

THE  
PRIVATIZATION

ISSUE





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## The fight against privatization

A fight for anti-oppression and equity

Earlier this fall, I spent some time in counter-protests against the hate-filled anti-2SLGB+ rallies. Energy, love, and acceptance overpowered much of the hate at that moment; however, I know that in the long run it didn't heal this social ill. That doesn't mean I am without hope—in fact, I left the protests with a deep feeling of equanimity, re-empowered in my activism. I left the sea of Pride and Progress flags knowing that there is a community that has my back, and that will fight for the tenets of equity and goodness.

This feeling of empowerment moves beyond anti-oppression work into an equally important, and in fact parallel area—the fight against privatization. We know that the privatizing of public services, the selling of public lands, and the dismantling of public institutions has greater impacts on oppressed communities. In this way, fighting privatization is a fight for anti-oppression and equity.

In this issue you will find articles that explore the dangers of privatization and that highlight how we can counter the government's continued use of the privatization playbook—underfund, undermine, and then cut, all in the name of putting more money in the pockets of the rich. This then increases the disparity between those who have too much and those who need more just to live.

This issue also marks the 50<sup>th</sup> volume of *Education Forum*—an achievement of which the whole publication team is most proud. As part of our ongoing desire to be a relevant publication

you will no doubt notice some changes to our format, both online and in print. We are moving to a journal-style bound print copy, and it is my hope as editor that you will see *Education Forum* as a publication worthy of holding on to. I am sure it will find a proud place on your bookshelves, its bound spine being a sign of OSSTF/FEESO's role as a leader in labour and education. The new *Education Forum* layout was created with accessible design in mind, for example we are using matte nonglossy paper and are ensuring correct contrast ratios for text and background colours. We also reduced the number of columns on the page to improve readability and simplified the grid layout to improve clarity. For online access, an accessible PDF version of the magazine has been produced and shared on our website. Accessible PDFs are specifically programmed to include accessibility features such as document bookmarks, text tagging, and the addition of alt text to graphics and images to provide descriptive information.

I hope as you read through this issue you will find something to keep you hopeful and engaged in activism and I hope you find the new format as pleasing as the whole *Education Forum* team found it to create.

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## La lutte contre la privatisation

Une lutte contre l'oppression et l'équité

Au début de l'automne, j'ai participé à des contre-manifestations contre les rassemblements haineux anti-2SLGBTQI+. L'énergie, l'amour et l'acceptation a eu raison d'une grande partie de la haine à ce moment-là, mais je sais qu'à long terme, cela n'a pas guéri ce mal social. Cela ne signifie pas que je suis sans espoir; en fait, j'ai quitté les manifestations avec un profond sentiment de calme relatif, redonnant du pouvoir à mon militantisme. J'ai quitté la mer de drapeaux de la Fierté et du Progrès en sachant qu'il existe une communauté qui me soutient et qui se battra pour les principes d'équité et de bonté.

Ce sentiment d'autonomisation va au-delà du travail de lutte contre l'oppression et s'étend à un domaine tout aussi important, et en fait parallèle, à savoir la lutte contre la privatisation. Nous savons que la privatisation des services publics, la vente des terres publiques et le démantèlement des institutions publiques ont un impact plus important sur les communautés opprimées. Ainsi, la lutte contre la privatisation est une lutte pour l'anti-oppression et l'équité.

Dans ce numéro, vous trouverez des articles qui explorent les dangers de la privatisation et qui soulignent comment nous pouvons contrer l'utilisation continue par le gouvernement de la règle du jeu de la privatisation : sous-financer, saper, puis couper. Tout cela au nom de l'augmentation de l'argent dans les poches des riches, ce qui accroît la disparité entre ceux qui ont trop et ceux qui ont besoin de plus pour simplement vivre.

