

education
forum



Can we talk?

IDENTITY, DRAG, AND UNIONISM

BY GARRETT METCALFE

On peut parler?

IDENTITÉ, DRAGUE ET SYNDICALISME

PAR GARRETT METCALFE

Fall 2022 VOL. 49, ISSUE 1 OSSTF/FEESO



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Contents

Fall 2022, vol. 49, issue 1

- 4 From the Editor/Mot de la rédactrice en chef**
- 6 The story of Fix our Schools/Au sujet de Fix Our Schools**
It's time to clear the repair backlog in schools/Il est temps d'éliminer le retard des réparations dans les écoles
by/par Krista Wylie
- 16 Can we talk?/On peut parler?**
Identity, drag, and unionism/Identité, drague et syndicalisme
by/par Garrett Metcalfe
- 24 Election Organizers at the heart of local political action/Les organisateurs électoraux au cœur de l'action politique locale**
Grassroots energy at the heart of Member engagement/L'énergie de la base au cœur de l'engagement des Membres
by/par Tim Mathewson
- 30 A review of the 2019-2020 round of collective bargaining/Bilan de la ronde de négociation de 2019-2020**
A tough fight, but winnable/Une lutte difficile, mais qui peut être gagnée
by/par Chris Samuel
- 41 Never too far from the Federation**
Active Retired Members of OSSTF/FEESO
by OSSTF/FEESO Staff
- 43 Undermining public education**
Privatization and "school choice" in Alberta
by Heather Ganshorn
- 48 Corsi-Rosenthal Boxes as school-based learning activities**
Making health and safety curriculum-friendly
by Gordon Robitaille
- 50 Bargaining Unit boost**
- 51 Top picks**
- 56 Last word/Mot de la fin**



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Together feels OK

An issue filled with hope



Inevitably, we have the tropes that accompany the fall season—curling up with blankets, putting the garden to rest for the winter, preparing for hibernation. These all seem at once bleak and yet hopeful. They are signs that our world is cyclical, that there is a tomorrow, and that we can and will get through the dark times.

This issue of *Education Forum* has played out with a similar trope—a number of our articles attest to the challenges we face in public education and in our quest for a just society. They consider what has to be done to be better, to do better, and to dream better. In the article, "Corsi-Rosenthal Boxes as school-based learning activities," OSSTF/FEESO Member, Gordon Robitaille, showcases how a little idea can bring about significant change and can unite a community.

In, "A tough fight, but winnable," OSSTF/FEESO staff member, Chris Samuel, summarizes how the Federation used political bargaining as a novel and effective strategy in our recent fight to protect publicly funded education in the province. Samuel reviews the strategy and identifies how and when creative thinking can turn around a seemingly unwinnable situation.

One of the most touching and personal pieces in this issue comes to us from local OSSTF/FEESO leader, Garrett Metcalfe. In our cover story, Metcalfe exposes his own journey to per-

sonal freedom and the ways in which drag helped him find the support of this union community.

The work of our Election Organizers is featured in Tim Mathewson's piece, "Election Organizers at the heart of local activism," where the case is made for sustained political action. This is paralleled by two articles from community activists groups *Support Our Students Alberta* and *Fix Our Schools*. Both show how public education is being undermined and how together we can fight the right's ubiquitous disdain for public education.

You may also notice a couple of changes in the look and feel of our magazine, especially the hard copy edition. As a team, we are working to provide a more accessible and greener product. Over the next few issues you will see a more sustainable paper stock used along with a more accessible print font and graphic designs. It is our hope that as we employ these changes that *Education Forum* will continue to be a publication you can snuggle up under your blanket with while sipping a warm beverage. We hope that it will inspire you in your work protecting and enhancing public education, building unionism, and furthering social justice, and equity.

In solidarity,

Tracey Germa, Editor
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Ensemble, ça va

Un numéro plein d'espoir

Inévitablement, nous avons des figures qui accompagnent la saison automnale : se blottir dans des couvertures, mettre le jardin au repos pour l'hiver, se préparer à l'hibernation. Tout cela semble à la fois sombre et plein d'espoir. Ce sont des signes que notre monde est cyclique, qu'il y a un lendemain et que nous pouvons et allons traverser les périodes sombres.

Ce numéro d'*Education Forum* se déroule selon une figure similaire : un certain nombre de nos articles témoignent des défis auxquels nous sommes confrontés dans l'éducation publique et dans notre quête d'une société juste. Ils examinent ce qu'il faut faire pour être mieux, pour mieux faire et pour mieux rêver. Dans l'article « Corsi-Rosenthal Boxes,» comme activités d'apprentissage en milieu scolaire, Gordon Robitaille, membre d'OSSTF/FEESO, montre comment une petite idée peut entraîner des changements importants et unir une communauté.

Dans « Une lutte difficile, mais qui peut être gagnée, » Chris Samuel, membre du personnel d'OSSTF/FEESO, résume les façons dont la Fédération a utilisé la négociation politique comme stratégie nouvelle et efficace dans notre récente lutte pour protéger l'éducation financée à même les deniers publics dans la province. Chris Samuel passe en revue la stratégie et identifie comment et quand la pensée créative peut renverser une situation apparemment ingagnable.

L'un des articles les plus touchants et personnels de ce numéro nous vient de Garrett Metcalfe, dirigeant local d'OSSTF/FEESO. Dans notre article de couverture, Garrett expose son propre cheminement vers la liberté personnelle et les moyens par lesquels la drague l'a aidé à trouver le soutien de cette communauté syndicale.

Le travail de nos organisateurs électoraux est présenté dans l'article de Tim Mathewson, « Les organisateurs électoraux au cœur de l'action locale, » qui plaide en faveur d'un activisme politique soutenu. En parallèle, deux articles de groupes de militants communautaires, *Support Our Students Alberta* et *Fix Our Schools*. Ces deux articles démontrent à quel point l'éducation publique est minée et comment nous pouvons lutter ensemble contre le mépris omniprésent de la droite pour l'éducation publique.

Vous remarquerez peut-être aussi quelques changements dans l'aspect et la convivialité de notre magazine, en particulier dans l'édition papier. En tant qu'équipe, nous travaillons à fournir un produit plus accessible et plus écologique. Dans les prochains numéros, vous verrez que nous utilisons un papier plus durable, une police d'impression et des conceptions graphiques plus accessibles. Nous espérons que, grâce à ces changements, *Education Forum* continuera d'être une publication avec laquelle vous

pourrez vous blottir sous votre couverture en sirotant une boisson chaude et qui vous inspirera dans votre travail de protection et d'amélioration de l'éducation publique, le renforcement du syndicalisme et de l'avancement de la justice sociale et de l'équité.

En toute solidarité,

Tracey Germa, rédactrice en chef

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THE STORY OF FIX OUR SCHOOLS

It's time to clear the repair backlog in schools

by Krista Wylie

For many years, parents in my community worried and complained about the physical conditions of our local public schools. However, we were not sure what we could do to improve the situation.

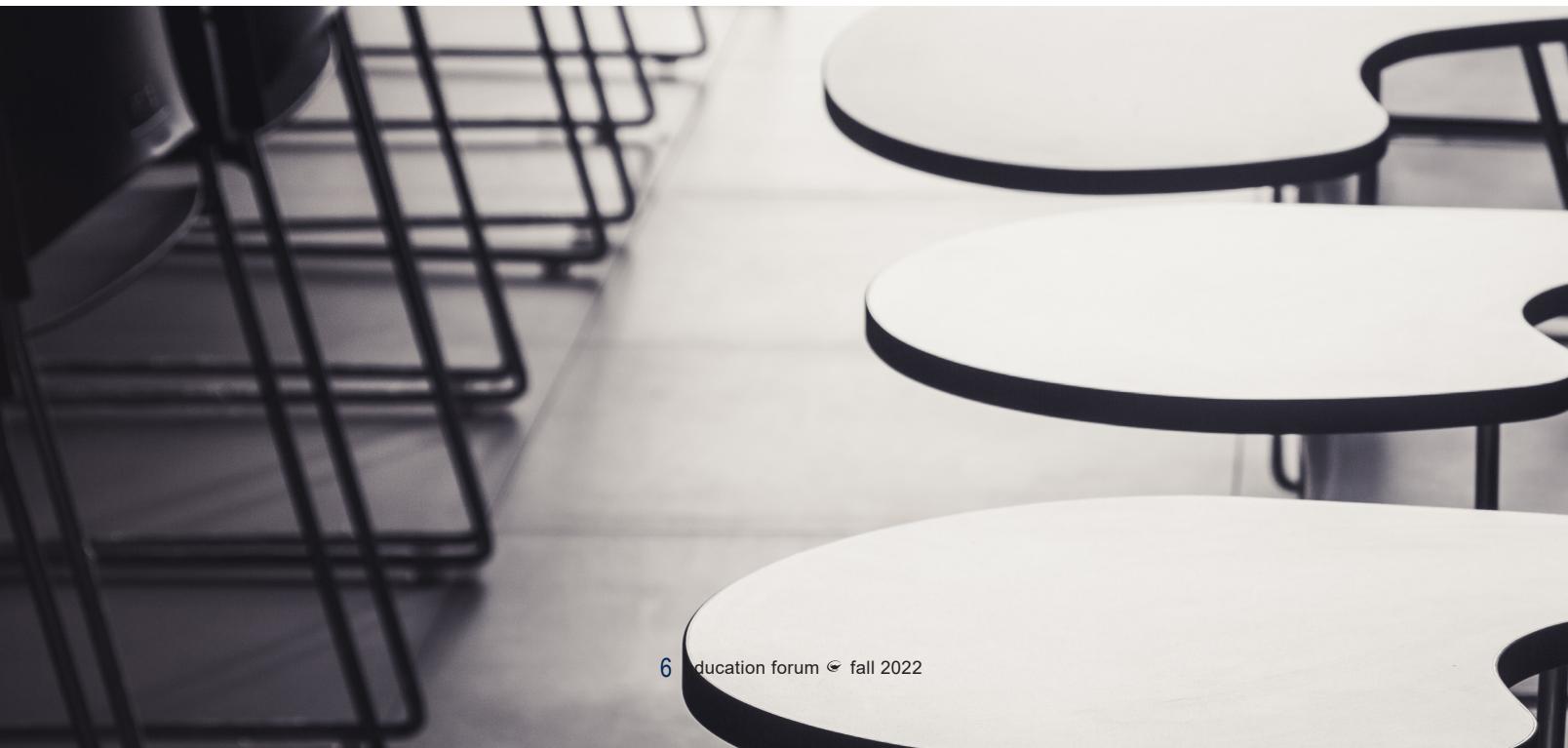
We were concerned about the visible disrepair such as peeling paint and old, inefficient windows. We were equally concerned about the invisible dis-

repair that likely lurked beneath the surface and could potentially be more serious. We were also concerned about the school conditions that seemed to be accepted as "normal" when, in fact, they were entirely unacceptable. For instance, my son, his classmates, and their teacher all wore winter coats at school for more than a week one win-

ter because their classroom was only 12 degrees Celsius.

Eventually, we began to think that parent activism might play a role in positively impacting local school conditions. And so, with equal parts optimism and naivete, a small group of parents began meeting in April 2014 to discuss disrepair in Toronto's public schools. From the start,

/continued on page 8



AU SUJET DE **FIX OUR SCHOOLS**

Il est temps d'éliminer le retard des réparations dans les écoles

par Krista Wylie

Pendant de nombreuses années, les parents de ma communauté se sont inquiétés et plaints des conditions matérielles de nos écoles publiques locales. Cependant, nous n'étions pas sûrs de ce que nous pouvions faire pour améliorer la situation.

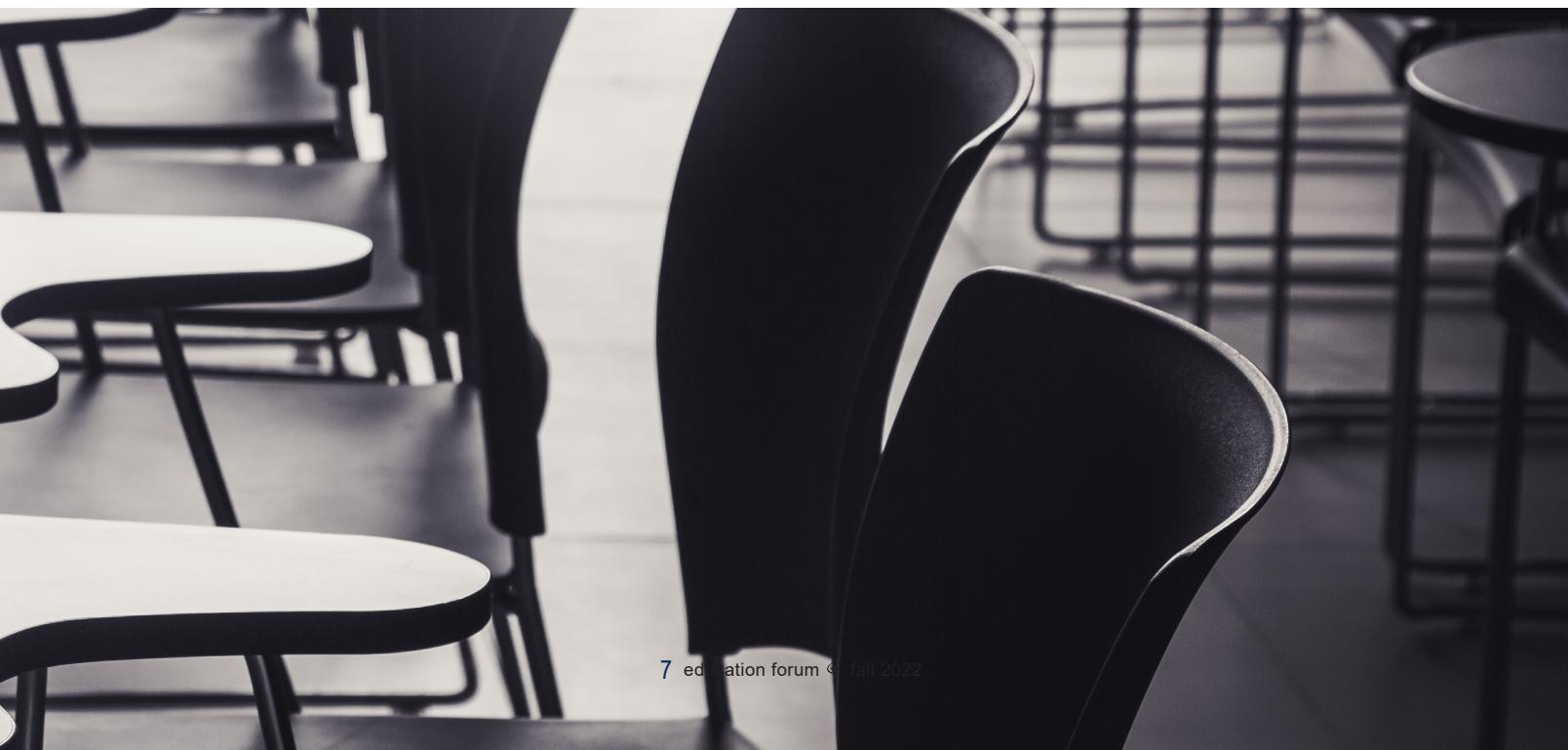
Nous étions préoccupés par les dégradations visibles, comme la peinture écaillée et les vieilles

fenêtres inefficaces. Nous étions également préoccupés par les dégradations invisibles qui se cachaient sous la surface et qui pouvaient être plus graves. De plus, nous étions préoccupés par les conditions de vie à l'école qui semblaient être acceptées comme « normales » alors qu'elles étaient en fait totalement inacceptables. Par

exemple, un hiver, mon fils, ses camarades de classe et leur enseignant ont tous porté des manteaux d'hiver à l'école pendant plus d'une semaine parce que la température de leur salle de classe n'était que de 12 degrés Celsius.

Éventuellement, nous avons commencé à penser que l'activisme des parents pourrait

/suite à la page 9



/continued from page 6

we committed to being solution-oriented, non-partisan, parent-led, and we held a vision that:

- every publicly funded school in Ontario should be a safe, healthy, well-maintained building that provided an environment conducive to learning and working;
- publicly funded schools should be considered and treated as critical public infrastructure.

We officially launched the *Fix Our Schools* campaign in October 2014. By May 2015, we had built a network of close to 1,000 people across Toronto. At the start of our campaign, we believed that disrepair and poor conditions were a problem unique to Toronto schools. However, within our first year, we realized that disrepair and poor conditions impacted all 72 of Ontario's publicly funded school boards. In fact, we unearthed that, as of 2015, there was a \$15-billion repair backlog in Ontario schools. And so, we committed to expanding beyond Toronto to become an Ontario-wide campaign.

With this bit of early history shared, we will now highlight some of our notable successes as a campaign, our approach to advocacy, and some of our key insights and how those have informed our advocacy. We will also underscore the importance of political activism.

NOTABLE SUCCESSES

The *Fix Our Schools* campaign has been instrumental in achieving the following successes:

1. Convinced the provincial government to increase fund-

ing for school repairs and renewal from \$150-million/year in 2014 to \$1.4-billion/year in June 2016, and to maintain this level of annual funding every budget cycle since 2016 despite ongoing threats of provincial funding cuts.

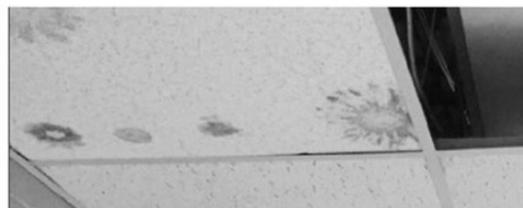
2. Obtained transparency into school disrepair data, with Facility Condition Index (FCI)/disrepair data first being published by the Ministry of Education in September 2016 and updated in October 2017. Unfortunately, the Ford government has not continued this level of transparency into school repair backlog details, and only provides the overall school repair backlog total when questioned each year.

3. Secured the commitment of 58 MPPs elected to Ford's first provincial government to develop a standard of good repair for Ontario schools and to provide the adequate, stable funding needed to achieve those standards and eliminate the repair backlog in Ontario's schools.

OUR APPROACH TO ADVOCACY

After realizing in 2015 that *Fix Our Schools* needed to expand to become an Ontario-wide campaign, we worked to build upon our Toronto base of support. We attended school, ward, and board meetings; we actively engaged in community outreach; we ran social media campaigns; we sent e-newsletters; and we built relationships with large,

organized groups whose interests aligned with those of *Fix Our Schools*—such as OSSTF/FEESO, other unions, and other parent organizations. Our goal was to create a large, connected network of people across Ontario who shared our vision of safe, healthy, well-maintained schools, and who could collec-



Schools are **critical** infrastructure...

...THAT IMPACT MILLIONS OF PEOPLE



tively work to create pressure for positive change.

With a meaningful base of support established, we were able to build relationships with all political parties and across many levels of government to raise our issues, present our arguments, and provide our ideas for positive change. Central to our approach was establishing relationships with the Premier's Office because we wanted the

/continued on page 10

jouer un rôle en ayant un impact positif sur les conditions scolaires locales. Ainsi, avec autant d'optimisme que de naïveté, un petit groupe de parents a commencé à se réunir en avril 2014 pour discuter du délabrement des écoles publiques de Toronto. Dès le début, nous nous sommes engagés à être ori-

devraient être considérées et traitées comme des infrastructures publiques essentielles.

Nous avons officiellement lancé la campagne *Fix Our Schools* (*Réparer Nos Écoles*) en octobre 2014. En mai 2015, nous avions construit un réseau de près de 1 000 personnes à travers Toronto. Au début de notre campagne, nous pensions que la vétusté et les mauvaises conditions étaient un problème propre aux écoles de Toronto. Cependant, au cours de notre première année, nous avons réalisé que ces problèmes touchaient les 72 conseils scolaires financés à même les deniers publics de l'Ontario. En fait, nous avons découvert qu'en 2015, les écoles ontariennes accusaient un retard de 15 milliards de dollars au niveau des réparations. Nous nous sommes donc engagés à aller au-delà de Toronto pour devenir une campagne à l'échelle de l'Ontario.

Après ce petit rappel historique, nous allons maintenant mettre en lumière certaines de nos réussites notables en tant que campagne, notre approche de la défense des intérêts, ainsi que certaines de nos idées clés et la manière dont elles ont influencé notre défense des intérêts. Nous soulignerons également l'importance de l'activisme politique.

RÉUSSITES NOTABLES

La campagne *Fix Our Schools* a permis d'atteindre les succès suivants:

1. Convaincu le gouvernement provincial d'augmenter le financement des réparations et

de la rénovation des écoles, qui est passé de 150 millions de dollars par an en 2014 à 1,4 milliard de dollars par an en juin 2016, et de maintenir ce niveau de financement annuel à chaque cycle budgétaire depuis 2016, malgré les menaces constantes de réduction du financement provincial.