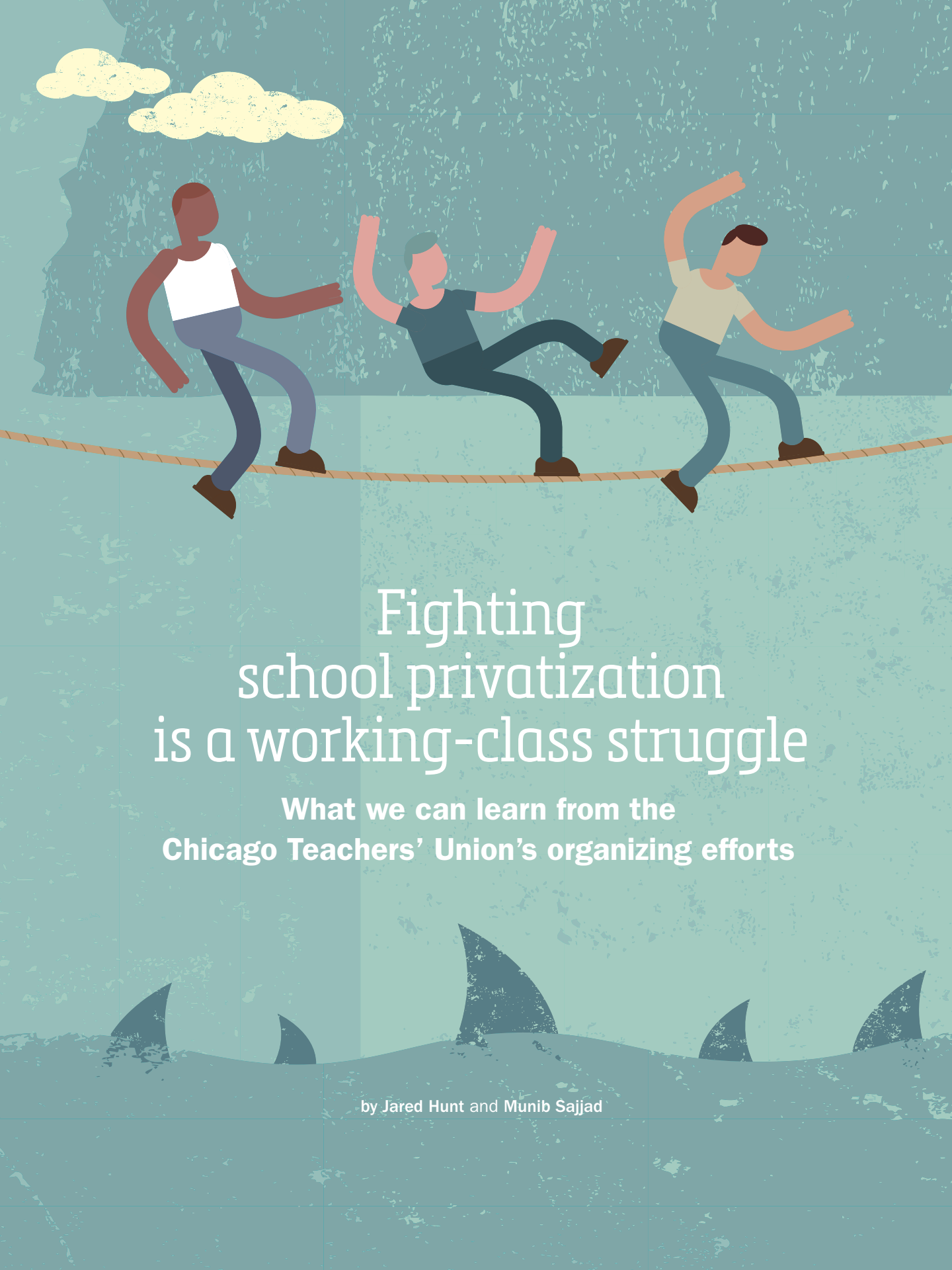
Ce numéro marque également le 50<sup>e</sup> volume d'*Education Forum*, une réussite dont toute l'équipe de la publication est très fière. Dans