2. Obtention de la transparence des données sur la vétusté des écoles, les données sur l'indice de l'état des installations (IEI) et la vétusté ayant été publiées pour la première fois par le ministère de l'Éducation en septembre 2016 et mises à jour en octobre 2017. Malheureusement, le gouvernement Ford n'a pas maintenu ce niveau de transparence dans les détails du retard de réparation des écoles et ne fournit que le total global du retard de réparation des écoles lorsqu'il est interrogé chaque année.

3. Obtention de l'engagement de 58 députés provinciaux élus au sein du premier gouvernement provincial de Ford d'élaborer une norme de bonne réparation pour les écoles de l'Ontario et de fournir le financement adéquat et stable nécessaire pour atteindre ces normes et éliminer le retard dans la réparation des écoles de l'Ontario.

NOTRE APPROCHE DE LA DÉFENSE

Après avoir réalisé en 2015 que *Fix Our Schools* devait s'étendre pour devenir une campagne à l'échelle de l'Ontario,

funding increase for school repairs and renewal to come from an increase in the overall funding to the Ministry of Education, and not from clawing back funding for other important education priorities. We were also able to garner media attention to show the disrepair in Ontario schools and highlight solutions.

We gathered facts and figures, developing reasonable ar-

tions at a more personal level. We found that the facts and figures were important, but that the stories and photos touched people's emotions and created more of a desire to make positive change.

Working with the provincial government led by Kathleen Wynne, we achieved our notable successes. We were able to leverage our large base of support to create the pressure needed for them to make big changes in funding and transparency. Admittedly, working with the provincial government led by Doug Ford has been challenging. The only success we've been able to achieve under this provincial government has been to protect the \$1.4-billion/year funding for school repairs and renewal. We have found the Ford government to be arrogant, unwilling to listen to or work with stakeholders, and to consistently view our public schools and education system as a very low priority.

KEY INSIGHTS THAT INFORMED OUR ADVOCACY

We gleaned several key insights early on in our campaign that informed our advocacy work and our calls to action:

1. Ontario's provincial government must provide adequate, stable funding for school repair and renewal. In 1998, Mike Harris' PC government amalgamated school boards and implemented a new funding formula, with school boards relying exclusively on the provincial government for funding. In 2002, the Rozanski report, commissioned by the PC government, identified

that \$5.6-billion of disrepair had accumulated in Ontario's publicly funded schools since the provincial government took over education funding.

Furthermore, the Rozanski report identified that the yearly funding provided by the provincial government to school boards for school repairs and renewal was less than 1% of the value of the current replacement value of schools, even though established industry standards recommended that governments provide a minimum of 1.5% - 4% of the current facility replacement value of a building for repair and renewal needs each year. The Liberal governments that held power for the 15 years after the Rozanski report allowed disrepair in Ontario's schools to triple to \$15.9-billion. In fact, when the Fix Our Schools campaign began in 2014, provincial funding for school repairs and renewal was a mere \$150-million/year, approximately one-tenth of the \$1.4-billion/year that industry standards suggested was the bare minimum that school boards needed to be able to complete routine repairs and maintenance.

As stated earlier as a notable success, in June 2016, the provincial government did substantially increase the annual funding for school repair and renewal to the \$1.4 billion/year that was recommended as the bare minimum according to industry standards. However, while this significant increase was welcomed, this level of provincial funding was never going

gements for why more funding was needed for school repair and renewal, for why transparency into disrepair details was crucial, for why schools were critical public infrastructure, and for why standards of good repair were needed. At the same time, we collected personal stories and photographs that illustrated the many negative impacts of disrepair and poor school condi-

nous avons travaillé à développer notre base de soutien à Toronto. Nous avons assisté à des réunions d'écoles, de quartiers et de conseils scolaires; nous nous sommes engagés activement dans la sensibilisation communautaire; nous avons mené des campagnes dans les médias sociaux; nous avons envoyé des bulletins électroniques et nous avons établi des relations avec des groupes importants et organisés dont les intérêts s'alignaient sur ceux de *Fix Our Schools*, comme OS-STF/FESO, d'autres syndicats et d'autres organisations de parents. Notre objectif était de créer un vaste réseau connecté de personnes à travers l'Ontario qui partageaient notre vision d'écoles sécuritaires, saines et bien entretenuées et qui pouvaient travailler collectivement pour créer une pression en faveur d'un changement positif.

Avec une base de soutien significative établie, nous avons pu établir des relations avec tous les partis politiques et à travers plusieurs niveaux de gouvernement pour soulever nos problèmes, présenter nos arguments et fournir nos idées pour un changement positif. L'établissement de relations avec le cabinet du premier ministre était au cœur de notre approche, car nous voulions que l'augmentation du financement pour la réparation et la rénovation des écoles provienne d'une augmentation du financement global du ministère de l'Éducation et non de la récupération de fonds pour d'autres priorités importantes en matière d'éducation. Nous avons également réussi à obtenir l'attention des médias pour attirer l'attention sur

le délabrement des écoles de l'Ontario et mettre en évidence les solutions.

Nous avons rassemblé des faits et des chiffres, élaborant des arguments raisonnables pour expliquer pourquoi il fallait augmenter le financement

des écoles à un niveau plus personnel. Nous avons constaté que les faits et les chiffres étaient importants, mais que les histoires et les photos touchaient les émotions des gens et suscitaient davantage le désir d'apporter des changements positifs.

En travaillant avec le gouvernement provincial dirigé par Kathleen Wynne, nous avons remporté des succès notables. Nous avons pu nous appuyer sur notre large base de soutien pour créer la pression nécessaire pour qu'ils apportent des changements importants en matière de financement et de transparence. Il est vrai que travailler avec le gouvernement provincial dirigé par Doug Ford a été difficile. Le seul succès que nous avons pu obtenir sous ce gouvernement provincial a été de protéger le financement de 1,4 milliard de dollars par an pour la réparation et la rénovation des écoles. Nous avons trouvé que le gouvernement Ford était arrogant, qu'il ne voulait pas écouter ou travailler avec les parties prenantes et qu'il considérait constamment nos écoles publiques et notre système d'éducation comme une très faible priorité.

Nous avons constaté que les faits et les chiffres étaient importants, mais que les histoires et les photos touchaient les émotions des gens et suscitaient davantage le désir d'apporter des changements positifs.

de la réparation et de la rénovation des écoles, pourquoi il était crucial de faire preuve de transparence dans les détails des délabrements, pourquoi les écoles étaient des infrastructures publiques essentielles et pourquoi il fallait établir des normes de bonne réparation. Parallèlement, nous avons recueilli des histoires personnelles et des photographies illustrant les nombreux impacts négatifs de la vétusté et du mauvais état

IDÉES CLÉS QUI ONT INFLUENCÉ NOTRE DÉFENSE

Dès le début de notre campagne, nous avons glané plusieurs informations clés qui ont orienté notre travail de défense et nos appels à l'action :

1. Le gouvernement provincial de l'Ontario doit fournir un financement adéquat et stable pour la réparation et la rénovation des écoles. En 1998,

to make up for the almost 20 years when provincial funding was a mere fraction of what it ought to have been and during which time \$15.9-billion of disrepair was allowed to accumulate in Ontario's schools.

Certainly, we have seen this to be true. Since the current Ford PC government came to power in 2018, we've seen a continued year-over-year increase in the school repair backlog, despite the ongoing \$1.4-billion/year funding for repairs and renewal of schools. As of June 2021, the school repair backlog was \$16.8-billion total.

Fix Our Schools has urged successive provincial governments to provide adequate, stable funding for these important public assets called schools, and to allocate at least an additional \$1.6-billion/year. Only when provincial funding is stable and adequate will we have a hope of achieving schools that are safe, healthy, and well-maintained, and that provide environments conducive to learning and working.

2. A Standard of Good Repair for Ontario's publicly funded schools must be developed and implemented. These standards need to clearly articulate the acceptable state of school buildings, portables, and schoolyards, and to include the metrics that will be collected to demonstrate that standards are met. These standards and the associated metrics must include and address:

- the \$16.8-billion of disre-

- pair in school buildings;
- a program to assess current repair backlogs in portables and schoolyards;
- air quality and ventilation;
- classroom temperatures;
- accessibility;
- environmental efficiency & durability;
- drinking water;
- asbestos;
- cleanliness;
- classroom space;
- vermin, mold;
- fire and electrical code.

Without a defined and commonly understood standard and associated metrics for what conditions are acceptable in Ontario's school buildings, portables, and schoolyards, there is no reasonable way to assess the success in meeting the standards.

3. Ontario's provincial government must release annual updates on school disrepair data, and start collecting and releasing transparent metrics for portables and schoolyards at regular intervals. Beginning in 2011, Ontario's provincial government started engaging independent, third-party engineers to inspect each school in the province once every five years. These engineers review the essential structures and systems of a school. They also assess the wear and tear to building interiors. It has been through this process that the repair backlog for Ontario's schools has been determined and updated.

Up until 2016, the provincial government never publicly shared the findings of

these school inspections. *Fix Our Schools* believed that having transparency into school disrepair data was important. We felt that if people knew the details of the repair backlog at schools in their community, they would be far more politically engaged than if they only know the large, amorphous total repair backlog figure for all Ontario schools. Therefore, we created significant pressure on the provincial government and ultimately convinced the Ministry of Education to begin releasing disrepair data on a school-by-school basis in 2016. Unfortunately, November 2017 was the last time that the provincial government updated and released this disrepair data. Since Premier Ford was elected in 2018, there has been a disappointing lack of transparency.

To measure the outcomes of provincial funding for school infrastructure, our provincial government must continue to collect and publicly release disrepair data for every publicly funded school building in Ontario. *Fix Our Schools* also has advocated for our provincial government to start collecting and sharing disrepair data for portables and schoolyards.

THE IMPORTANCE OF POLITICAL ACTIVISM

As you well know, there is great power in collective action. At *Fix Our Schools*, we've experienced that power many times since 2014. We remember the first journalist we met with, and her skepticism about us being able

le gouvernement PC de Mike Harris a fusionné les conseils scolaires et mis en œuvre une nouvelle formule de financement, les conseils scolaires dépendant exclusivement du gouvernement provincial pour leur financement. En 2002, le rapport Rozanski, commandé par le gouvernement PC, a révélé que 5,6 milliards de dollars de réparations s'étaient accumulés dans les écoles financées à même les deniers publics de l'Ontario depuis que le gouvernement provincial avait pris en charge le financement de l'éducation.

De plus, le rapport Rozanski a identifié que le financement annuel fourni par le gouvernement provincial aux conseils scolaires pour la réparation et la rénovation des écoles était inférieur à 1 pour cent de la valeur de remplacement actuelle des écoles, même si les normes établies de l'industrie recommandent que les gouvernements fournissent un minimum de 1,5 pour cent à 4 pour cent de la valeur de remplacement actuelle d'un bâtiment pour les besoins de réparation et de rénovation chaque année.

Les gouvernements libéraux qui ont été au pouvoir pendant les 15 années qui ont suivi la publication du rapport Rozanski ont laissé le délabrement des écoles de l'Ontario tripler pour atteindre 15,9 milliards de dollars. En fait, lorsque la campagne Réparons nos écoles a débuté en 2014, le financement provincial pour la réparation et la rénovation des écoles n'était que de 150 millions de dol-

lars par an, soit environ un dixième du 1,4 milliard de dollars par an qui, selon les normes de l'industrie, était le strict minimum dont les conseils scolaires avaient besoin pour effectuer les réparations et l'entretien de routine.

En juin 2016, le gouvernement provincial a augmenté de façon substantielle le financement annuel des réparations et de la rénovation des écoles pour atteindre le montant de 1,4 milliard de dollars par an recommandé comme étant le strict minimum selon les normes de l'industrie. Cependant, bien que cette augmentation significative ait été bien accueillie, ce niveau de financement provincial n'allait jamais compenser les presque 20 années pendant lesquelles le financement provincial n'était qu'une fraction de ce qu'il aurait dû être et pendant lesquelles on a laissé s'accumuler 15,9 milliards de dollars de délabrement dans les écoles de l'Ontario.

Nous nous sommes aperçus que c'est la vérité. Depuis l'arrivée au pouvoir de l'actuel gouvernement PC de Ford en 2018, nous avons constaté une augmentation continue d'année en année du retard dans la réparation des écoles, malgré le financement continu de 1,4 milliard de dollars par an pour les réparations et la rénovation des écoles. En juin 2021, l'arriéré de réparation des écoles s'élevait à 16,8 milliards de dollars au total.

Fix Our Schools a exhorté les gouvernements provinciaux successifs à fournir

un financement adéquat et stable pour ces biens publics importants que sont les écoles, et à attribuer au moins 1,6 milliard de dollars supplémentaires par an. Ce n'est que lorsque le financement provincial sera stable et adéquat que nous aurons l'espoir d'obtenir des écoles sécuritaires, saines et bien entretenues et qui offrent des milieux propices à l'apprentissage et au travail.

2. Une norme de bon état pour les écoles financées à même les deniers publics de l'Ontario doit être élaborée et mise en œuvre.

Ces normes doivent énoncer clairement l'état acceptable des bâtiments scolaires, des locaux mobiles et des cours d'école et inclure les mesures qui seront recueillies pour démontrer que les normes sont respectées. Ces normes et les mesures associées doivent inclure et traiter les points suivants :

- les 16,8 milliards de dollars de vétusté des bâtiments scolaires;
- un programme d'évaluation des retards de réparation actuels dans les classes mobiles et les cours d'école;
- la qualité de l'air et la ventilation;
- la température des salles de classe;
- l'accessibilité;
- l'efficacité environnementale et la durabilité;
- l'eau potable;
- l'amiante;
- la propreté;
- l'espace de classe;
- la vermine, la moisissure et;

We recognize that school conditions are only one aspect of our education system. We also recognize the amazing things that go on inside classrooms every day, despite the poor physical conditions of many schools. This is a testament to teachers and education workers. We thank you for your commitment to Ontario's students.

to get any traction at all with making change on an issue as “unsexy” as school infrastructure. And then, we remember meeting with this same journalist many years later. She was amazed at how we had grown and sustained our campaign. She was also impressed with the successes we had achieved through slowly building a committed base of support, taking collective action to build pressure, and using a solution-oriented, non-partisan approach.

We recognize that school condi-

tions are only one aspect of our education system. We also recognize the amazing things that go on inside classrooms every day, despite the poor physical conditions of many schools. This is a testament to teachers and education workers. We thank you for your commitment to Ontario's students.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how critical schools and education are to Ontario's children, their families, and our economy. With this in mind, we encourage each of you to please subscribe to *Fix Our Schools* to receive periodic emails with information and ideas for action: www.fixourschools.ca/joinus/. And, we encourage OSSTF/FEESO Members to continue to be politically active on other key education priorities. Your collective action in the coming months and years will be critical to our public schools and education system.

Krista Wylie is Co-Founder of the *Fix Our Schools* campaign [FixourSchools.ca](http://FixOurSchools.ca)/
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- les codes de prévention des incendies et de l'électricité.

En l'absence d'une norme définie et communément comprise et de paramètres associés, concernant les conditions acceptables dans les bâtiments scolaires, les locaux mobiles et les cours d'école de l'Ontario, il n'y a pas de moyen raisonnable d'évaluer le succès du respect des normes.

3. Le gouvernement provincial de l'Ontario doit publier des mises à jour annuelles sur les données relatives à la vétusté des écoles et commencer à recueillir et à publier à intervalles réguliers des données transparentes sur les classes mobiles et les cours d'école. Depuis 2011, le gouvernement provincial de l'Ontario a commencé à engager des ingénieurs indépendants pour inspecter chaque école de la province une fois tous les cinq ans. Ces ingénieurs examinent les structures et les systèmes essentiels d'une école. Ils évaluent également l'usure de l'intérieur des bâtiments. C'est grâce à ce processus que l'arriéré de réparation des écoles de l'Ontario a été déterminé et mis à jour.

Jusqu'en 2016, le gouvernement provincial n'a jamais partagé publiquement les conclusions de ces inspections d'écoles. *Fix Our Schools* croyait qu'il était important d'avoir de la transparence dans les données sur la vétusté des écoles. Nous avons estimé que si les gens connaissaient les détails de

l'arriéré de réparations dans les écoles de leur communauté, ils seraient beaucoup plus engagés politiquement que s'ils ne connaissaient que le grand chiffre amorphe de l'arriéré total de réparations pour toutes les écoles de l'Ontario. Par conséquent, nous avons créé une pression importante sur le gouvernement provincial et avons finalement convaincu le ministère de l'Éducation de commencer à publier les données sur les réparations, école par école, en 2016. Malheureusement, novembre 2017 a été la dernière fois que le gouvernement provincial a mis à jour et publié ces données sur les délabrements. Depuis l'élection du premier ministre Ford en 2018, on constate un manque de transparence décevant.

Pour mesurer les résultats du financement provincial de l'infrastructure scolaire, notre gouvernement provincial doit continuer à recueillir et à publier les données sur les délabrements pour chaque bâtiment scolaire financé à même les deniers publics en Ontario. *Fix Our Schools* a également plaidé pour que notre gouvernement provincial commence à recueillir et à partager les données sur la vétusté des classes portables et des cours d'école.

IMPORTANCE DE L'ACTIVISME POLITIQUE

Comme vous le savez bien, il existe un grand pouvoir dans l'action collective. Chez *Fix Our Schools*, nous avons fait l'expérience de ce pouvoir à de

nombreuses reprises depuis 2014. Nous nous souvenons de la première journaliste que nous avons rencontrée et de son scepticisme quant à notre capacité à obtenir une quelconque traction pour faire changer les choses sur une question aussi « exci-

témoignage du personnel enseignant et des travailleuses et travailleurs en éducation. Nous vous remercions de votre engagement envers les élèves de l'Ontario.

La pandémie de la COVID-19 a montré à quel point les écoles

Nous reconnaissions que les conditions de vie dans les écoles ne sont qu'un aspect de notre système éducatif. Nous reconnaissions également les choses étonnantes qui se passent chaque jour dans les salles de classe, malgré les mauvaises conditions physiques de nombreuses écoles. C'est un témoignage du personnel enseignant et des travailleuses et travailleurs en éducation.

tante » que les infrastructures scolaires. Et puis, nous nous souvenons avoir rencontré cette même journaliste plusieurs années plus tard. Elle était étonnée de voir comment nous avions développé et soutenu notre campagne. Elle était également impressionnée par les succès que nous avions obtenus en construisant lentement une base de soutien engagée, en prenant des mesures collectives pour faire pression et en utilisant une approche non partisane axée sur les solutions.

Nous reconnaissions que les conditions de vie dans les écoles ne sont qu'un aspect de notre système éducatif. Nous reconnaissions également les choses étonnantes qui se passent chaque jour dans les salles de classe, malgré les mauvaises conditions physiques de nombreuses écoles. C'est un

et l'éducation sont essentielles pour les enfants de l'Ontario, leurs familles et notre économie. Dans cette optique, nous encourageons chacun d'entre vous à s'abonner à *Fix Our Schools* pour recevoir des courriels périodiques contenant des renseignements et des idées d'action: www.fixourschools.ca/joinus/. Et nous encourageons les membres d'OSSTF/FEESO à continuer à être politiquement actifs sur d'autres priorités clés en matière d'éducation. Votre action collective dans les mois et années à venir sera essentielle pour nos écoles publiques et notre système éducatif.

Krista Wylie est cofondatrice de la campagne *Fix Our Schools* [Fixourschools.ca](http://fixourschools.ca) / info@fixourschools.ca



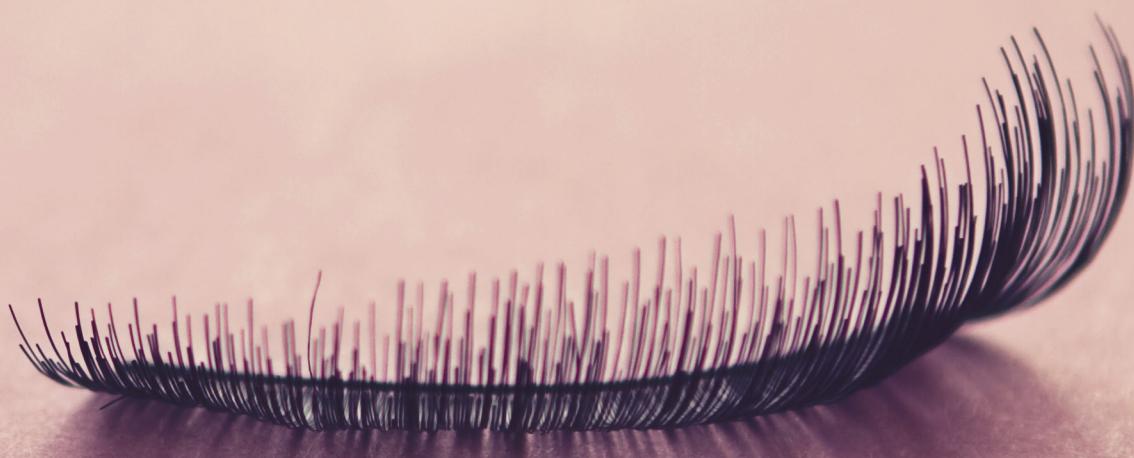
Can we talk?