le cadre de notre volonté d'être pertinent, vous remarquerez sans doute des changements dans notre format, tant en ligne qu'en version imprimée. En tant qu'éditrice, je suis certaine que vous considérerez *Education Forum* comme une publication digne d'être conservée et qu'elle trouvera une place de choix sur vos étagères, son dos relié étant un signe du rôle d'OSSTF/FEESO en tant que chef de file dans le domaine de l'emploi et de l'éducation. La nouvelle mise en page d'*Education Forum* a été conçue dans un souci d'accessibilité. Par exemple, nous utilisons du papier mat non lustré et nous veillons à ce que les contrastes entre le texte et les couleurs d'arrière-plan soient corrects. Nous avons également réduit le nombre de colonnes sur la page pour améliorer la lisibilité et simplifié la disposition du quadrillage pour améliorer la clarté. En ce qui concerne le format en ligne, une version PDF accessible du magazine a été produite et diffusée sur notre site Web. Les PDF accessibles sont spécifiquement programmés pour inclure des fonctions d'accessibilité comme les signets de document, la balise de texte et l'ajout d'un texte alt aux graphiques et aux images pour fournir des informations descriptives.

J'espère qu'en lisant ce numéro, vous trouverez de quoi vous donner de l'espoir et vous engager dans l'activisme. J'espère que vous trouverez le nouveau format aussi agréable que toute l'équipe d'*Education Forum* l'a trouvé à créer.

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# Fighting school privatization is a working-class struggle

**What we can learn from the  
Chicago Teachers' Union's organizing efforts**

by Jared Hunt and Munib Sajjad

Ontario's Ministry of Education is arguably the largest ministry in the provincial government with the lowest level of privatization, perhaps even country-wide. What little privatization there is in Ontario's K-12 publicly funded education system amounts to running school buses and taking care of buildings, creating and implementing online credit programs, and providing child-care services before and after school. In recent years, school boards have been experimenting with alternative revenue streams, such as attracting and charging fees for international students, as a method of dealing with chronic underfunding. The current status of public education in the province is, however, at risk, through a variety of governmental steps that mark the implementation of a typical privatization plan. The slippery slope of privatization starts with underfunding and moves through a variety of steps to break the public's confidence in the public system, thus opening discussions about what an open market in education could provide. If an Ontario government wanted to introduce a marketplace to monetize competition in publicly funded K-12 education, what could it look like? MPPs of previous political parties have floated large scale ideas, but none have followed through. However, this isn't the case just south of the border, and the experiences there should act as examples for us in our fight to protect publicly funded education in Ontario.

Chicago Public Schools (CPS), the city's public education authority, introduced for-profit schools in the mid-nineties, using a "charter" schools business model. Charter schools operate as a public/private partnership, where the local government hands over the operation and funding decisions to a corporate entity, who in turn contracts out the day-to-day operation of school-based services and instruction. Proponents of charters believe they can run education programs more efficiently and save rate-payer money. Today, approximately 125 of Chicago's more than 635 public schools are charters. But, the Chicago Teachers' Union (CTU) pushed back against charters through workplace organizing

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The slippery slope of privatization starts with underfunding and moves through a variety of steps to **break the public's confidence** in the public system...

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drives that successfully won union contracts for charter school teachers and support staffs, effectively centralizing the organizing power of all workers, and uniting them as a labour force. CTU even became the country's first union to use strike action in a charter school to win better deals. The Chicago Teachers' Union story has attracted well-deserved international attention. Education sector unions across the United States and beyond continue to study the progress of CTU to learn how to make gains against privatization. Measurably, one of CTU's greatest achievements occurred in the Spring of 2023, where after years of systematic organizing at worksites and into communities, the CTU helped

elect Brandon Johnson, a CTU organizer since 2011, as the 57<sup>th</sup> Mayor of Chicago. Without question, the election of Brandon Johnson is a major accomplishment that will help stem the private sector's attempts to grab hold of the education system in that city; however, this victory didn't happen overnight. To get here CTU organizers first picked a working-class fight against Chicago's privatized charter school system, a fight that created meaningful relationships between public school workers and their communities.

Following CTU's very successful negotiation campaign in 2012, where education workers made major gains by going on strike and winning the support of many community groups, Chicago Public Schools management decided to immediately close nearly 50 schools. The school closures aimed to punish the CTU and its members. More importantly, the management of Chicago Public Schools allowed charters to proliferate in urban neighbourhoods. The sudden increase in charters sharply reduced CTU membership but that wasn't the only concern. Chicago city schools have higher populations of racialized students which means the school closures, along with the problems associated with charter schools, disproportionately impacted Hispanic and Black students. Since then, organizing ideology has led to union contracts in 25% of Chicago's 12 charter school networks. CTU leadership would prefer that the municipal government eliminate charters and for-profit education altogether, but in the mean-time winning union contracts to improve working conditions for educators and learning conditions for kids is the next best way to fight against privatization. It brings together the semi-privatized workers and situates them in a unionized environment that can foster increased community and worker relationships, all focused on the vital role that public education plays in creating the best outcomes for all students.