IDENTITY, DRAG, AND UNIONISM

BY GARRETT METCALFE

Surrounded by sequins, hair spray, wigs, costumes, jewellery, and yes... lots of duct tape—Joane Rivers and the Deceiving Divas were anxious but ready to hit the stage two year's ago at OSSTF/FEESO's Provincial Summer Leadership conference in a ball room at the Westin Harbour Castle. Joane Rivers is my drag persona; Joan Rivers has always been an idol of mine and a long-time hero/ally to the Queer community. She was advocating long before it became trendy.

/continued on page 18



On peut parle?

IDENTITÉ, DRAGUE ET SYNDICALISME

PAR GARRETT METCALFE

Entourées de paillettes, de fixatif à cheveux, de perruques, de costumes, de bijoux et oui... de beaucoup de ruban adhésif, Joane Rivers et les *Deceiving Divas* étaient anxieuses, mais prêtes à monter sur scène il y a deux ans, lors de la Conférence provinciale de leadership d'été d'OSSTF/FEESO, dans une salle de bal du Westin Harbour Castle. Joane Rivers est mon personnage; Joan Rivers a toujours été mon idole et une héroïne/alliée de longue date de la communauté Queer. Elle se portait à la défense de cette cause bien avant que cela ne devienne à la mode.

/suite à la page 19

/continued from page 16

This was not our normal crowd full of Queers with empty shot glasses on the tables before the show even started. This wasn't the usual crowd with loud outbursts of vulgarity. This was not going to be a regular Saturday night show. For Joane Rivers, it was also the night the two professional worlds met in a very public way. The world of Garrett the educator of 20 years and Garrett the drag performer of 15 years were about to collide. Two worlds that had been kept apart out of fear and necessity were coming together and I was terrified but ready.

The audience was politely chatting, the house lights dimmed and the show's first character, Marilyn Monroe, appeared on the stage to warm the crowd up. There was a quiet gasp and then mesmerized silence. The other queens began to panic—yelling to Joane, "they hate us" and, "this is going to be a long night." I assured them that they just think they are at the theatre and are being super polite. "Don't worry," I said... "Joane will warm them up." Inside however, I was experiencing my own panic and internal conflict. Years of hiding my identities and the homophobia I've experienced within the education system had come to this moment. Deep breathe... the show must go on!

Following the polite applause for Marilyn, Joane Rivers exploded on the stage with a mission—to



push boundaries, make statements, and invite OSSTF/FEESO to experience just a glimpse of my world and Queer culture. Unapologetically, Joane gave permission for us all to have a good time while challenging our boundaries and norms. Joane extended an invite to a mainly cisgender/straight audience to play, for just a night, in a world of edgy humour rooted out of oppression. An invitation to experience Queer camp was extended and the audience embraced it with open

FOR THIS FIRST FEW YEARS
OF MY CAREER, I CONTINUED
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COMPLETELY CLOSETED
WITH ALL COLLEAGUES AND
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ALL ASPECTS OF MY LIFE.

arms. This was going to be a FUN night!

In traditional Joane fashion... can we talk? Can we talk about a community that has experienced so much homophobia and transphobia for decades? Can we talk about a community that survived the politics of an AIDS epidemic? Can we talk about a community that continues to face police brutality, hate legislation and must fight to provide safe spaces for 2SLGBTQI+ youth? Can we talk about a teacher who was closeted, living multiple secretive lives, and who eventually found a safe landing place in OSSTF/FEESO?

Our ability to survive often stems out of the creation of a Queer culture referred to as "camp." When we have had to laugh or cry, the Queer community usually chooses laughter. We are a marginalized group that uses self-deprecating humour, over-exaggeration, and the stereotypes of oppression to push the boundaries of mainstream norms and values. Through humour, we make very strong social/political statements about gender binaries. Joane Rivers had welcomed the audience into this Queer culture for a night. Garrett was frightened to allow the two worlds to collide.

It was a long journey getting to this moment. Thirty years ago, I was a closeted gay man that married his high school sweetheart and had

/continued on page 20

/suite de la page 17

Il ne s'agissait pas de notre foule habituelle, remplie de Queers avec des verres à liqueur vides sur les tables avant même que le spectacle ne commence. Ce n'était pas la foule habituelle avec des éclats de vulgarité. Il ne s'agissait pas d'un spectacle habituel du samedi soir. Pour Joane Rivers, c'est aussi la nuit où deux mondes professionnels se sont rencontrés de manière très publique. Le monde de Garrett, l'éducateur depuis 20 ans, et celui de Garrett, le travesti depuis 15 ans, sont sur le point d'entrer en collision. Deux mondes qui avaient été tenus à l'écart par peur et par nécessité allaient se rencontrer et j'étais terrifié, mais prêt.

Le public discute poliment, les lumières de la salle se tamisent et le premier personnage du spectacle, Marilyn Monroe, apparaît sur scène pour réchauffer la foule. Il y a eu un souffle silencieux, puis un silence médusé. L'autre reine a commencé à paniquer en criant à Joane « ils nous détestent » et « la nuit va être longue ». Je leur ai assuré qu'elles pensaient juste être au théâtre et qu'elles étaient super polies. « Ne vous inquiétez pas. » J'ai dit... « Joane va les réchauffer. » Mais à l'intérieur, je vivais ma propre panique et un conflit interne. Des années à cacher mes identités et l'homophobie que j'ai vécue dans le système éducatif m'ont amené à ce moment. Respirez profondément... le spectacle doit continuer!

Après les applaudissements polis de Marilyn, Joane Rivers a explosé sur la scène avec une mission : repousser les limites, faire des déclarations et inviter OSSTF/FEESO à découvrir un aperçu de mon monde et de la culture queer. Sans honte, Joane nous a donné la permission de passer un bon moment tout en défiant nos limites et nos normes. Joane a invité un public majoritairement cisgenre et hétérosexuel à jouer, le temps d'une soirée, dans un monde d'humour nerveux issu de l'oppression. Une invitation à vivre une expérience de camp queer a été lancée et le public l'a accueillie à bras ouverts. Cette soirée allait être très AMUSANTE!

Dans la tradition de Joane... pouvons-nous parler? Pouvons-nous parler d'une communauté qui a connu tant d'homophobie et de transphobie pendant des décennies? Pouvons-nous parler d'une communauté qui a survécu aux politiques de l'épidémie de SIDA? Pouvons-nous parler d'une communauté qui continue à faire face à la brutalité policière, à la législation sur la haine et qui

doit se battre pour offrir des espaces sûrs aux jeunes 2SLGBTQI+? Pouvons-nous parler d'un enseignant qui était dans l'ombre, qui a vécu plusieurs vies secrètes et qui a finalement trouvé un endroit sûr au sein d'OSSTF/FEESO?

Notre capacité à survivre découle souvent de la création d'une culture queer appelée camp. Lorsque nous devons rire ou pleurer, la communauté queer choisit généralement le rire.

PENDANT LES PREMIÈRES ANNÉES DE MA CARRIÈRE, J'AI CONTINUÉ CETTE MASCARADE ET J'ÉTAIS COMPLÈTEMENT FERMÉ À TOUS MES COLLÈGUES ET ÉLÈVES. L'HOMOPHOBIE INTÉRIORISÉE PARALYSAIT TOUS LES ASPECTS DE MA VIE.

Nous sommes un groupe marginalisé qui utilise l'humour autodérisoire, l'exagération et les stéréotypes de l'oppression pour repousser les limites des normes et des valeurs dominantes. Par le biais de l'humour, nous faisons des déclarations sociales et politiques très fortes sur les binômes de genre. Joane Rivers avait accueilli le public dans cette culture queer pour une nuit. Garrett était effrayé à l'idée de laisser ces deux mondes entrer en collision.

Le chemin a été long pour arriver à ce moment. Il y a trente ans, j'étais un homosexuel refoulé qui avait épousé son amour de jeunesse et j'avais deux enfants. J'étais encore à l'université et j'essayais désespérément de cacher mon identité en étant aussi hétéro que possible. Pendant les premières années de ma carrière, j'ai continué cette mascarade et j'étais complètement fermé à tous mes collègues et élèves. L'homophobie intériorisée paralysait tous les aspects de ma vie.

Toute ma carrière a toujours été ancrée dans le travail de lutte contre l'oppression et, au cours de ces premières années, je me suis retrouvé à travailler sans relâche à la lutte contre le racisme tout en enterrant complètement mes propres besoins identitaires. Le début des années 90 a été une période cruelle pour les éducateurs homosexuels. Entendre les histoires de collègues homosexuels

/suite à la page 21

/continued from page 18

two children. I was still in university and was desperately trying to hide my identity by being as straight as possible. For this first few years of my career, I continued this charade and was completely closeted with all colleagues and students. Internalized homophobia paralyzed all aspects of my life.

My entire career has always been rooted in anti-

OUR IDENTITIES ARE COMPLEX AND EXTREMELY IMPORTANT FOR ALL OF US. WHEN WE FIND OURSELVES FORCED TO HIDE IDENTITIES AND CAN'T BE TRULY AUTHENTIC IN ALL SPACES, IT CREATES SIGNIFICANT HARM.

oppression work and in those early years, I found myself working tirelessly fighting racism while completely burying my own identity needs. The early 90s were cruel times for Queer educators. Hearing stories of gay colleagues who had been fired from the local Catholic Board, hearing blatant homophobia from students and colleagues only further closeted me in fear. Internalized homophobia is powerful and soul destroying. I was also navigating the conflict I felt in fighting for human rights while ignoring my own oppression and the oppression of my gay students. This internal conflict eventually pushed me to come out when I was 29.

I came out in a big way. Within a couple of years I was out to all family and all colleagues and students. I shifted my anti-oppression activism to all things gay while also exploring my own Queer identity. In doing so, I quickly found myself living another closeted life as a drag queen performer. By day I was fighting the homophobia of colleagues, students, and an education system determined to destroy me, and by night I was on stage performing in fear that the worlds would collide.

I guarantee there isn't a Queer educator out there that couldn't share story upon story of the homophobia they have experienced at work. I've had parents remove students from my class and

administrators who supported that decision. I've had verbal and physical threats to my safety from students. I've had vandalism to my home and car at the hands of students. I've experienced female colleagues who felt safety in my sexual orientation as grounds to physically touch me at work which I had to explain to them was never appropriate.

I've had male colleagues avoid me at work spaces and one who informed me that "they don't judge me for being gay because that was God's job." I've had many colleagues ask me to "tone it down" and even an administrator who told me that I needed to leave the gay at home and stop forcing my gay agenda at work.

As a social justice activist, the systemic homophobia within education has been even more frightening. During the early days of my career while trying to establish Gay/Straight Alliances, I was informed that if I continued with this "agenda" my job would be in jeopardy. I've led an entire career faced with systemic obstacle after obstacle that has limited my professional growth. Once, I was explicitly informed that another gay guy in the job position was not required. I often found myself on the opposite side of the table advocating for Queer rights for students while administrators fighting the changes were closeted themselves. I've had secretive relationships with closeted Queer administrators, senior administrators, and even politicians. I couldn't make this stuff up if I tried.

While facing these challenges at work, I was escaping to the Queer culture of drag under the spotlight at night. It was my opportunity to fully explore my creativity and Queer identity but it came at the expense of finding myself closeted and living in fear once again—a constant fear of students, parents, and my employer finding out. I would find myself performing with anonymity in drag while looking out to an audience that often was made up of my own closeted colleagues, parents of students, and yes... sometimes the very administrators threatening my job during the day. These were very confusing and fearful times, filled with anxiety.

Our identities are complex and extremely important for all of us. When we find ourselves forced to hide identities and we can't be truly authentic in all spaces, it creates significant harm. It also does a huge disservice to our own students who are desperately looking to see themselves in the

/continued on page 22

/suite de la page 19

qui avaient été renvoyés du conseil catholique, entendre l'homophobie flagrante des élèves et des collègues n'a fait que m'enfermer davantage dans la peur. L'homophobie intérieurisée est puissante et détruit l'âme. J'étais également confrontée au conflit que je ressentais en luttant pour les droits de la personne tout en ignorant ma propre oppression et celle de mes élèves homosexuels. Ce conflit interne m'a finalement poussé à sortir du placard à l'âge de 29 ans.

Je suis sorti du placard en grand. En l'espace de quelques années, je l'ai fait auprès de toute ma famille, de mes collègues et de mes élèves. J'ai orienté mon militantisme anti-oppression vers tout ce qui est gai, tout en explorant ma propre identité queer. Ce faisant, je me suis rapidement retrouvé à vivre une autre vie de clandestinité en tant qu'artiste drag queen. Le jour, je luttais contre l'homophobie de mes collègues, de mes élèves et d'un système éducatif déterminé à me détruire, et la nuit, je me produisais sur scène dans la crainte que ces deux mondes n'entrent en collision.

Je suis certain qu'il n'y a pas un seul éducateur homosexuel qui ne pourrait pas raconter une histoire après l'autre sur l'homophobie dont il a été victime au travail. J'ai vu des parents retirer des élèves de ma classe et des administrateurs qui soutenaient cette décision. Des élèves ont proféré des menaces verbales et physiques à mon encontre. J'ai subi des actes de vandalisme à mon domicile et dans ma voiture de la part d'élèves. J'ai connu des collègues féminines qui se sentaient en sécurité dans mon orientation sexuelle pour me toucher physiquement au travail et partager des détails intimes de leur vie sexuelle. Des collègues masculins m'ont évité dans les espaces de travail et l'un d'entre eux m'a informé qu'il ne me juge pas parce que je suis gai, car c'est le travail de Dieu. De nombreux collègues m'ont demandé de baisser le ton et même un administrateur m'a dit que je devais laisser l'homosexualité à la maison et cesser d'imposer mon agenda gai au travail.

En tant que militant pour la justice sociale, l'homophobie systémique au sein de l'éducation a été encore plus effrayante. Au début de ma carrière, alors que j'essayais de créer des alliances gais/hétéros, on m'a dit que si je continuais à imposer mon programme, mon emploi serait menacé. Toute ma carrière a été confrontée à des obstacles systémiques successifs qui ont limité

ma croissance professionnelle. Une fois, on m'a explicitement informé qu'il n'était pas nécessaire qu'un autre gai occupe le même poste. Je me suis souvent retrouvé de l'autre côté de la table à défendre les droits des élèves homosexuels alors que les administrateurs qui luttaient contre les changements étaient eux-mêmes dans l'ombre. J'ai eu des relations secrètes avec des administrateurs, des cadres supérieurs et même

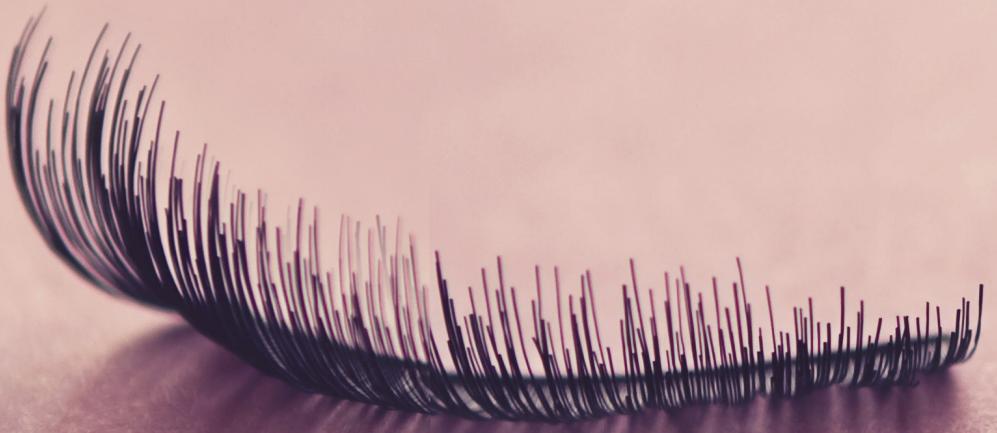
NOS IDENTITÉS SONT COMPLEXES ET EXTRÊMEMENT IMPORTANTES POUR CHACUN D'ENTRE NOUS. LORSQUE NOUS SOMMES OBLIGÉS DE CACHER NOS IDENTITÉS ET QUE NOUS NE POUVONS PAS ÊTRE VRAIMENT AUTHENTIQUES DANS TOUS LES ESPACES, CELA CRÉE UN PRÉJUDICE IMPORTANT.

des politiciens homosexuels. Je ne pourrais pas inventer ce genre de choses si j'essayais.

Tout en faisant face à ces défis au travail, je m'évadais la nuit dans la culture queer de la drague sous les projecteurs. C'était l'occasion pour moi d'explorer pleinement ma créativité et mon identité homosexuelle, mais au prix de me retrouver enfermée et de vivre à nouveau dans la peur, la peur constante que les élèves, les parents et mon employeur le découvrent. Je me retrouvais à jouer dans l'anonymat en me travestissant tout en regardant un public qui était souvent composé de mes propres collègues renfermés, de parents d'élèves, et oui... parfois même des administrateurs qui menaçaient mon emploi pendant la journée. C'était une période très déroutante et effrayante, remplie d'anxiété.

Nos identités sont complexes et extrêmement importantes pour chacun d'entre nous. Lorsque nous sommes obligés de cacher nos identités et

/suite à la page 23



/continued from page 20

mentors and institutions around them. For years, I couldn't find that safe space as an educator and I was letting my students down at the same time. We were all experiencing trauma and harm.

Slowly, over time, these two worlds of educator and performer began to meet each other. My social activism as a performer hosting youth pride proms met with OSSTF/FEESO District 13 (Durham) who was sponsoring the event. I found myself performing for youth in a space where District 13 leadership were present watching the show. While we never spoke directly about it, I was beginning to develop a trust with my union. I was becoming aware that the Federation was doing work supporting 2SLGBTQI+ youth and this spoke volumes for me about a possible safe space to land when I was ready. Relationships with marginalized folks take time and nurturing. I observed from a distance as the union was showing signs they were doing the right things. It wouldn't be long and I would find myself fully immersed in Federation work.

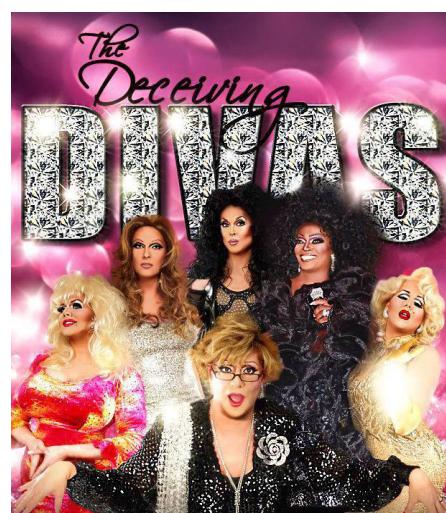
So off Joane Rivers went... no subject left untouched. Crude and rude, pushing the envelope while at the same time displaying a vulnerability, likeability, and humanity we all felt in the room. This was about coming together as allies and celebrating Queerness and all it means.

Enter the DIVAS! Celine, Liza, Whitney, Reba, Dolly, Adele, Diana, and, of course, Cher! Powerful women recognizable by single names... these are the idols of the Queer community. Strong powerful women who challenged norms, laid ground-work, and who were feminists in their own right—all of whom championed Queer rights their entire careers. This was the Deceiving Divas with Joane Rivers at the helm in all of her glory!

Nervous to the point of illness backstage, Joane Rivers made the decision to break character, show vulnerability and allow the two worlds to collide. A glammed up Joane was behind the dressing table, stripping down the façade while performing “What Makes a Man a Man.” The number often brings audiences to tears, leaves us questioning gender binaries and homophobia, and reminding us of the importance of compassion, acceptance, and the celebration of humanity.

The glitz, vulgarity, and camp slowly disappeared to reveal the educator, colleague, and proud Member of OSSTF/FEESO. Standing vulnerable and out of drag... I found myself immersed in love as a thunderous standing ovation broke the silence of the closing number. This was the moment I knew the complexity of my identity had been valued and seen. I had found a safe place to land in OSSTF/FEESO!

Garrett Metcalfe is the Anti-Oppression & Social Justice Representative in District 13, Durham.





/suite de la page 21

que nous ne pouvons pas être vraiment authentiques dans tous les espaces, cela crée un préjugé important. Cela rend également un très mauvais service à nos propres élèves qui cherchent désespérément à se reconnaître dans les mentors et les institutions qui les entourent. Pendant des années, je n'ai pas réussi à trouver cet espace sécuritaire en tant qu'éducateur et, en même temps, je laissais tomber mes élèves. Nous avons tous subi des traumatismes et des préjugés.