To organize in charter schools means to fight against the deep pockets of private for-profit interests. Charter holders have immense

financial and political capital to protect their interests. They run elaborate advertising campaigns and make large donations to key electoral campaigns. They demonize the CTU by attacking union leadership in the media with targeted language like "power grab," arguing that the CTU is against "innovation" and only wants to create more "red-tape." Charter proponents characterize unionizing efforts as "big union bosses" against parental choice. They argue that union contracts are very restrictive for competition. What's more is that charter capitalists steadfastly maintain the false narrative that CTU's collective agreements mean cuts to staffing and resources. These tactics are textbook privatization playbook moves that aim to falsely discredit the services provided by a public education system. Yet, despite the attacks from charter supporters, the CTU engages in deep organizing within its membership and into communities.

The Chicago Teachers' Union isn't just defending the working and learning conditions of educators and students against privatization, they're finding ways to flex their power and influence. CTU leadership intentionally chooses to go on the offensive, especially to confront the misinformation and neoliberal spin, by listening to the stories of members. Members tell working-class stories about kids whose families can't afford basic necessities and about teaching in ill-resourced and under-staffed schools, particularly in charters. CTU organizers help active members sharpen these stories and use straight talk to debunk the myths of charters. This is why CTU's fight against privatization is so important. They're proving that with good relational organizing, an education sector union can engage rank and file members to reach through community partnerships and push back against pedagogical profiteering. For example, CTU runs an organizer training program every July called the Summer Organizing Institute, where 30 applicants learn how to use organizing principles and practices in their respective school communities. They are hired on as interns and paid to undertake tasks based on their learning. Some

Institute interns are selected because of their affiliation with progressive groups like social and climate justice organizations. Training involves classroom theory and in-the-field praxis. During training, organizer interns visit members' homes

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...the successful operation of any charter school system requires a profit margin, one that **doesn't flip resources and profit back into schools and student supports.**

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to ask questions designed to optimize listening and to bolster neighbourhood-based organizing meetings. This means that CTU members quickly learn the importance of community allyship as a foundation of trade unionism. CTU's annual training institute wants new organizers to learn that the material and social struggle of members impacts everyone, like the intersections of working in unhealthy school buildings, living around local industrial pollution, and breathing the smoke of wild fires induced by global warming.

Above all, CTU is an organizing union because it views educators as members of communities, not just workers in publicly funded schools.

The leaders and organizers of CTU make a strong case as to why the fight against charters is a working-class issue. A publicly funded education system with non-unionized educators erodes and devalues the socioeconomic interests of families and workers. Chicago Public Schools administration might argue that charters are a viable financial solution to education, but the socioeconomic impacts suggest otherwise, as the successful operation of any charter school system requires a profit margin, one that doesn't flip resources and profit back into schools and student supports. Chicago Public Schools provides funding for charters and regular schools at the same per pupil rate, but unlike charters, non-charter school accounting doesn't have to serve up a percentage slice to the charter holder. Administrative costs in Chicago charters tend to be high as well, since the 12 charter networks require separate business structures. Privatization in publicly funded school systems like Chicago's not only redirects funding away from classrooms, it promotes the classist idea that to have quality public services like education some people have to get rich (and subsequently others must do without). To combat neoliberalism, CTU members call attention to the fact that charter schools don't operate in wealthy, suburban neighbourhoods and charter schools have fewer special educators, counselors, and social workers. They successfully won overall enrollment caps in charter networks to prevent student drift and stabilize the system. They argue that their members live and work in the city and want what's best for their students, that investing in classrooms leads to better student enrolment, and thus stronger taxation growth for urban neighbourhoods.