Lentement, au fil du temps, ces deux mondes d'éducateur et d'artiste ont commencé à se rencontrer. Mon activisme social en tant qu'artiste animant des bals de promo pour la fierté des jeunes a rencontré OSSTF/FEESO District 13 (Durham) qui parrainait l'événement. Je me suis retrouvé à me produire pour des jeunes dans un espace où les dirigeants du District 13 étaient présents et regardaient le spectacle. Bien que nous n'en ayons jamais parlé directement, je commençais à développer une confiance avec mon syndicat. Je me rendais compte que la Fédération soutenait les jeunes 2SLGBTQI+ et cela m'a fait comprendre qu'il s'agissait d'un espace sécuritaire où je pourrais m'installer lorsque je serais prêt. Les relations avec les personnes marginalisées demandent du temps et de l'attention. J'ai observé de loin le syndicat qui montrait des signes qu'il faisait les bonnes choses. Dans peu de temps, je me retrouverais totalement immergée dans le travail de la Fédération.

Alors Joane Rivers est partie... aucun sujet n'a été laissé de côté. Vulgaire et grossière, elle a repoussé les limites tout en affichant une vulnérabilité, une sympathie et une humanité que nous avons tous ressenties dans la salle. Il s'agissait de se rassembler en tant qu'alliés et de célébrer

l'imaginaire queer et tout ce qu'il signifie.

Les DIVAS sont arrivées! Céline, Liza, Whitney, Reba, Dolly, Adele, Diana et, bien sûr, Cher! Des femmes puissantes, reconnaissables à leur seul nom... Ce sont les idoles de la communauté queer. Des femmes fortes et puissantes qui ont défié les normes, préparé le terrain, étaient des féministes à part entière et qui ont toutes défendu les droits des homosexuels pendant toute leur carrière. C'était les Deceiving Divas avec Joane Rivers à la barre dans toute sa gloire!

Nerveuse au point d'être malade en coulisses, Joane Rivers a pris la décision de briser son personnage, de montrer sa vulnérabilité et de permettre aux deux mondes d'entrer en collision. C'est une Joane toute pimpante qui s'est retrouvée derrière la coiffeuse, dénudant la façade tout en interprétant What Makes a Man a Man. Ce numéro, qui fait souvent pleurer le public, nous amène à nous interroger sur les catégories de genre et l'homophobie et nous rappelle l'importance de la compassion, de l'acceptation et de la célébration de l'humanité.

L'aspect spectaculaire, la vulgarité et le camp ont lentement disparu pour révéler l'éducateur, le collègue et le fier membre d'OSSTF/FEESO. Je me suis retrouvé vulnérable et hors du coup... Je me suis retrouvé plongé dans l'amour lorsqu'une ovation tonitruante a brisé le silence du numéro de clôture. C'est à ce moment que j'ai su que la complexité de mon identité avait été appréciée et vue. J'avais trouvé un endroit sécuritaire où atterrir à OSSTF/FEESO!

Garrett Metcalfe est représentant de la lutte contre l'oppression et la justice sociale dans le District 13, Durham.



In the fall of 2020, OSSTF/FEESO selected eight Election Organizers to mobilize Members and assist Districts with election readiness planning for the provincial and municipal elections in 2022. The eight Election Organizers working for OSSTF/FEESO Provincial Office during the provincial election, under the guidance of Paul Kossta, were: Domenic Bellissimo, Ricardo Harvey, Bill Hewitt, Jared Hunt, Rose Lepage, Tim Mathewson, Susan Rab, and Vanessa Stoby. Mark Kissel and Pawel Mazurek also spent significant time as Election Organizers throughout the process.

The Election Organizers began meeting in October 2020 to lay the ground work for our planning. One of the first jobs they were tasked with was helping Districts prepare for candidate endorsements. We spent 2021 meeting with locals, including District Political Action Committees (PACs), some of whom formed for the first time, to discuss the endorsement process and election engagement plans. In May of 2021, riding-by-riding consultations were held with local leaders to look at historical data and narrow down a list of ridings on which to focus local efforts.

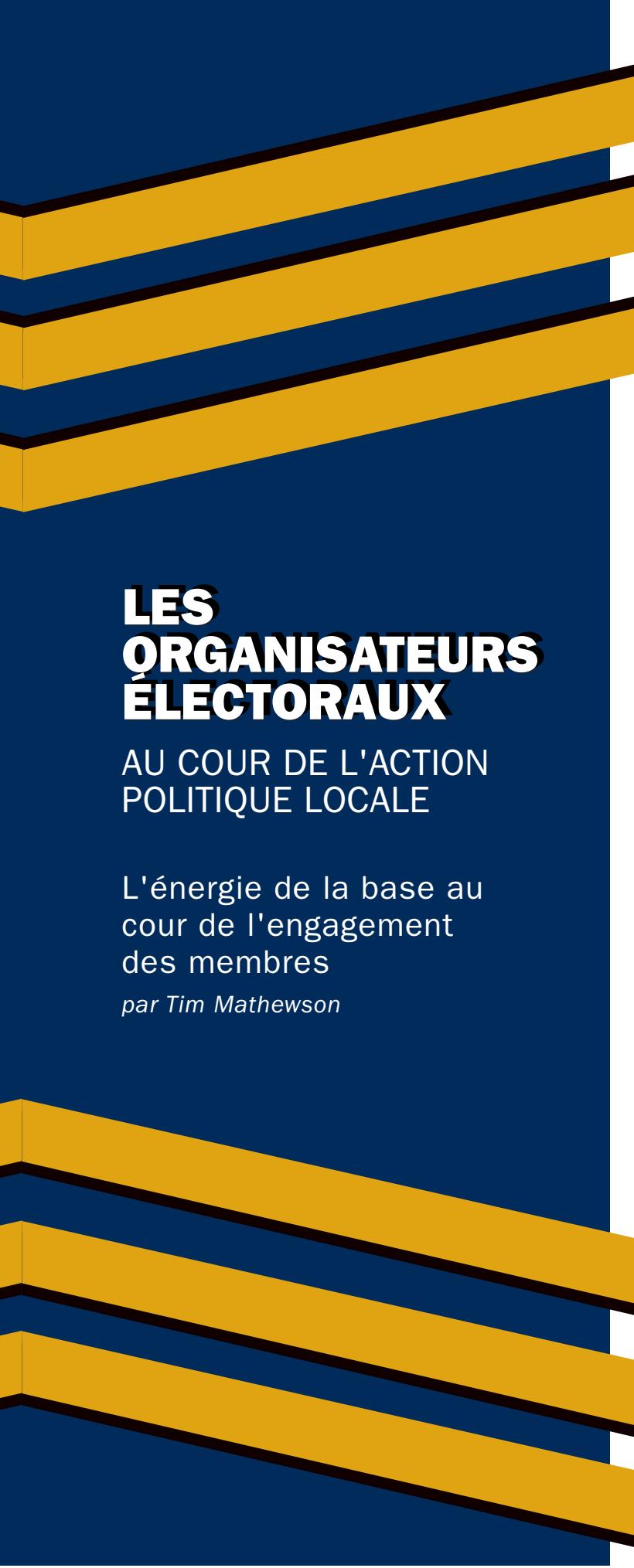
Throughout the process, the pandemic played a significant role in our work. As a result, the majority of our meetings with each other and with Districts were over Zoom. The Election Organizers met in person for the first time at the end of the summer of 2021 to map out plans and timelines up to the election. We helped organize and run the OSSTF/FEESO Election Readiness conference at the end of October. The Friday night plenary included a talk from polls analyst Eric Grenier (founder of *The Writ*), and a roundtable discussion from three grassroots organizers: Sandra Huh from York Communities for Public Education, Samantha Krishnapillai from On Canada Project, and Arlene Slocombe from Wellington Water Watchers. Saturday featured workshops run by the eight Election Organizers and Provincial Office staff about local outreach to allies and

ELECTION ORGANIZERS

AT THE HEART OF
LOCAL POLITICAL ACTION

Grassroots energy at
the heart of member
engagement

by Tim Mathewson



LES ORGANISATEURS ÉLECTORAUX

AU COUR DE L'ACTION POLITIQUE LOCALE

L'énergie de la base au
cour de l'engagement
des membres

par Tim Mathewson

À l'automne 2020, OSSTF/FEESO a choisi huit organisatrices électorales et organisateurs électoraux pour mobiliser les membres et aider les districts à planifier la préparation aux élections provinciales et municipales de 2022. Les huit organisateurs électoraux travaillant pour le Bureau provincial d'OSSTF/FEESO pendant les élections provinciales, sous la direction de Paul Kossta, étaient : Domenic Bellissimo, Richardo Harvey, Bill Hewitt, Jared Hunt, Rose Lepage, Tim Mathewson, Susan Rab et Vanessa Stoby. Mark Kissel et Pawel Mazurek ont également consacré beaucoup de temps à l'organisation des élections tout au long du processus.

Les organisateurs électoraux ont commencé à se rencontrer en octobre 2020 pour jeter les bases de notre planification. L'une des premières tâches qui leur a été confiée a été d'aider les districts à préparer les parrainages de candidates et candidats. Nous avons passé l'année 2021 à rencontrer les unités locales, y compris les comités d'action politique (CAP) des districts, dont certains se formaient pour la première fois, afin de discuter du processus de soutien et des plans d'engagement électoral. En mai 2021, des consultations circonscription par circonscription ont été organisées avec les dirigeants locaux pour examiner les données historiques et réduire la liste des circonscriptions sur lesquelles concentrer les efforts locaux.

Tout au long du processus, la pandémie a joué un rôle important dans notre travail. Par conséquent, la majorité de nos rencontres entre nous et avec les districts se sont déroulées sur Zoom. Les organisateurs électoraux se sont réunis en personne pour la première fois à la fin de l'été 2021 afin d'établir les plans et l'échéancier jusqu'à l'élection. Nous avons aidé à organiser et à diriger la Conférence de préparation aux élections d'OSSTF/FEESO à la fin du mois d'octobre. La plénière du vendredi soir comprenait un exposé de l'analyste des sondages Eric Grenier (fondateur de *The Writ*) et une

/suite à la page 27

/continued from page 24

community groups, promoting OSSTF/FEESO's Education Platform, organizing members, as well as PAC growth and preparation for the election.

The work of the fall Election Readiness conference was built on in the Spring Regionals conference at the end of March.

This shows that OSSTF/FEESO continues to be a leading voice in advocacy for a strong publicly funded education system. Our efforts were also noticed by campaigns, candidates, and other unions who frequently noted the presence of OSSTF/FEESO Members on social media and as volunteers on campaigns.

Friday night's plenary included a return visit from Eric Grenier to touch on some of what were expected to be the tightest races, as well as speeches from the three opposition party leaders. Saturday morning's regional workshops, run by the Elec-

tion Organizers with help from provincial Communications/Political Action (CPA) department staff and Communications/Political Action Committee (CPAC) members, focused on election planning timelines as outlined in the OSSTF/FEESO *Election Manual*, a discussion of our social media toolkit (a collaborative effort between election organizers, the CPA department and CPAC) and a relational organizing exercise designed to increase volunteer capacity. The social media toolkit focused on messaging related to platform planks in OSSTF/FEESO's Education Platform as well as specific messaging related to job classifications.

OSSTF/FEESO's 2022 Lobby Day was a big step forward towards making endorsements. Election Organizers and local Members met virtually with MPPs representing ridings in their District at the end of January to discuss elements in OSSTF/FEESO's *Education Platform, Strengthen Public Education: Re-build Ontario*. We met with most of the opposition MPPs but only a handful of PC MPPs attended (though all were invited). The endorsement process continued throughout the spring with Election Organizers and local leaders interviewing dozens of candidates throughout January, February, and March before discussing endorsements in local PACs and bringing recommendations forward to District executive councils.

The first round of OSSTF/FEESO endorsements were announced at our Annual Meeting of the Provincial

Assembly (AMPA) with additional endorsements announced throughout April and even a few more made during the election campaign. Helping to boost the publicity of these endorsements, OSSTF/FEESO President Karen Littlewood, visited a number of Districts for an endorsement tour. Behind the scenes, Election Organizers helped coordinate the details of the events with locals and candidates. These endorsements received extensive media coverage from local outlets, including a live broadcast of the NDP endorsements in Toronto from CP24.

All of this set the stage for a significant increase in Member engagement and participation during the provincial election. OSSTF/FEESO utilized new ways of communicating on a mass scale with Members to inform them about the election. In addition to emails from locals, two voice broadcasts (recordings) were sent to Members from President Karen Littlewood—one at the beginning of the campaign to remind them that the election had started and to participate, and one at the end to remind them to vote. Members were also sent a mass text from provincial OSSTF/FEESO near the beginning of the campaign to let them know who the endorsed candidate was in their riding and to provide them an opportunity to opt-in to receive additional election information from the Federation. This work was supplemented in many

/suite de la page 25

table ronde avec trois organisateurs de la base : Sandra Huh de York Communities for Public Education, Samantha Krishnapillai de On Canada Project, et Arlene Slocombe de Wellington Water Watchers. Le samedi, les huit organisateurs électoraux et le personnel du Bureau provincial ont présenté des ateliers sur la sensibilisation des alliés et des groupes communautaires, la promotion du programme électoral en matière d'éducation d'OSSTF/FEESO, le recrutement des membres, la croissance du CAP et la préparation aux élections.

Le travail de la conférence d'automne sur la préparation aux élections a été mis à profit lors de la conférence régionale du printemps, à la fin du mois de mars. La séance plénière du vendredi soir comprenait la deuxième visite d'Eric Grenier, qui a abordé certaines des courses les plus serrées, ainsi que les discours des trois chefs des partis de l'opposition. Les ateliers régionaux du samedi matin (dirigés par les organisateurs électoraux avec l'aide du personnel provincial du Secteur des communications/action politique (CAP) et des membres du Comité des communications/action politique (CCAP) se sont concentrés sur les délais de planification des élections comme décrits dans le manuel des élections, une discussion sur la boîte à outils des médias sociaux (un effort de collaboration entre les organisateurs électoraux, le

Secteur des CAP et le CCAP) et un exercice de recrutement relationnel (conçu pour augmenter la capacité des bénévoles). La boîte à outils pour les médias sociaux était axée sur les messages liés aux éléments du programme en matière d'éducation d'OSSTF/FEESO ainsi que sur les messages spécifiques liés aux classifications d'emplois.

La journée de lobbying 2022 d'OSSTF/FEESO a constitué un grand pas en avant vers la prise d'engagements. Les organisateurs et organisatrices électoraux et les Membres locaux ont rencontré virtuellement les députés provinciaux représentant les circonscriptions de leur district à la fin de janvier pour discuter des éléments du programme en matière d'éducation d'OSSTF/FEESO, « Renforcer l'éducation publique : Reconstruire l'Ontario. » Nous avons rencontré la plupart des députés de l'opposition, mais seulement une poignée de députés du PC étaient présents (bien que tous aient été invités). Le processus de parrainage s'est poursuivi tout au long du printemps : les organisateurs électoraux et les dirigeants locaux ont interviewé des douzaines de candidates et candidats en janvier, février et mars avant de discuter des parrainages dans les CAP locaux et de présenter des recommandations aux conseils exécutifs de district.

La première série de parrainages d'OSSTF/FEESO a été annoncée lors de la Réunion annuelle de l'Assemblée provinciale (RAAP). D'autres appuis ont été annoncés tout au long du mois

d'avril et quelques-uns ont même été faits pendant la campagne électorale. Pour contribuer à la publicité de

Cela montre qu'OSSTF/FEESO continue d'être une voix de premier plan dans la défense d'un solide système d'éducation financé à même les deniers publics. Nos efforts ont également été remarqués par les campagnes, les candidates et candidats et les autres syndicats qui ont fréquemment noté la présence des Membres d'OSSTF/FEESO sur les médias sociaux et comme bénévoles aux campagnes.

ces appuis, Karen Littlewood, présidente d'OSSTF/FEESO, a visité un certain nombre de districts pour une tournée de parrainage. Dans les coulisses,

/suite à la page 29

/continued from page 26

Districts by local Members who made phone calls and sent out other texts with more information. The work of the Election Organizers would culminate in Members participating in education canvasses, labour canvasses, phone banking, and OSSTF/FEESO-specific canvasses in support of endorsed Black women candidates.

For the Election Organizers, the provincial election campaign was a busy and challenging time. Between our work with Districts and volunteering on campaigns, it meant that we were busy for most of our waking hours, 7 days a week. It was also a challenge to continue to ask Members who were exhausted from the past two years of the pandemic (and the past four years of this government) to par-

ticipate in the election. Despite these challenges, it was an incredibly energizing and fulfilling experience to work with so many Members, candidates, and campaign volunteers towards such an important common goal. It was reaffirming to see so many good people doing such good work in their communities. While the results of the provincial election were not what we wanted, there were many positives to come out of our work. Many Members came out to volunteer for election campaigns for the first time. The opposition parties borrowed many parts of our Education Platform in their own platforms, and we heard strong references to elements of the OSSTF/FEESO platform during the main provincial leadership debate. This shows that OSSTF/

FEESO continues to be a leading voice in advocacy for a strong publicly funded education system. Our efforts were also noticed by campaigns, candidates, and other unions who frequently noted the presence of OSSTF/FEESO Members on social media and as volunteers on campaigns. This work will help us build organizational capacity to play an even greater part in future campaigns and in the years between elections. I look forward to assisting with OSSTF/FEESO's efforts in holding this government accountable over the next 4 years.

Tim Mathewson is a teacher in District 18, Upper Grand and at the time of writing was on seconndment to OSSTF/FEESO Provincial Office as an Election Organizer.



les organisateurs électoraux ont aidé à coordonner les détails des activités avec les unités locales et les candidates et candidats. Ces parrainages ont fait l'objet d'une importante couverture médiatique dans les médias locaux, y compris une diffusion en direct des appuis au NPD à Toronto par CP24.

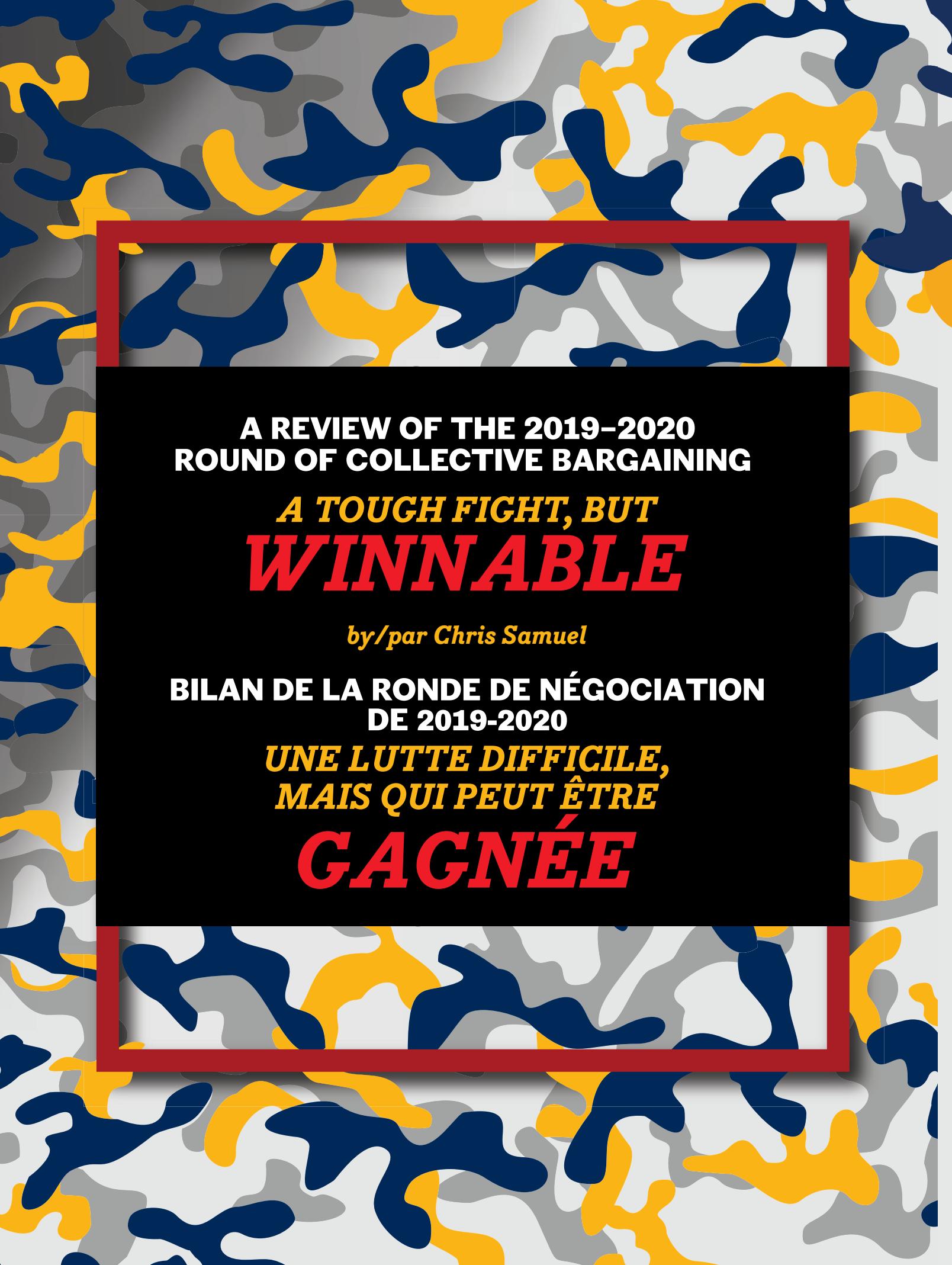
Tout cela a préparé le terrain pour une augmentation significative de l'engagement et de la participation des Membres pendant les élections provinciales. OSSTF/FEESO a utilisé de nouveaux moyens de communication à grande échelle avec les Membres pour les informer des élections. En plus des courriels des unités locales, deux radio-diffusions vocales (enregistrements) ont été envoyées aux Membres par Karen Littlewood, présidente, une au début de la campagne pour leur rappeler que les élections étaient commencées et de participer, et une à la fin pour leur rappeler de voter. Les Membres ont également reçu un message de masse d'OSSTF/FEESO vers le début de la campagne pour leur faire savoir qui était la candidate ou le candidat parrainé dans leur circonscription et leur donner l'occasion de s'inscrire pour recevoir des renseignements supplémentaires sur les élections de la part de la Fédération. Ce travail a été effectué dans de nombreux districts par des membres locaux qui ont fait des appels téléphoniques

et ont envoyé d'autres textes contenant des informations additionnelles. Le travail des organisatrices et organisateurs électoraux a culminé avec la participation des Membres à des sollicitations dans le domaine de l'éducation, du travail, des appels téléphoniques et des sollicitations spécifiques d'OSSTF/FEESO pour appuyer les candidates de la communauté noire.

Pour les organisatrices et organisateurs électoraux, la campagne électorale provinciale a été une période chargée et pleine de défis. Entre notre travail avec les districts et le bénévolat sur les campagnes, cela signifie que nous étions occupés pendant la plupart de nos heures d'éveil, sept jours par semaine. Ce fut également un défi de continuer à demander aux Membres éprouvés par les deux dernières années de pandémie (et les quatre dernières années de ce gouvernement) de participer à l'élection. Malgré ces défis, ce fut une expérience incroyablement énergisante et enrichissante de travailler avec tant de Membres, de candidates et candidats et de bénévoles de la campagne vers un objectif commun aussi important. C'était réaffirmant de voir tant de bonnes personnes faire un si bon travail dans leurs communautés. Bien que les résultats des élections provinciales n'aient pas été ceux que nous souhaitions, il y a eu beaucoup d'éléments positifs qui sont ressorti de notre travail. De nombreux Membres se sont portés volo-

ntaires pour des campagnes électorales pour la première fois. Les partis d'opposition ont emprunté de nombreuses sections de notre programme en matière d'éducation dans leurs propres programmes électoraux et nous avons entendu de fortes références à des éléments du programme d'OSSTF/FEESO pendant le principal débat des chefs de partis provinciaux. Cela montre qu'OSSTF/FEESO continue d'être une voix de premier plan dans la défense d'un solide système d'éducation financé à même les deniers publics. Nos efforts ont également été remarqués par les campagnes, les candidates et candidats et les autres syndicats qui ont fréquemment noté la présence des Membres d'OSSTF/FEESO sur les médias sociaux et comme bénévoles aux campagnes. Ce travail nous aidera à renforcer la capacité organisationnelle afin de jouer un rôle encore plus important dans les futures campagnes et dans les années entre les élections. J'ai hâte de contribuer aux efforts d'OSSTF/FEESO pour tenir ce gouvernement responsable au cours des quatre prochaines années.

Tim Mathewson est un enseignant dans le District 18, Upper Grand et au moment d'écrire ces lignes, il était en prêt de service au Bureau provincial d'OSSTF/FEESO en tant qu'organisateur électoral.



A REVIEW OF THE 2019–2020
ROUND OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

A TOUGH FIGHT, BUT
WINNABLE

by/par Chris Samuel

BILAN DE LA RONDE DE NÉGOCIATION
DE 2019–2020

*UNE LUTTE DIFFICILE,
MAIS QUI PEUT ÊTRE*
GAGNÉE



In the 2019-2020 round of K-12 collective bargaining, OSSTF/FEESO led the pushback against the Ford government's efforts to massively increase class size and to impose mandatory online learning on secondary students. Those fights were largely won, with average secondary class sizes bargained down to 23:1 from the government's proposed 28:1, reinstatement of the supports for student funding, a health care spending account for education workers, and opt-outs for online learning.

Then came COVID-19 which saw students and our Members alike put through two years (and potentially more) of teaching and learning under incredibly difficult circumstances.

We don't know what new challenges COVID-19 is going to give us, but we do know that education workers, teachers, and students need stability and a sincere commitment to giving the public education system the necessary resources to make up for lost time and come back stronger. Unfortunately, we also know that the Ford government will use every tool it has to make cuts and open the door for privatization. We can also be pretty sure that the Ford government learned from the last round of bargaining and is eager to give education unions,—and OSSTF/FEESO in particular,—a bit of payback.

That's the context in which OSSTF/FEESO recently gave notice of our intent to bargain as the first step in negotiating a new central agreement for education workers and teachers in the public, K-12 system. And if we learned anything from the last round of bargaining, it's that in bargaining and in politics, context is everything.

After the last round of bargaining, OSSTF/FEESO

/continued on page 32

Lors de la ronde de négociation collective de 2019-2020 de la maternelle à la 12e année, OSSTF/FEESO a mené la riposte contre les efforts du gouvernement Ford visant à augmenter massivement les effectifs des classes et à imposer l'apprentissage en ligne obligatoire aux élèves du secondaire. Ces luttes ont été en grande partie gagnées, avec la réduction des effectifs moyens des classes du secondaire à 23 pour 1 par rapport au 28 pour 1 proposé par le gouvernement, le rétablissement des mesures de soutien pour le financement des élèves, une allocation de dépenses en soins de santé pour les travailleuses et travailleurs en éducation et l'exclusion de l'apprentissage en ligne.

Puis est arrivée la COVID-19, qui a vu les élèves et nos Membres passer deux ans (et peut-être plus) à enseigner et à apprendre dans des situations incroyablement difficiles.

Nous ne savons pas quels nouveaux défis la COVID nous posera, mais nous savons que les travailleuses et travailleurs en éducation, les enseignantes et enseignants et les élèves ont besoin de stabilité et d'un engagement sincère à donner au système d'éducation publique les ressources nécessaires pour rattraper le temps perdu et revenir plus fort. Malheureusement, nous savons aussi que le gouvernement Ford utilisera tous les outils à sa disposition pour faire des coupures et ouvrir la porte à la privatisation. Nous pouvons également être certains que le gouvernement Ford a tiré des leçons de la dernière ronde de négociations et qu'il est impatient de rendre la monnaie de sa pièce aux syndicats de l'éducation, et à OSSTF/FEESO en particulier.

C'est dans ce contexte qu'OSSTF/FEESO a

/continued from page 31

conducted an extensive review of the union's overall strategy and the specific tactics and actions used to support that strategy. The review made use of polling data, media analysis, consultants' reports, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups. This article presents some of the findings from that review. The concluding section, below, reports our four key findings from the review, but there are also two themes that the reader should keep in mind.

First, we are in a very different political and bargaining context than we were in 2019-2020. Not all of the things we did three years ago would work if we tried them again now. We need to give careful consideration to the relationship between context and strategy and cultivate a collective ability to be flexible, adaptable, and creative.

Second, we need to recall the most important lesson from 2019-2020. Even governments that appear to hold all the cards can be made to back down. In 2019, the Ford government seemed unstoppable, but OSSTF/FEESO's novel, coherent, and well-executed strategy helped to fight off the worst of the government's attacks. We can do that again. It will likely be a lengthy and difficult fight, but it will also be a winnable fight.

A NOVEL STRATEGY: POLITICAL BARGAINING

OSSTF/FEESO's biggest departure from past practices came from the decision to pursue what we have been calling "political bargaining." In the past, OSSTF/FEESO—like other education and public sector unions in Ontario—kept bargaining strategy almost entirely separate from our media and communications activities. Traditional bargaining meant engaging in good-faith give-and-take at the bargaining table. Skilled bargainers make good gains by strategically revealing priorities and making convincing arguments. They were especially likely to succeed when they had the backing of a strong strike vote and committed, mobilized Membership. Communications around bargaining came mostly in the form of updates to Members and occasional media availabilities.

Political bargaining turned this approach on its head.

Because the Ford government made it clear—even before bargaining began—that they were going to pursue massive strips, the traditional give-and-take of bargaining was off the table. No

Figure 1. Trust on education issues

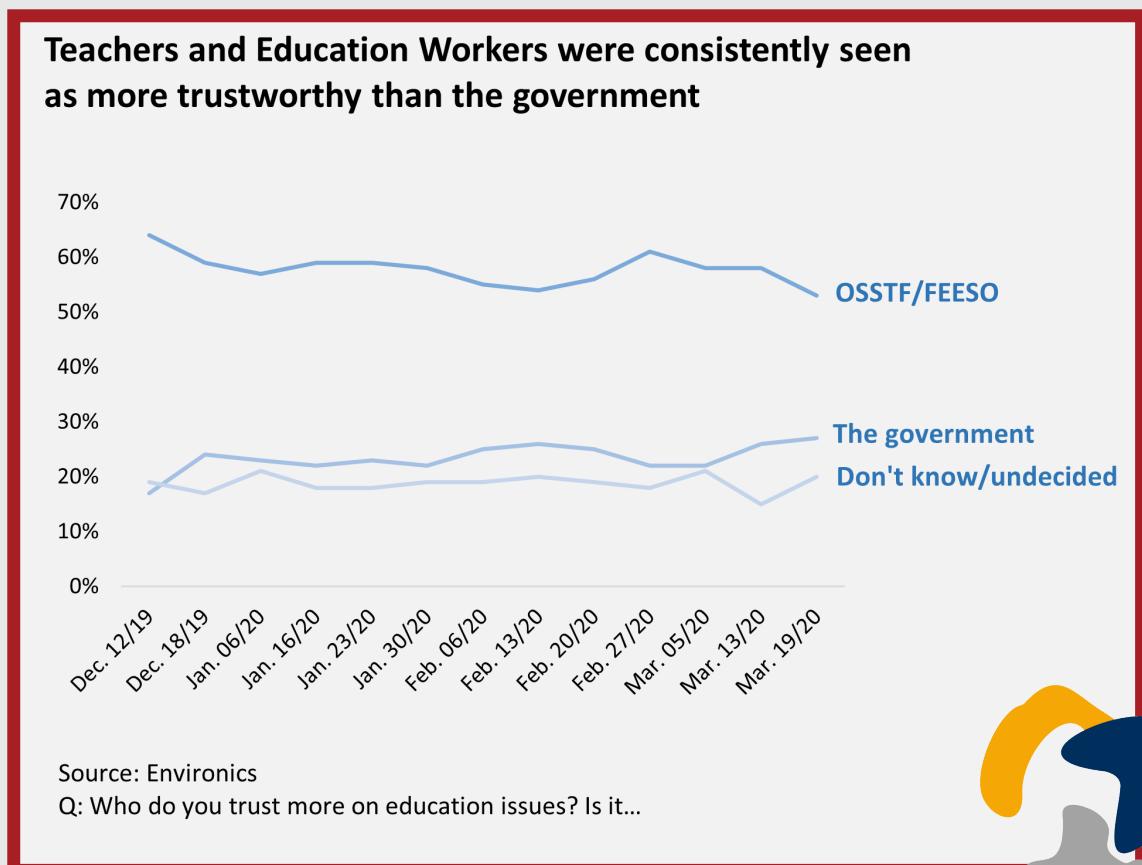
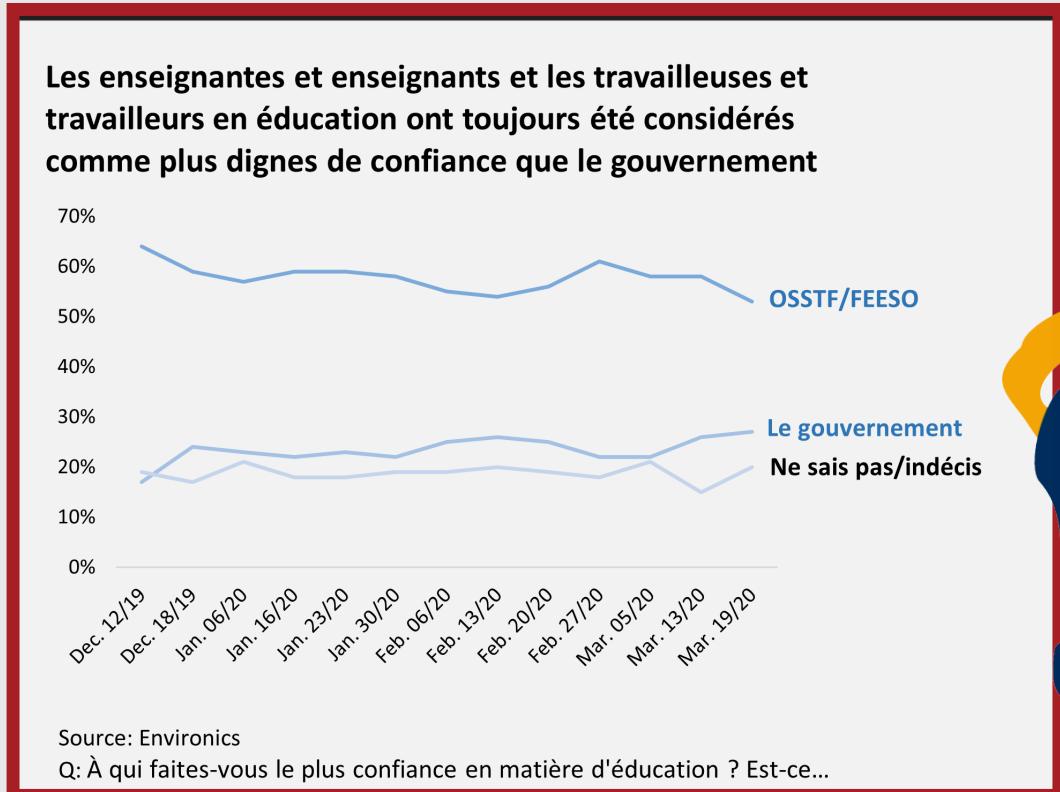


Figure 1. Confiance sur les enjeux en éducation



récemment annoncé son intention de négocier comme première étape de la négociation d'une nouvelle entente centrale pour les travailleuses et travailleurs en éducation et le personnel enseignant du système public de la maternelle à la 12 année. Et si nous avons appris quelque chose de la dernière ronde de négociations, c'est qu'en négociation et en politique, le contexte est primordial.

Après la dernière ronde de négociations, OSSTF/FEESO a procédé à un examen approfondi de la stratégie globale du syndicat et des tactiques et actions spécifiques utilisées pour soutenir cette stratégie. Cet examen s'est appuyé sur des données de sondages, des analyses des médias, des rapports de consultants, des entrevues semi-structurées et des groupes de discussion. Cet article présente certaines des conclusions de cet examen. La section de conclusion, ci-dessous, présente nos quatre principales constatations de l'examen, mais il y a également deux thèmes que le lecteur devrait garder à l'esprit.

Premièrement, nous sommes dans un contexte politique et de négociation très différent de celui de 2019-2020. Toutes les choses que nous avons faites il y a trois ans ne fonctionneraient pas si nous les réessayions maintenant. Certaines le seront, mais pas toutes. Nous devons accorder une attention particulière à la relation entre le

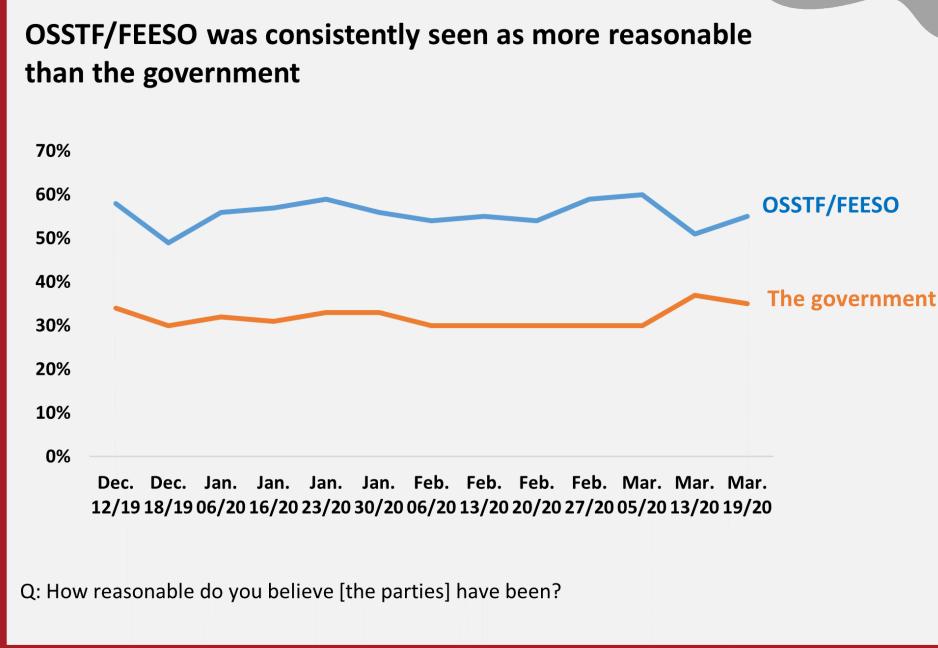
contexte et la stratégie et cultiver une capacité collective à être flexible, adaptable et créative.

Deuxièmement, nous devons nous rappeler la leçon la plus importante de 2019-2020. Même les gouvernements qui semblent avoir toutes les cartes en main peuvent être amenés à faire marche arrière. En 2019, le gouvernement Ford semblait inarrêtable, mais la stratégie originale, cohérente et bien exécutée d'OSSTF/FEESO a permis de repousser les pires attaques du gouvernement. Nous pouvons le faire à nouveau. Ce sera probablement une lutte longue et difficile, mais ce sera aussi une lutte qui peut être gagnée.

UNE NOUVELLE STRATÉGIE : LA NÉGOCIATION POLITIQUE

Le plus grand écart d'OSSTF/FEESO par rapport aux pratiques antérieures est venu de la décision de poursuivre ce que nous avons appelé la négociation politique. Dans le passé, OSSTF/FEESO, comme d'autres syndicats du secteur de l'éducation et du secteur public en Ontario, a gardé la stratégie de négociation presque entièrement séparée de nos activités médiatiques et de communication. La négociation traditionnelle signifiait s'engager de bonne foi dans des concessions mutuelles à la table de négociation. Les

Figure 2. Who is being reasonable?



bargaining-table strategy and no strike vote would create the leverage necessary to avoid concessions. Where past bargaining strategies treated public opinion as an afterthought, in this round OSSTF/FEESO made public opinion central to our strategy. The Ontario Autism Coalition had already shown that the Ford government could be made to back down when subjected to enough public pressure. OSSTF/FEESO needed to do the same thing.

Political bargaining, then, relied on a robust communications campaign to shift public opinion and apply pressure on the government. The campaign targeted the obvious groups—students and families with children in the K-12 public system—but it went further to show the 75 percent of Ontarians who do not have kids in the K-12 system that larger classes and mandatory online learning would have a negative impact on them as well. The strategy positioned OSSTF/FEESO as the authoritative voice on public education in Ontario. It showed Ontarians that we were reasonable, responsible, and guided by evidence about class sizes and education funding.

Our review of the 2019-2020 round of bargaining showed that the communications strategy had some major successes. Polling data gathered between December 2019 and March 2020 showed that the public generally saw OSSTF/FEESO as more trustworthy than the government.

Journalists also came to rely on OSSTF/FEESO as the authoritative voice on education issues dur-

ing bargaining. We looked at all articles related to collective bargaining in the Toronto Star, the Ottawa Sun, and the Thunder Bay Newswatch to see how well OSSTF/FEESO's message was getting out. We found that OSSTF/FEESO far outpaced the other Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) affiliates in terms of how often we were quoted in bargaining-related stories. As Figure 3 shows, almost half of union quotes in bargaining stories came from OSSTF/FEESO.

Figure 3. OTF affiliates: Total quotations

OTF Affiliates: Total Quotations		
	Count	% Total
OSSTF/FEESO	178	45.5%
ETFO	99	25.3%
OECTA	83	21.2%
AEFO	31	7.9%

A focused communications strategy kept the media's attention on issues that were more favourable to OSSTF/FEESO than the government. Minister of Education, Stephen Lecce, repeatedly tried to bring the focus onto compensation issues, including by falsely accusing OSSTF/FEESO of asking for \$7 billion in salary increases. In fact, over the eight media availabilities the Minister held at Queen's Park during bargaining, he accused the unions of being focused on compensation 52 times and only mentioned class sizes 31 times.

/suite de la page 33

négociatrices et négociateurs expérimentés font de bons gains en révélant stratégiquement les priorités et en présentant des arguments convaincants. Ils étaient particulièrement susceptibles de réussir lorsqu'ils avaient le soutien d'un vote de grève fort et de membres engagés et mobilisés. Les communications relatives à la négociation prenaient principalement la forme de mises à jour destinées aux Membres et d'interventions occasionnelles dans les médias.

LA NÉGOCIATION POLITIQUE A BOULEVERSÉ CETTE APPROCHE.

Comme le gouvernement Ford a clairement indiqué, avant même le début des négociations, qu'il allait procéder à des coupures massives, les concessions traditionnelles de la négociation n'étaient plus possibles. Aucune stratégie à la table de négociation et aucun vote de grève ne pouvait créer le levier nécessaire pour éviter les concessions. Alors que les stratégies de négociation précédentes traitaient l'opinion publique comme une réflexion après coup, dans cette ronde, OSSTF/FEESO a placé l'opinion publique au centre de sa stratégie. La Coalition ontarienne de l'autisme avait déjà démontré que le gouvernement Ford pouvait faire marche arrière lorsqu'il était soumis à une pression publique suffisante. OSSTF/FEESO devait faire la même chose.

La négociation politique s'est donc appuyée sur une solide campagne de communication pour faire évoluer l'opinion publique et faire pression sur le gouvernement. La campagne a ciblé les groupes évidents : les élèves et les familles ayant des enfants dans le système public de la maternelle à la 12e année, mais elle est allée plus loin en montrant aux 75 pour cent d'Ontariennes et d'Ontariens qui n'ont pas d'enfants dans le système de la maternelle à la 12e année que les classes plus grandes et l'apprentissage en ligne obligatoire auraient un impact négatif sur eux aussi. La stratégie a positionné OSSTF/FEESO comme la voix faisant autorité en matière d'éducation publique en Ontario. Elle a montré aux Ontariennes et Ontariens que nous étions raisonnables, responsables et guidés par des données probantes concernant l'effectif des classes et le financement de l'éducation.

Notre examen de la ronde de négociations de 2019-2020 a montré que la stratégie de communication a remporté de grands succès. Les données de sondage recueillies entre décembre 2019 et mars 2020 ont montré que le public considérait généralement OSSTF/FEESO comme plus digne de confiance que le gouvernement.

Les journalistes en sont aussi venus à se fier à OSSTF/FEESO en tant que voix faisant autorité sur les enjeux en matière d'éducation pendant les négociations. Nous avons examiné tous les

Figure 2. Qui est raisonnable?

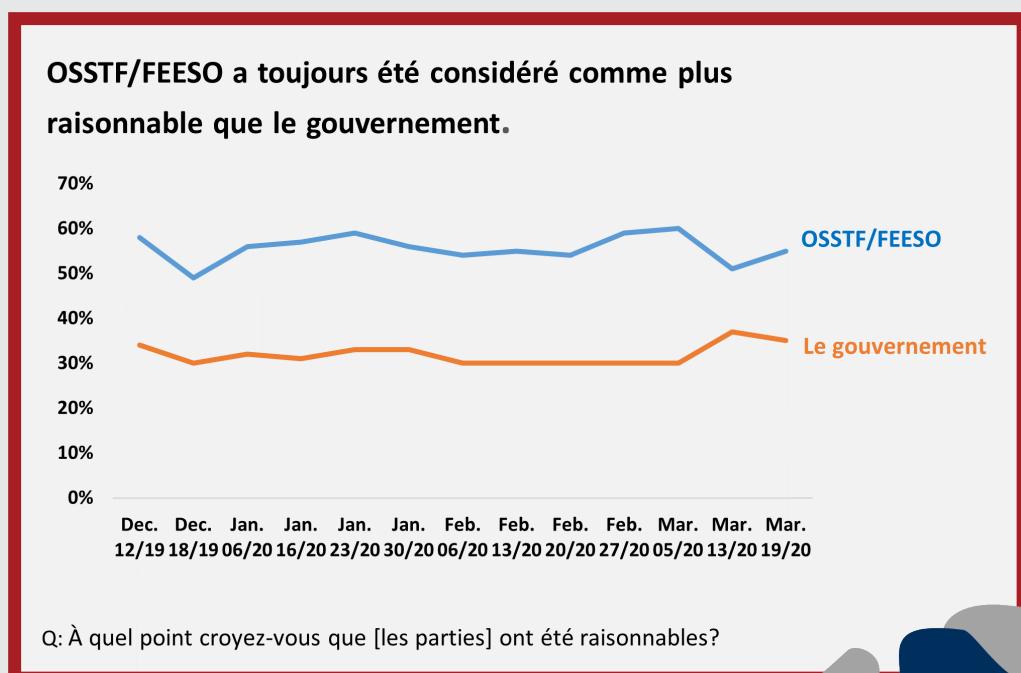
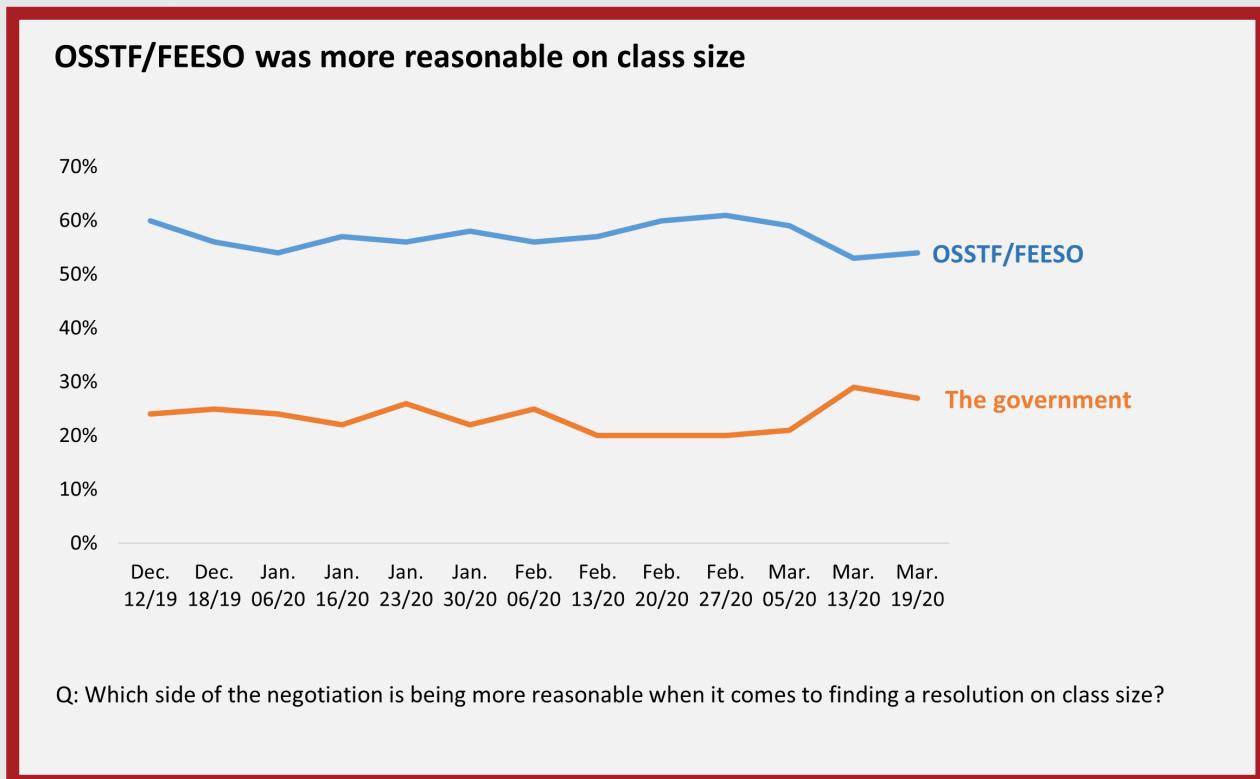


Figure 4. Who is being reasonable on class size specifically?



That was his attempt to frame the debate. Polling again shows why the Minister would prefer to talk about compensation rather than class sizes: the public consistently saw OSSTF/FEESO as more reasonable on this and other issues.

Overall, there is good evidence that political bargaining succeeded in keeping public opinion on-side with OSSTF/FEESO's bargaining goals. That created pressure on the government and on the Minister. It kept them off guard and off message. Consistent, evidence-based messaging communicated through a wide range of venues helped create this pressure, but even the best communications strategy would not have been enough to push back on the government's worst proposals. Real strength came from our Members. Political bargaining was not just about a media campaign or savvy messaging. It was about OSSTF/FEESO Members participating in more than two dozen distinct tactics to help move the political bargaining strategy forward.

NOVEL TACTICS

OSSTF/FEESO's review of the 2019-2020 bargaining found that among the 28 tactics we used during the campaign, 14 were either actions that OSSTF/FEESO had created ourselves, adopted

from other successful campaigns, or had tried previously but in a smaller, less focused way. Most obvious among those tactics was transparent bargaining (posting all proposals and counter-proposals on a public website; for more detail, see: <http://education-forum.ca/2020/11/26/transparent-bargaining/>), but members were also introduced to information picketing, rotating strikes, fact-checking on social media, commissioning of a study from the Conference Board of Canada, and social media advertising that intentionally targeted conservative voters.

As part of our review, OSSTF/FEESO staff interviewed local leaders, Provincial Office staff, and members of the Provincial Executive. During the interviews there was general agreement that the tactics we used were relatively effective and relatively well-integrated. That is, not only did the tactics have a positive impact on their own, but they also worked together to have an even larger impact. The tactics considered to be most effective included our social media presence, rallies at Queen's Park and elsewhere, information pickets, our use of polling and focus groups, research on the main issues, and transparent bargaining. The interviews also showed that participants saw connections among these tactics and that we gain momentum when we use effective, integrated tactics to support an overall strategy.

/suite de la page 35

articles liés aux négociations collectives dans le Toronto Star, le Ottawa Sun et le Thunder Bay Newswatch pour voir dans quelle mesure le message d'OSSTF/FEESO était diffusé. Nous avons constaté qu'OSSTF/FEESO dépassait de loin les autres affiliés de la Fédération des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario (FEO) quant à la fréquence à laquelle nous étions cités dans les articles liés aux négociations. Comme le montre la figure 3, près de la moitié des citations syndicales dans les articles sur les négociations provenaient d'OSSTF/FEESO.

Figure 3. Affiliés à la FEO : Citations totales

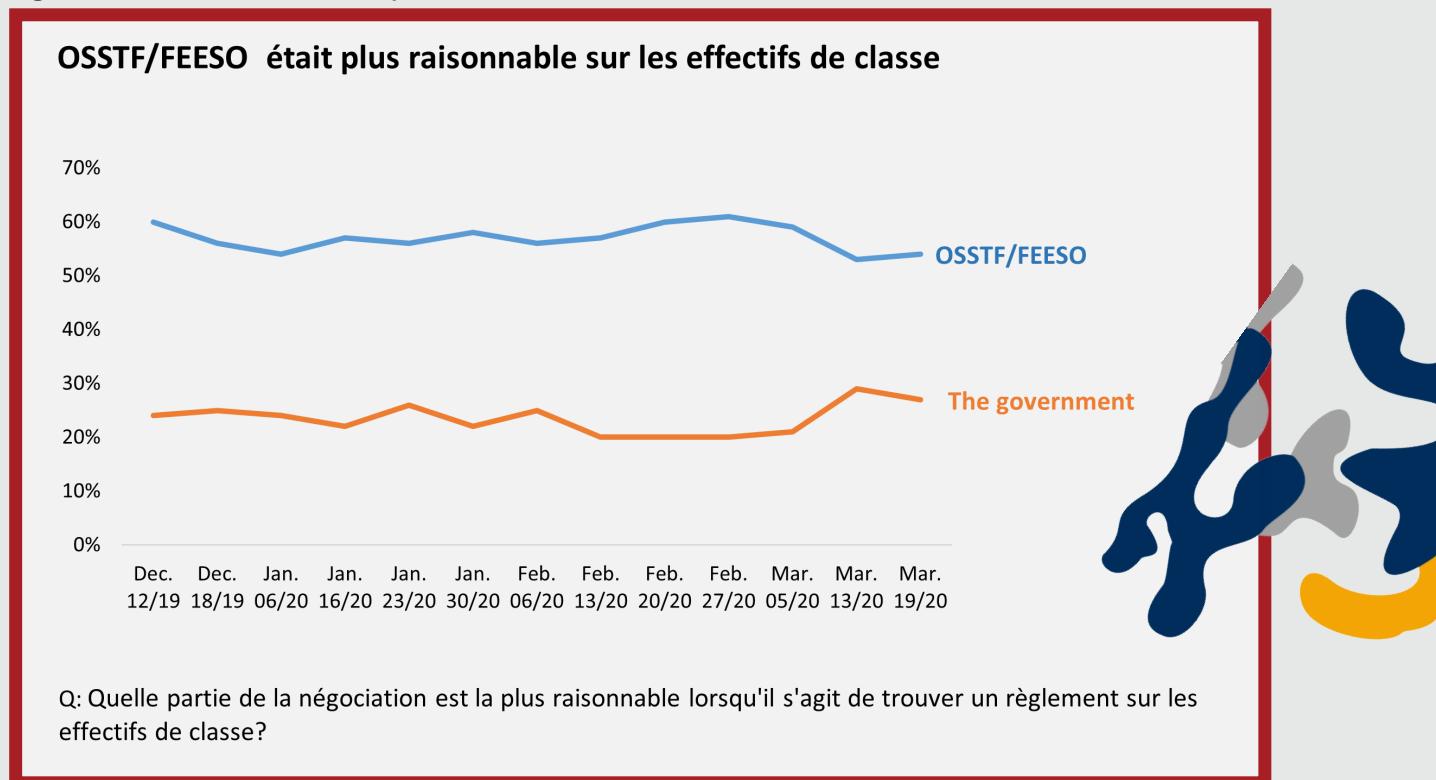
Affiliés à la FEO : Citations totales		
	Nombre	% Total
OSSTF/FEESO	178	45.5%
ETFO	99	25.3%
OECTA	83	21.2%
AEFO	31	7.9%

Une stratégie de communication ciblée a permis de maintenir l'attention des médias sur des enjeux qui étaient plus favorables à OSSTF/FEESO qu'au gouvernement. Stephen Lecce, ministre de l'Éducation, a tenté à maintes reprises d'attirer

l'attention sur les enjeux de rémunération, notamment en accusant faussement OSSTF/FEESO de demander sept milliards de dollars en augmentations salariales. En fait, au cours des huit rencontres avec les médias que le ministre a tenues à Queen's Park pendant les négociations, il a accusé les syndicats de se concentrer sur la rémunération 52 fois et n'a mentionné les effectifs de classes que 31 fois. C'est ainsi qu'il a tenté d'encadrer le débat. Les sondages montrent à nouveau pourquoi le ministre préfère parler de la rémunération plutôt que des effectifs de classes: le public a toujours considéré OSSTF/FEESO comme plus raisonnable sur cette question et sur d'autres.

Dans l'ensemble, il est largement établi que la négociation politique a réussi à maintenir l'opinion publique du côté des objectifs de négociation d'OSSTF/FEESO. Cela a créé une pression sur le gouvernement et sur le ministre. Cela les a tenus à l'écart et à l'écart du message. Des messages cohérents et fondés sur des données probantes, communiqués par le biais d'un large éventail de moyens, ont aidé à créer cette pression, mais même la meilleure stratégie de communication n'aurait pas été suffisante pour repousser les pires propositions du gouvernement. La véritable

Figure 4. Qui est raisonnable, en particulier, sur les effectifs de classe?



/suite à la page 39



CONCLUSION: KEY FINDINGS

Through interviews, media analysis, polling, and other data, we are able to draw four broad conclusions about the last round of bargaining. There is not enough space to go into them in detail here, but hopefully they can provide some food for thought for Members and allies as we head into what is likely to be another very difficult round of bargaining.

1

Political bargaining was largely successful and ought to continue.

The other education unions all ran campaigns that were comparable to our own political bargaining strategy. The Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) affiliates and the Canadian Union of Public Employees' (CUPE) education-sector body, the Ontario School Board Council of Unions (OSCBU) all used a combination of advertising, social media, fact-checking, and traditional media to shift public opinion and put pressure on the government. Not only should political bargaining continue, but it will work best if education unions and allies can work as collaboratively as possible to keep the public focused on protecting Ontario's public education system.

2

Evidence-based campaigning increased OSSTF/FEESO's credibility and decision-making.

Along with political bargaining, the Federation also embedded a new commitment to research and evidence into all aspects of campaigning. The data gathered for our bargaining review show that positioning OSSTF/FEESO as relying on evidence provided crucial support for political bargaining. Reliance on evidence increased the Federation's credibility, provided assurances to lo-

cal leaders and Members that the strategy was working, helped facilitate discussions between Members and the general public, and helped the union appropriately deploy a novel strategy and novel tactics.

3

Novelty was an essential element of the campaign's successes.

The review found that OSSTF/FEESO's use of a novel strategy and novel tactics made OSSTF/FEESO unpredictable and therefore difficult for the government to manage. Our willingness to try new things left the government struggling to find a coherent message that would resonate with the general public. It's important to remember, though, that the government will have learned from our successes last time and is likely working on their own ways to out-maneuvre us. We will have to continue to look for new opportunities and new ways to make sure the public is on board in our fight to protect public education.

4

Whether a tactic will work depends on the context. Some tactics can and should be used in the next round of bargaining, but not all of them.

A tactic—even a really good one—may only be successful in the right circumstances. For example, the most innovative tactic used this round—transparent bargaining—was a good strategy in the face of a hostile, cuts-driven government. It might not be the right strategy if the government comes after things the public doesn't care about or think our members don't deserve. We need to think carefully about what worked and why, what will work again, and—most importantly—whether we can come up with something new that will work even better this time.

Chris Samuel is the Policy Analyst/Researcher at OSSTF/FEESO Provincial Office.

force est venue de nos Membres. La négociation politique n'était pas seulement une question de campagne médiatique ou de messages astucieux. Les Membres d'OSSTF/FEESO ont participé à plus de deux douzaines de tactiques distinctes pour aider à faire avancer la stratégie de négociation politique.

DES TACTIQUES NOVATRICES

L'examen par OSSTF/FEESO de la négociation de 2019-2020 a révélé que parmi les 28 tactiques que nous avons utilisées au cours de la campagne, 14 étaient soit des actions qu'OSSTF/FEESO avait créées elle-même, soit adoptées à partir d'autres campagnes réussies, soit déjà essayées auparavant, mais de manière plus restreinte et moins ciblée. La plus évidente de ces tactiques était la négociation transparente (affichage de toutes les propositions et contre-propositions sur un site Web public; pour plus de détails, consultez <http://education-forum.ca/2020/11/26/transparent-bargaining/>), mais les membres ont également été initiés au piquetage d'information, aux grèves tournantes, à la vérification des faits sur les médias sociaux, à la commande d'une étude au Conference Board du Canada et à la publicité sur les médias sociaux qui ciblait intentionnellement les électeurs conservateurs.

Dans le cadre de notre examen, le personnel d'OSSTF/FEESO a interviewé des dirigeants locaux, le personnel du Bureau provincial et des membres de l'Exécutif provincial. Au cours des entrevues, il y a eu un accord général sur le fait que les tactiques utilisées étaient relativement efficaces et relativement bien intégrées. En d'autres termes, non seulement les tactiques ont eu un impact positif en elles-mêmes, mais elles ont également fonctionné ensemble pour avoir un impact encore plus important. Les tactiques considérées comme les plus efficaces comprenaient notre présence dans les médias sociaux, les rassemblements à Queen's Park et ailleurs, les piquets d'information, notre utilisation des sondages et des groupes de discussion, la recherche sur les principaux enjeux et la négociation transparente. Les entrevues ont également montré que les participants voyaient des liens entre ces tactiques et que nous gagnions du terrain lorsque nous utilisions des tactiques efficaces et intégrées pour soutenir une stratégie globale.

CONCLUSION : PRINCIPALES CONSTATATIONS

Grâce aux entretiens, à l'analyse des médias, aux sondages et à d'autres données, nous sommes en mesure de tirer quatre grandes conclusions sur le dernier cycle de négociations. Nous n'avons pas assez d'espace pour les examiner en détail ici, mais nous espérons qu'elles pourront donner matière à réflexion aux Membres et aux alliés à l'aube de ce qui sera probablement un autre cycle de négociations très difficile.

Les négociations politiques ont été largement couronnées de succès et doivent se poursuivre

Les autres syndicats du secteur de l'éducation ont tous mené des campagnes comparables à notre propre stratégie de négociation politique. Les affiliés de la Fédération des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario (FEO) et l'organisme du secteur de l'éducation du Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique (SCFP), le Conseil des syndicats des conseils scolaires de l'Ontario (CSCSO), ont tous utilisé une combinaison de publicité, de médias sociaux, de vérification des faits et de médias traditionnels pour modifier l'opinion publique et faire pression sur le gouvernement. Non seulement la négociation politique doit se poursuivre, mais elle fonctionnera mieux si les syndicats du secteur de l'éducation et leurs alliés collaborent le plus possible afin de maintenir l'attention du public sur la protection du système d'éducation publique de l'Ontario.

La campagne fondée sur des données probantes a augmenté la crédibilité d'OSSTF/FEESO et sa prise de décision.

En plus des négociations politiques, la Fédération a également intégré un nouvel engagement envers la recherche et les données probantes dans tous les aspects de la campagne. Les données recueillies pour notre examen des négociations montrent que le fait de positionner OSSTF/FEESO comme s'appuyant sur des preuves a fourni un soutien crucial aux négociations politiques. Le fait de s'appuyer sur des preuves a augmenté la crédibilité de la Fédération, a donné l'assurance aux dirigeants locaux et aux Membres que la stratégie fonctionnait, a contribué à faciliter les dis-

cussions entre les Membres et le grand public et a aidé le syndicat à déployer de façon appropriée une stratégie et des tactiques nouvelles.

3

La nouveauté était un élément essentiel des succès de la campagne.

L'examen a permis de constater que l'utilisation par OSSTF/FEESO d'une stratégie et de tactiques nouvelles a rendu OSSTF/FEESO imprévisible et donc difficile à gérer pour le gouvernement. Notre volonté d'essayer de nouvelles choses a laissé le gouvernement lutter pour trouver un message cohérent qui résonnerait auprès du grand public. Il est important de se rappeler, cependant, que le gouvernement a tiré les leçons de nos succès de la dernière fois et qu'il travaille probablement sur ses propres moyens de nous surpasser. Nous devrons continuer à chercher de nouvelles occasions et de nouvelles façons de nous assurer que le public est de la partie dans notre lutte pour protéger l'éducation publique



L'efficacité d'une tactique dépend du contexte. Certaines tactiques peuvent et doivent être utilisées lors du prochain cycle de négociations, mais pas toutes.

Une tactique, même si elle est vraiment bonne, peut ne réussir que dans les bonnes circonstances. Par exemple, la tactique la plus innovante utilisée lors de ce cycle, la négociation transparente, était une bonne stratégie face à un gouvernement hostile, axée sur les réductions budgétaires. Ce n'est peut-être pas la bonne stratégie si le gouvernement s'en prend à des choses dont le public ne se soucie pas ou s'il pense que nos membres pensent ne les méritent pas. Nous devons réfléchir soigneusement à ce qui a fonctionné et pourquoi, si cela fonctionnera à nouveau et, plus important encore, si nous pouvons proposer quelque chose de nouveau qui fonctionnera encore mieux cette fois-ci.

Chris Samuel est l'analyste/chercheur en politiques au Bureau provincial d'OSSTF/FEESO.



Never too far from the Federation

Active Retired Members at OSSTF/FEESO



In 1996, OSSTF/FEESO established a new type of membership specifically for Active Retired Members (ARM). This allows retired members of OSSTF/FEESO who wish to remain actively involved with their colleagues politically or socially to rejoin OSSTF/FEESO. Active retirement offers an opportunity for continuing involvement with the educational community at both the local and provincial levels. Local chapters of ARM have been or are being organized to provide members with opportunities to gather for social events and/or political action activities.

The experience, skills, and abilities of retired members are valuable resources that should be utilized to further goals in areas such as political action, legislative lobbying, crisis as-

sistance, research, communications, and public relations.

Members of our current ARM council sat down with *Education Forum*, highlighting the importance of staying politically active in retirement. All the ARM members described the value of staying connected with their union, not only for their own mental health and wellbeing, but also its value for the union.

When asked about why he joined ARM, the Chair of ARM council, Manfred Netzel (ARM Chapter 12, formerly D12, Toronto) said, "as a former active OSSTF/FEESO Member and local leader in Toronto for much of my career, it seemed a natural decision to remain active as a retiree and voluntary OSSTF/FEESO member with like-minded colleagues. The ability to keep informed about political issues and initiatives through online

and printed publications is paramount for many ARM members. The \$50 annual fee and access to an affordable choice of benefits plans with additional perks through the EDVANTAGE program were also important factors I considered at retirement from my employer."

John Ryrie (ARM Chapter 24, formerly D24, Waterloo) enjoys his time on ARM council and parallels this commitment with work during federal and provincial elections—most recently last fall as a Training Officer for the Kitchener-Conestoga riding, instructional work and program delivery which derived, in part, from sixteen years in front of classes at Kitchener Collegiate Institute (KCI).

For Daina Janitis, (ARM Chapter 11, formerly D11, Thames Valley), the link between active union membership and being



part of ARM is an easy one. “We old teachers are not irreplaceable, but we ARE valuable every year that we continue to live. Our communication skills, our enthusiasm for mentoring younger people, and our ability to read

other retirees and to stay active within OSSTF/FEESO and our District and I recently attended the CPAC Regionals as the ARM Chapter 25 representative.” Cheryl’s words highlight the ability to stay in regular contact with former colleagues through ARM Chapter communications, both online and still in a hard copy format. This coupled with presentations and workshops on topical issues beyond retirement concerns is rewarding and much appreciated by ARM members. This continues at the provincial level through the umbrella organization for ARM Chapters, the ARM Council, which organizes a Biennial Conference with delegated representation from every ARM Chapter.

Colleen Ireland, (ARM Chapter 13/16, formerly D16, York Region) has kept it interesting by continuing her political activism, but now with a focus on supporting the Ontario Health Coalition in its fight for Long-Term Care (LTC). She says that, “as an ARM member, I believe that advocacy for quality home care and LTC is a no-brainer. At some point, we or members of our families may well need outside supports that are reliable.”

Members of the council see ARM as the best way to stay connected with the Federation in a very affordable and accountable manner, while still allowing a retiree to continue to pursue or explore interests, hobbies, and social/recreational activities with new or former colleagues. They all agree that not being subject to the daily stresses of the workplace while having a guaranteed (and indexed) pension is a wonderful status to experience every day.

Although each ARM Chapter determines the frequency, format, and intensity of its local meetings and activities, members have the right and expectation to elect their leadership group, have regular financial reports, and experience interesting speakers and presentations throughout the year. An Annual General Meeting is a constitutional requirement, including reports from both local Executives and provincial OSSTF/FEESO liaisons. There are also reciprocal agreements between ARM Chapters to extend invitations to interested members from other Chapters.

The variety and frequency of activities that ARM members can participate in have been limited during the pandemic. However, as both before 2020 and again as local public health restrictions have changed in 2022 there have been regular recreational/cultural activities ranging from golf tournaments and curling bonspiels, live theatre excursions, museum, and art gallery visits just to name a few. Some ARM Chapters have also organized garden plantings, regular breakfast or lunch meetings, and other social gatherings. Finally, active member engagement and involvement in municipal and provincial election campaigns has been a mandate of ARM since its creation some 25 years ago by the Federation leadership and activists.

“
We old teachers are not irreplaceable, but we ARE valuable every year that we continue to live. Our communication skills, our enthusiasm for mentoring younger people, and our ability to read and write cursive make us life-long learners and teachers,
”

and write cursive make us life-long learners and teachers,” she notes, adding that it was a colleague in OSSTF/FEESO who encouraged her to get involved with ARM.

Cheryl Cavell (ARM Chapter 25, formerly D25, Ottawa-Carleton) says that ARM, “provides me with the chance to meet with

To learn more about ARM Council, visit the provincial OSSTF/FEESO website - ARM Council Home (osstf.on.ca)



Undermining public education

Privatization and school choice in Alberta

by Heather Ganshorn

When Jason Kenney's United Conservative Party (UCP) was elected to a majority government in Alberta in 2019, everyone with a stake in public education had reason to be concerned about the party's plans for K-12 education. This was a party whose election platform included a promise to scrap a curriculum that they branded as "NDP social engineering" (despite its being initiated by a previous Conservative government), and another promise to expand choice in education, a phrasing that is usually associated with a move toward privatization. Support Our Students Alberta is a non-partisan, non-profit public education advocacy group fighting for the rights of all children to an equitable and accessible public education system, and we are concerned about the increasing privatization of public education in Alberta.

Alberta has perhaps the widest array of "school choice" in Canada, with options that include not only the public, Catholic, and Francophone boards that are the historical basis of the province's public education system, but also private schools, homeschooling, and charter schools (an American invention that has been adopted in Alberta, but not yet elsewhere in Canada). Many of these options receive partial or full public funding. The UCP government has further expanded these options.

The degree to which some of these programs are public vs. private is hotly debated in Alberta. When most people hear "privatization," they probably imagine some sort of user-pay, for-profit business. In education, this may look like an exclusive private school, and Alberta certainly has those. However, privatization encompasses more than these elite schools. *The Encyclopedia of Educational Theory and Philosophy* notes that privatization is not simply about for-profit service delivery, but is also about shifting funding and/or governance of public services to private control, including "public subsidies either to private providers or to service users; shifting costs to users; or restructuring policies so that users of a public good or service are instead treated as market-style consumers under the logic that the good or the service primarily generates individual, private benefits."¹

In other words, privatizers view education not as a public good that prepares future citizens to par-

ticipate in their communities and society, but rather as a consumer product for individuals who have a right to access public funds to achieve their particular goals. But it is not only funding, but also governance that shifts when schools are privatized. While public education is governed by publicly elected boards, privatization often shifts governance and oversight to private entities, or in the case of homeschooling, to individual families.

Public education advocates argue that this shift

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right to access public funds to
achieve their particular goals.**

is intended to undermine public systems through defunding; weakening teachers' unions and public boards; and presenting less accountable bodies as equally legitimate, or even as more desirable, all while eroding the idea of public education as a social good. In the words of education scholar Diane Ravitch, "Abandoning public schools for a free-market system eviscerates our basic obligation to support them whether our own children are in public schools, private schools or religious schools, and even if we have no children at all."²

In Alberta, we see evidence of all these trends, along with a concerted effort to blur the lines between public and private education.

The most obvious exemplars of privatized education in Alberta are traditional private schools. Private schools may or may not receive government funding, depending on whether they are willing to use certificated teachers and teach the provincial



programs of study
(curriculum).

If a private school chooses to be accredited and funded, then it receives 70 percent of the per-student funding that a public school receives. While similar arrangements exist in other provinces, Alberta's level of funding for private schools is the highest in Canada. Many provinces, including Ontario, do not fund private schools at all. On top of this public subsidy, tuition fees can range from a few thousand dollars per year to over \$20,000 for elite private schools.

Homeschooling is another private arrangement that receives public funding. Alberta has by far the highest number of homeschooled children in Canada. According to Statistics Canada, 14,730 Alberta children were homeschooled in 2019/20³. The province with the next highest number is Ontario, which despite its much larger population only had 6,564 children being homeschooled. Funding is available for students doing supervised homeschooling (under the supervision of a school authority or private school). The per-student subsidy is \$1,700, divided evenly between the child's family and the supervising school authority.

As Curtis Riep notes in his analysis of homeschooling in Alberta (pp. 17-18), "For some scholars, homeschooling represents an extreme form of a broader shift toward educational privatization since it represents a retreat from the public sphere, students lack exposure to cultural and ethical diversity, and learning is predicated on individualistic needs and wants rather than collec-

tive action, social responsibility, and democratic citizenship."⁴

Charter schools are an American invention that Alberta also adopted in the 1990s; they do not exist elsewhere in Canada. Charter school advocates insist that these schools are public, since they are publicly funded, but it's evident both in the USA and Canada, that charter schools are on the privatization continuum, especially if our definition of privatization includes the shift of governance away from public entities; public subsidies to private providers; and treatment of public services as a marketplace that caters to individual choices.

Introduced in the U.S. by the Bush administration, the marketing pitch for charter schools was that they were to function as test beds for innovative educational reforms that could, if successful, be adopted by the larger public system, an idea that is also expressed in Section 13 of Alberta's *Charter Schools Regulation*. In practice, however, they have become publicly funded, privately operated schools, essentially private schools within the public system. Alberta charter schools, like public schools, receive 100 percent per-student funding. However, they do not fall under the governance of school boards; their own boards are not publicly elected, and they are accountable directly to the Education Minister. They are not required to hire unionized teachers. The charter documents that encompass their terms of reference are not publicly available.

Charter schools may be established by an indi-

vidual or group wishing to provide a specialized approach or focus that is purportedly not already offered by other local public boards, they must follow the Alberta curriculum, and they are not allowed to charge tuition fees or deny access to students “if sufficient space and resources are available,”⁵ according to the *Charter Schools Handbook*.

There is an unavoidable tension, however, between this requirement and the understanding articulated in the Handbook that “charter schools specialize in a particular educational service or approach in order to address a particular group of students.” For example, a charter school whose focus is gifted education, academic rigour, a focus on STEM or the arts, or “character development” is going to cater to particular groups of people. Anecdotally, there are accounts of individual families being advised that a particular charter school may not be “the right fit” for their child.

There are also very real barriers to participation that may include geographic location, onerous application processes that may include academic assessments for a fee, or expectations placed on students and families. Many charters also do not offer the accommodations and supports for special needs that may be found in the public system, nor are they legislatively required to accommodate. American education researcher Kevin Welner has identified a dozen ways in which charter schools shape enrollment⁶. While some of these practices do not apply in Alberta’s context, others are arguably present—including marketing to a particular niche, language around “fit,” placement assessments, and expectations around parental involvement.

The proliferation of charter schools has also resulted in public boards

feeling pressure to compete for students and the funding that comes with them, by providing alternative offerings of their own. These alternatives may range from multilingual programming to programs such as Montessori, single-gender schools, or faith-based schooling. Some school boards have even allowed formerly private schools to convert to alternative programs. If a private school chooses to do this, it will ostensibly fall under the governance of the board it joins; however, these schools appear to retain a great deal of autonomy, including the ability to charge fees beyond what would be allowed by a truly public school.

One such example is Master’s Academy, a Christian school in Calgary. Established in 1997 as a private school, Master’s joined the Palliser School Division as an alternative public school in 2008. Palliser is a rural school division that originally supported a swath of municipalities in Southern Alberta; however, it has added several faith-based Calgary schools to its list of alternative programs.

Under Alberta’s *Education Act* (section 13.1), such schools may not charge tuition to students who reside within the board’s jurisdiction. However, section 19.5 of the *Act* states that the board (not the individual school) may charge fees to cover non-instructional costs related to the alternative program⁷.

Master’s Academy’s web site lists a “Palliser school fee” of \$35 per child⁸. This is the fee that goes to the Board. However, that’s a drop in the bucket compared to what families pay directly to the Master’s Academy Educational Society. All families with children attending Master’s must purchase a “family bond” that starts at \$7,000 for one child, and is refundable, minus any interest earned, when the child leaves the school. But

the real big-ticket cost is the annual “society



fee” to the Master’s Academy Educational Society of over \$7,000 per year for full-time students in Grades 1-12. It appears that structuring payments as a fee that goes to a school society is sufficient to evade the *Education Act*’s prohibition on public boards’ alternative programs charging tuition. A review of some of the other alternative programs operating under public boards in Alberta indicates that while many alternative programs do not engage in this practice, Master’s is not the only alternative school to charge this type of fee through a society. Schools charging thousands of dollars

With shrinking budgets and a growing student population, this level of continued support seems unlikely, and hard choices have to be made.

in fees are essentially private schools functioning under the umbrella of a public board, collecting 100 percent of the per-student allocation of public dollars, rather than the 70% that they would be eligible for if they operated as accredited funded private schools.

While Alberta arguably has the most extensive school choice and the highest level of privatization of any K-12 system in Canada, the UCP government is committed to further expanding privatization. In 2020, the UCP passed the *Choice in Education Act*, which removed the requirement for charter school groups to give public boards the first option to offer a program as an alternative public program, provides for the establishment of “vocation-focused” charter schools focusing on trades and technologies, and removes the requirement that a school authority supervise home education programs.

A provincial election in 2023 may bring in a change of government, but the NDP opposition have thus far been circumspect about where they stand on charter schools and privatization in education, nor did they implement policies to curb or reverse privatization when they were in government. Historically, Alberta has had the wealth to support all options in this patchwork system to a certain standard. With shrinking

budgets and a growing student population, this level of continued support seems unlikely, and hard choices have to be made. Support Our Students works to raise public awareness of how many resources are being actively directed away from the public system that serves all children, to support the preferences of the minority of families that choose to opt out of public education.

Heather Ganshorn is Research Director at Support Our Students Alberta

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CORSI-ROSENTHAL BOXES AS SCHOOL-BASED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Making health and safety curriculum-friendly
by Gordon Robitaille

In August of 2020, Richard Corsi (the incoming Dean of Technology at the University of California, Davis) was interviewed for an article in the magazine *Wired*. It was during this interview where Corsi posited the notion of cleaning our air by strapping a MERV 13 filter to a box fan. Jim Rosenthal (CEO of Tex-Air Filters) heard about the idea and began experimenting with different designs to optimize efficiency, and shortly thereafter, a four filter cube design started spreading within various engineering circles. When asked to name the design, Rosenthal insisted that Richard Corsi's name be associated and that he would be happy to have Richard's name appear first in a hyphenated name: the Corsi-Rosenthal Box (CR Box).

Naturally, as various engineers confirmed the science behind CR Boxes in conjunction with their low per unit cost of under \$150, this technology started looking more and more like a viable way to help minimize the spread of COVID-19. It filters out approximately 85 percent of particles passing through the filters, making it a helpful tool to contain the virus. Additionally, Corsi-Rosenthal Boxes are also effective at screening out other airborne particulates such as pollen or pollution, which is ideal for our Northern communities since they are impacted by smoke from forest fires on a regular basis.

By September 2021, our Teacher/Occasional Teacher Bargaining Unit in District 6B (Superior North) obtained the school board's permission to incorporate CR Boxes into our courses as Rich Learning Tasks. One of the appealing aspects of the project is that it can be approached through multiple curricular lenses. For example, the project is an ideal fit for science, Math, Geography, and Technology courses because it allows students to explore the scientific method, data sets, real world applications, and elements of design and integrated technology. However, this important step of permission was not the only obstacle that we

had to overcome.

Since Corsi-Rosenthal Boxes were new and unknown within the general population, our OSSTF/FEESO Members needed resources to be assembled so they had a starting point for incorporation into their courses. Our Bargaining Unit had to create background materials to explain what the boxes were, how they worked, and how they could be incorporated into various courses; we then sought out participation from Members in all the schools we serve.

Fortunately, educators are well-versed in taking existing, commercially available products and using them in new ways to enhance their instruction. In short order teachers from all five of the schools we represent signed up to participate. Our Technology teachers chose to approach the project from an integrated technology lens, focusing on ways to design a frame that was reusable, yet aesthetically pleasing; whereas the Math teachers focussed on curricular strands that related to gathering data from laboratory and other sources, and organizing and recording the data using appropriate formats (tables, flow charts, graphs, diagrams). Meanwhile, our Geography teachers chose to centre the CR Box initiative within the Natural Disasters unit, with a specific focus on forest fire and wildfire preparedness.

When it came to securing funding for the project, our OSSTF/FEESO Teacher/Occasional Teacher Bargaining Unit approved a donation of \$2500 to get the project started and we began contacting local businesses to start sorting through the logistical constraints faced by our communities. Fortunately, our local businesses and organizations stepped up in unexpected ways to ensure that we had the resources we needed to roll the project out in an equitable way.

For instance, when I first called Cebrario's Hardware to describe the project and inquire about product availability, Chris Cebrario was excited by

the idea, and he offered to donate \$500 in materials toward the project. This community support continued when I contacted Nipigon Canadian Tire to find out timelines for ordering additional filters and fans, and the owners enthusiastically offered to assist by discounting the cost of materials and by shipping materials to our neighbouring communities.

As the project came closer to fruition, we reached out to our representative from the Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan (OTIP) to tell them about our project and the positive physical and mental health impact that it could have within the communities we represent. We explained that some CR Boxes would be used in classes and that



some would be donated to “at-risk” populations within our communities. Seeing the benefit to our communities that this project would provide, OTIP surprised us with an offer to donate \$500 dollars so that we could purchase more materials and build more filtration boxes!

As the scope of our project came into focus, the Bargaining Unit sought to interest our local Labour Council in sharing basic details of our project with affiliated unions. We had hoped that if enough people knew how inexpensive and easy it was to filter the air in their spaces, we could get widespread adoption, which would reduce the impact and spread of future COVID-19 waves. Our

delegate to the Thunder Bay and District Labour Council put together a brief presentation regarding CR Boxes and their potential ability to reduce the strain on Ontario’s health care system. Fortunately, the Thunder Bay and District Labour Council not only agreed to share CR Box knowledge with their affiliated members, but they also donated \$500



dollars to help us build more filtration boxes for our communities.

When all was said and done, each community hub was provided with one anemometer to measure air movement, one Air Quality meter (PM 2.5) to measure particulates in the air, five CSA approved box fans to power the filter boxes, eighteen Filtrete 2200 furnace filters to clean the air passing through, and enough duct tape to assemble it all. The students who participated in the project were very excited by their ability to engage in concrete actions that could make their loved ones safer, and the OSSTF/FEESO Members involved with the project also conveyed their sincere gratitude.

Looking back on the project, one can’t help but feel a swell of pride in how our Northern Ontario communities routinely come together to make meaningful improvements in our lives.

Gordon Robitaille is a teacher in District 6B, Superior North. Pictures courtesy of Les Barrett. Note: The photos above do not include the shroud (which optimizes efficiency and is normally located on top of the fan).

Bargaining Unit BOOST

by Tamara Witcher

"Bargaining Unit boost" is a regular column in *Education Forum* featuring an OSSTF/FEESO Bargaining Unit and the job class(es) within that unit. OSSTF/FEESO, founded in 1919, has over 60,000 Members across Ontario. They include public high school teachers, occasional teachers, educational assistants, continuing education teachers and instructors, early childhood educators, psychologists, secretaries, speech-language pathologists, social workers, plant support personnel, university support staff, and many others in education.

For this issue's "Bargaining Unit boost," *Education Forum* spoke with Tamara Witcher, 2nd year President of District 30's Provincial Schools Authority Teachers (PSAT).

What types of job classes are represented by D30 and your Bargaining Unit?

D30 represents the teachers of all four provincial schools in Ontario, in different locations.

What is one of the biggest challenges your Members face in their work?

Because the government (the Ministry of Education) is our employer, we are not a school board. One of the biggest challenges we face is how we are treated directly by the employer. The employer (i.e., the government) knows that because we are a very small unit (170 Members), and because we represent only the teachers, they often violate

our collective agreement. One hundred twelve grievances filed in the 2021-2022 year, for only approximately 170 Members, shows how bad our workplace is. Our employer continuously violates our agreement, because they know we are small, do not have a lot of money (from union dues), and that grievances take several years to be resolved. They simply do not care about us. For example, our occasional teachers (OTs) are not unionized. Their pay is \$150 a day, which is the same pay I was earning as an OT in 2004. And because they are not unionized, the OTs are often scheduled for full days without any prep time, and have double Additional Professional Activities duties. Also, because of this low pay that has not increased in almost two decades, OTs and our recently retired teachers decide to work at other school boards where they receive better pay and better working conditions, resulting in a severe lack of teachers at our

schools. While there is a lack of available teachers all over Ontario, the problem is doubly worse at the provincial schools. These problems could have been alleviated if the employer had listened to us and taken our feedback into action— increase pay for OTs and unionize them, for example. We have been fighting hard to unionize our OTs, and we are working hard as OSSTF/FEESO to fight for our Members as we head into bargaining.

What is one particularly unique thing about your Bargaining Unit that you think our Members probably don't know?

We represent teachers in schools for the Deaf and for the Blind/DeafBlind, in Milton, Belleville, London, and Brantford. Each school campus has lodgings for students who live very far away from their schools. Being in different locations in Ontario make it hard for us to meet. Also, each school has its own needs and issues.



Photo provided by Tamara Witcher

Top picks

Reviews

Describe some of the value your Bargaining Unit (and District) get from being part of the OSSTF/FEESO community.

Being a part of the OSSTF/FEESO community, we are able to take advantage of a large pool of resources and services. While it is easy to overlook us because we are a very small unit, we can get OSSTF/FEESO's attention and support if we ask for it.

Describe one misconception members of the public and/or the OSSTF Membership may have about the work your Members do—and correct that misconception.

Although we are a small unit, we are very proud of our schools and believe our schools are the best for all Deaf, Blind, and DeafBlind students. These students often miss out on things that others take for granted, and staff in mainstream schools do not have the experience nor expertise to fully serve them. At our schools, many of our Members are like the students themselves (e.g., they are Deaf and/or blind), and many of them have graduated from the provincial schools themselves. They return to their schools not as students but as teachers (and EAs, lodgings counsellors, etc.). They return because their schools encouraged them to thrive, and they want that to continue for other, younger students.

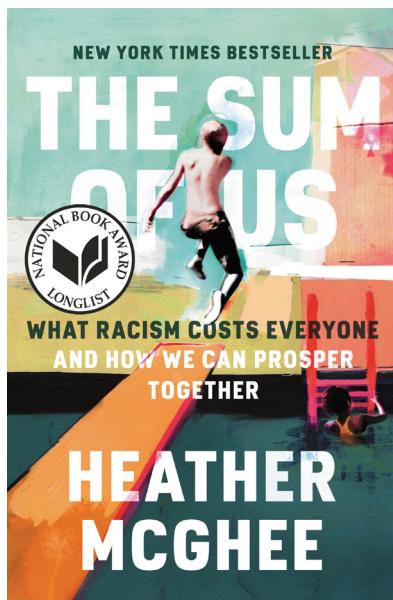
Tamara Witcher is a teacher in, and the president of, District 30, PSAT.

come to a better understanding of the complex issue of racism in society.

McGhee's book gives a unique perspective on racism and does an excellent job of using extensive research to give insight into the social dynamics that prevent us from transforming the status quo. The concepts presented in *The Sum of Us* identify problems that divide us and also provide solutions to creating an inclusive society. The chapters in the book discuss racism in the workplace, housing, education, and other topics. This book has extensive notes on each chapter and a discussion guide which are both very useful.

One of the best features of *The Sum of Us* is the qualitative research McGhee completes during her travels across the United States. Her many interviews provide a real connection to the individual stories of people that most of us can relate to on some level. These stories demonstrate our similarities and the individual mental shift necessary for everyone to experience better outcomes.

Although this book is focused on America, there is much Canadians can learn from it as there are many parallels. I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to have a better understanding of race relations. This is a must-read for people in positions of leadership and policy makers.



The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together

By Heather McGhee

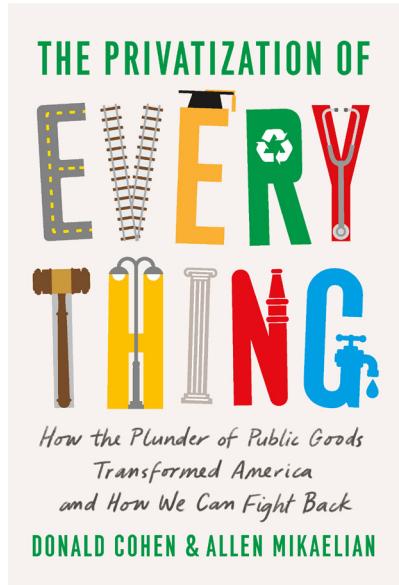
One World

(February 2021)

Reviewed by Paul Henry

As we continue to grapple with the legacy of racism in every aspect of society, educators have an important role to play given the well-documented impact racism and systemic oppression have on our youth. There is still a great need for a better understanding and commitment to action when it comes to racism. Heather McGhee's book, *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* is an excellent resource that can help readers

Paul Henry is an occasional teacher in District 21, Hamilton-Wentworth, a member of the Provincial OSSTF/FEESO Addressing Anti-Black Racism and Racism committee, the Governance Review work group, and the provincial Speakers Bank.



***The Privatization of Everything:
How the Plunder of Public Goods
Transformed America and How
We Can Fight Back***

By Donald Cohen and Allen Mikaelian

The News Press
(November 2021)

Reviewed by Lauren Simmons

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many people to question our relationship to work, and to capitalism writ large. The events of the last two years have turned our attention to the importance, and sometimes failure, of public institutions like education and health (deemed as “goods” in the terms of the authors). The timely book *The Privatization of Everything: How the Plunder of Public Goods Transformed America and How We Can Fight Back* by Donald Cohen and Allen Mikaelian, chronicles the transformation of America in the last century-and-a-half, particularly in the last few decades. It details how private interest has threatened to take over public goods in areas from transportation or welfare to water infrastructure to justice to waste collection to education to health and beyond.

Written by a policy analyst and a historian, respectively, the book traces the collapse of the commons in America with historical information and inspires the reader to create change where they can by reclaiming segments of formerly public goods. While the context for the book is American, and the level of privatization it examines is unprecedented here in Canada, it is crucial for us to look at how the process unfolded south of the border—how quickly it happens, and how entrenched privatization can become. This book has an approachable writing style, and Cohen and Mikaelian make the historical aspects accessible and interesting. *The Privatization of Everything: How the Plunder of Public Goods Transformed America and How We Can Fight Back* would be of particular interest to those who follow history, economics, politics, and public policy. As union members, we have a role in the fight to preserve public goods, too, and this book is a worthwhile tool in that fight.

Lauren Simmons is a teacher in District 12, Toronto



***A Conversation on Pan-Canadian
Teacher Mental Health During
COVID-19***

Podcast

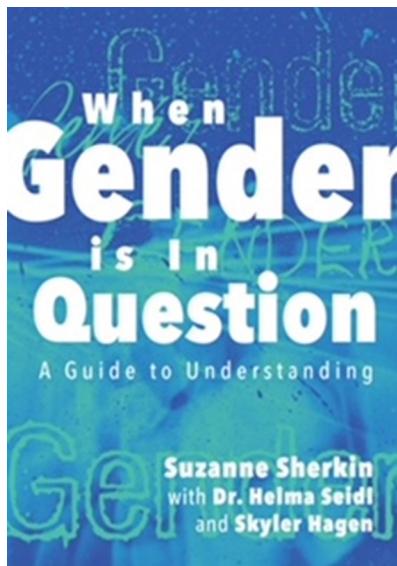
Reviewed by Carlo Fusco

As a regular podcast listener, I very much enjoyed Julieanne

Mawako's interview with Dr. Pamela Rogers and Nichole Grant where they discussed the Canadian Teachers' Federation's (CTF/FCE) latest pandemic research report. The report focused on mental health and well-being of teachers and education workers from across Canada, and the results were unexpectedly quite uniform from the 2300 participants. Educators around the country experienced stress due to losing the classroom as a physical space, protocols making it nearly impossible to maintain relationships with students and colleagues, and the constantly changing learning environment from in-person to on-line to hybrid. They found these and other COVID-19 related changes to the learning environment to be significantly deteriorating to the mental health and well-being of all education workers who took part in the study. Other factors, such as the education worker's complex and entangled private/professional life balance and the erosion of that balance was exacerbated during COVID-19. It was also found that education workers often felt at the center of social-political-economic decisions where they were neither consulted or listened to but which they were expected to support. The report not only identified what has impacted education workers' mental health and well-being but it also identified that some employer solutions, though well intentioned, did not meet educators' needs. For example, their findings showed that “add-in/stir-in” solutions don't work because the culture and systems affecting well-being were not being addressed. A broader in-

terconnected “ecological view” of mental health and well-being was needed to have an impact. The interview concludes with a few words from Sam Hammond, President of CTF/FCE, who stresses the need for federal support for all K-12 public education systems and a need to support and strengthen public education in general. The podcast left me wanting more and I was happy to find the report and the related infographics on the CTF/FCE website.

Carlo Fusco is a teacher in District 24, Waterloo.



**When Gender is in Question—
A Guide to Understanding**
by Suzanne Sherkin with Dr.
Helma Seidl and Skylar Hagen
One World
(February 2021)

Reviewed by Karen Kading

When Gender is in Question—A Guide to Understanding by Suzanne Sherkin with Dr. Helma Seidl and Skylar Hagen is an excellent resource for those who wish to expand their knowledge regarding diversity, gender, and the transition process. There are many definitions and

terms included in the work that are explained clearly and succinctly. The question of gender is approached from a unique perspective with three authors who contribute based upon their individual experiences and/or professional training. Suzanne Sherkin documents the process of her child's transition to becoming her son in a straightforward and compassionate manner. Suzanne's son, Skyler Hagen, shares his very personal journey of transition. Dr. Helma Seidl offers her expertise from a therapeutic point of view based upon her practice where most of her clients continue to move toward a personal gender identity which they can embrace as individuals.

Supporting your child during the transition process can be very challenging, confusing, and daunting for a parent. Suzanne not only describes this process for us, but speaks about her own experiences, while remaining a loving and supportive parent. She serves as an outstanding role model for all parents of children who have transitioned or are beginning that very personal journey.

Suzanne's son, Skyler, shares many of his emotional ups and downs during his transition. His mother describes the process of daily living for many of those questioning gender and identity as, “Eat. Pretend. Get by. Sleep. Repeat” (p. 6). Skyler explains how he never felt like he really belonged in a female body and describes his gradual shift to a male identity. Many gender questioning individuals share parts of their respective stories; the text highlights that it is important to remember that every gender

diverse individual travels their own pathway. Several of Skyler's most poignant recollections are being expelled from a women's washroom for looking too male and being physically attacked for using a men's washroom while still looking too feminine. Skyler mentions that to this day, he still knows where to find the best/safest gender-neutral washrooms in many large cities.

The third contributor, Dr. Helma Seidl, is a therapist with a practice composed of approximately 80% transitioning/gender questioning clientele. She discusses some therapeutic aspects of transitioning in an accepting, and supportive manner. Dr. Seidl also examines the important role the family can play in helping a person through this process, mental health concerns, transitioning in the workplace and addressing questions from parents, spouses/partners, and children.

The book offers an extensive list of definitions, and several topics are discussed such as the difference between: sex and gender, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation (p. 12). While it is important to recognize that language around gender is continually evolving, this is an excellent introductory book for those wishing to increase their knowledge of gender identity and transition, as it addresses these topics from a place of compassion, support, and acceptance. The book is highly recommended for educators, professional libraries, parents, and students.

Karen Kading is a teacher in District 11, London, and a member of the Provincial Status of Women Committee.

REPRÉSENTANT FIÈREMENT PLUS DE 200 CLASSIFICATIONS
D'EMPLOI ŒUVRANT DANS TOUS LES SECTEURS DE
L'ÉDUCATION FINANCIÉE À MÊME LES DENIERS PUBLICS



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Nous parcourons la vie en affrontant des détracteurs à chaque tournant. Les parents et membres de la parenté, nos frères et sœurs, camarades de classe et les membres du personnel en éducation semblent nous répéter sans arrêt de mieux faire, d'en faire plus, d'être différent, de faire un meilleur effort. Pourtant, parmi toutes ces critiques et ces évaluations incessantes, nous finissons souvent par être le pire de nos détracteurs.

Nous savons qui nous sommes et nous connaissons les buts que nous voulons et pouvons atteindre. Nous pouvons prouver que ces détracteurs ont tort, y compris le plus coriace - soi-même.

*Nous pouvons être
tout ce qu'ils disent que
nous ne serons jamais.*

1 000 \$
à gagner!

Organize. Educate. Agitate.

Towards a just and equitable future



Organize. Educate. Agitate. I heard a powerful Black female Queer activist from England, Phyllis Akua Opoku-Gyimah, also known as Lady Phyll, speak these words at a labour and Queer activism event that I attended as part of Pride Toronto 2022 this spring. They spoke to me. They fired me up. And they have sat with me throughout the summer and fall.

When we think of how to organize, as unionists, it must include reaching out to our allies and sometimes to stranger bed-folk. Finding community partners and helping them understand the vital role they can play in working to protect publicly funded education in Ontario is part of our continued activism. It means reaching out to parents and communities, listening to their needs, and sharing our vision for the future of education. OSSTF/FEESO knows the power of uniting with our communities and their leaders and we encourage all our Members to continue

to do the important work you do, supporting organizations that strengthen our communities, and most importantly, supporting our students to find success and happiness. If you are involved in a community group, consider how it could possibly work with your local OSSTF/FEESO Members and leaders to strengthen partnerships and grow solidarity.

To educate is at the root of all we do. Education workers and teachers are first and foremost here to help students learn and grow. But when we think of activism and protecting the things that matter most to us in a just society, we also must remember that at times we need to educate the public about the issues students and educators face. We must also educate ourselves—specifically that without reconciliation and without addressing anti-Black racism and other forms of oppression, we are failing to be the change makers we must be. It is our responsibility

to educate ourselves about the wrongs of the past, methods of challenging oppression, and ways to heal and grow.

I like to agitate. I'm always up for a rally or a protest where we can wave the OSSTF/FEESO flag with pride. But agitating isn't always such an overt or obvious action; it is often about having the hard conversations with our family and friends, and it is at other times about continued pressure in the form of lobbying your local MPP or Trustee. Agitating for a more robust and well-funded public education system matters and we cannot underestimate the power of a sustained and thoughtful form of activism. We can change people's points of view, one conversation at a time.

Lastly, I want to put in a plug for our local Labour Councils—they are the meeting ground for organized labour. These are the places where leaders are made and where solidarity is sown. If you are not already part of your local Labour Council, I urge you to seek them out and see what you can offer them and what they can offer you. Visit the Canadian Labour Congress site for information on your local Labour Council or reach out to your District office to find out how you can get involved.

Let's move into the winter with a commitment to organize, educate, and agitate for a future that is just, equitable, and grounded in reconciliation.

Karen Littlewood,
OSSTF/FEESO President

Organiser. Sensibiliser. Débattre.

Vers un avenir juste et équitable

Organiser. Sensibiliser. Débattre. J'ai entendu une puissante militante queer noire d'Angleterre, Phyllis Akua Opoku-Gyimah, également connue sous le nom de Lady Phyll, prononcer ces mots lors d'une activité sur le marché du travail et l'activisme queer auquel j'ai assisté dans le cadre de Pride Toronto 2022 ce printemps. Ils sont venus me chercher. Ils m'ont enflammée. Et ils m'ont accompagné tout au long de l'été et de l'automne.

Lorsque nous réfléchissons à la façon de nous organiser, en tant que syndicalistes, nous devons tendre la main à nos alliés et parfois à des étrangers. Trouver des partenaires communautaires et les aider à comprendre le rôle vital qu'ils peuvent jouer pour protéger l'éducation financée à même les deniers publics en Ontario fait partie de notre militantisme continu. Cela signifie tendre la main aux parents et aux communautés, écouter leurs besoins et partager notre vision de l'avenir de l'éducation. OSSTF/FEESO connaît le pouvoir de s'unir à nos communautés et à leurs dirigeants et nous encourageons tous nos membres à continuer à faire le travail important qu'ils accomplissent, en appuyant les organismes qui renforcent nos communautés et, surtout, en aidant nos élèves à trouver le succès et le bonheur. Si vous êtes impliqué dans un groupe communautaire, réfléchissez à la façon dont il pourrait travailler

avec les Membres et les dirigeants d'OSSTF/FEESO de votre région pour renforcer les partenariats et accroître la solidarité.

L'éducation est à la base de tout ce que nous faisons. Les travailleuses et travailleurs en éducation et le personnel enseignant sont d'abord et avant tout là pour aider les élèves à apprendre et à grandir. Mais lorsque nous pensons au militantisme et à la protection des choses qui nous importent le plus dans une société juste, nous devons aussi nous rappeler que nous devons parfois éduquer le public sur les problèmes auxquels les élèves et les éducatrices et éducateurs sont confrontés. Nous devons également nous éduquer nous-mêmes, en particulier sur le fait que si nous ne nous réconciliions pas et si nous ne nous attaquons pas au racisme anti-Noirs et aux autres formes d'oppression, nous ne serons pas les artisans du changement que nous devons être. Il est de notre responsabilité de nous éduquer sur les torts du passé, les méthodes de lutte contre l'oppression et les moyens de guérir et de grandir.

J'aime manifester. Je suis toujours partante pour un rassemblement ou une manifestation où nous pouvons brandir fièrement le drapeau d'OSSTF/FEESO. Mais la manifestation n'est pas toujours une action aussi évidente; il s'agit souvent d'avoir des conversations difficiles avec notre famille et nos amis et parfois d'exercer des pressions

continues sous la forme de lobbying auprès de votre député provincial ou de votre conseillère ou conseiller scolaire local. Agir pour un système d'éducation publique plus solide et mieux financé est important et nous ne devons pas sous-estimer le pouvoir d'une forme soutenue et réfléchie d'activisme. Nous pouvons changer le point de vue des gens, une conversation à la fois.

Enfin, je tiens à mettre en valeur nos conseils du travail locaux; ils sont le lieu de rencontre du mouvement syndical. Ce sont là où se forment les dirigeants et où se sème la solidarité. Si vous ne faites pas déjà partie de votre conseil du travail local, je vous encourage vivement à le rechercher et à voir ce que vous pouvez leur offrir et ce qu'ils peuvent vous offrir. Visitez le site du Congrès du travail du Canada pour obtenir des renseignements sur votre conseil du travail local ou communiquez avec votre bureau de district pour savoir comment vous pouvez vous impliquer.

Passons à l'hiver en nous engageant à recruter, à éduquer et à manifester pour un avenir qui soit juste, équitable et fondé sur la réconciliation.

Karen Littlewood,
présidente d'OSSTF/FEESO

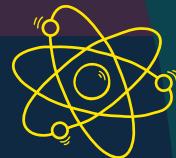
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