During the 2023 Summer Organizing Institute, educators enrolled in CTU's organizer program spent some time canvassing residents in an elementary charter school downtown neighbourhood. CTU organizers conducted outreach

to parents and community members that the charter school management have been reluctant to be a “sanctuary” school. CTU members in the elementary school have been working under an expired contract and management refuses to come to the table to re-negotiate a fair deal, one that includes important sanctuary language. Sanctuary language means that school management and staff do their best to support newcomers, for example by offering interpretation services during important special education meetings. More importantly, however, sanctuary schools do not cooperate with Federal immigration enforcement. This is particularly important for newcomers going through immigration processes because an anti-immigration Federal government could decide to aggressively pursue and detain undocumented children while attending school. It mandates that education is a human right for all students. Sanctuary language was successfully negotiated for all CPS schools in 2019, but charters don’t have to adopt sanctuary school practices if they don’t want to.

The implementation of sanctuary school policy is more than protecting vulnerable, racialized kids in the building from federal state agencies, such as the Trump Administration-established Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) which targets and deports migrant families seeking a new life. It illustrates that workers can use collective action to fight against the underpinnings of powerful neoliberals who champion low wage policies and who blame immigration for economic and social problems in society, and to bargain for sanctuary language to push back the encroachment of privatized education and institutional racism, and to bargain for sanctuary schools because it protects children and publicly funded education. Due diligence and good custodial management of public infrastructure aside, the learning that goes on in school classrooms is not a business. In other words, the education of children is not capital. Charter schools erode and undermine this central belief by monetizing learning at the expense of children, families, and communities.

With this, we can see how CTU has led and continues a key discourse on the transformational role of organizing within the membership and with community as its very core. What this means for public education and OSSTF/FEESO’s

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fight to protect and enhance our own system requires us to look deeply at how we organize with educators, parents, and students as a collective. As what we can learn from the Summer Organizing Institute is that organizing is to enable the power of people to work collectively to a devoted cause, and the need for us to remain vigilant from encroaching privatization. We cannot wait for an existential crisis to fight back, we build power now before it’s too late.

— **Jared Hunt** (he/him)  
Teacher, District 4, Near North

**Munib Sajjad** (he/him)  
OSSTF/FEESO Community Organizer



# La lutte contre la privatisation des écoles est un combat de la classe ouvrière

**Ce que nous pouvons  
apprendre des efforts  
de syndicalisation  
du *Chicago  
Teachers' Union***

par Jared Hunt et Munib Sajjad

Le ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario est sans doute le plus grand ministère du gouvernement provincial dont le niveau de privatisation est le plus bas, peut-être même à l'échelle du pays. Le peu de privatisation qui existe dans le système éducatif public de l'Ontario, de la maternelle à la 12<sup>e</sup> année, se résume à faire rouler les autobus scolaires et à entretenir les bâtiments, à créer et à mettre en œuvre des programmes de crédits en ligne et à fournir des services de garde d'enfants avant et après l'école. Ces dernières années, les conseils scolaires ont expérimenté d'autres sources de revenus, comme attirer et percevoir des frais pour les élèves étrangers, afin de remédier au sous-financement chronique. Le statut actuel de l'éducation publique dans la province est toutefois menacé par une série de mesures gouvernementales qui marquent la mise en œuvre d'un plan de privatisation typique. La pente glissante de la privatisation commence par le sous-financement et se poursuit par une série de mesures visant à briser la confiance du public dans le système public, ouvrant ainsi le débat sur ce qu'un marché libre de l'éducation pourrait offrir. Si un gouvernement de l'Ontario voulait introduire un marché pour monétiser la concurrence dans l'éducation publique de la maternelle à la 12<sup>e</sup> année, à quoi cela pourrait-il ressembler? Les députés provinciaux des partis politiques précédents ont lancé des idées à grande échelle, mais aucune n'est allée bien loin. Cependant, ce n'est pas le cas au sud de la frontière et les expériences menées là-bas devraient nous servir d'exemples dans notre lutte pour protéger l'éducation financée à même les deniers publics en Ontario.

Les *Chicago Public Schools (CPS)*, l'autorité éducative publique de la ville, ont introduit les écoles à but lucratif au milieu des années 90, avec le modèle d'entreprise des écoles à « charte ». Les écoles à charte fonctionnent comme un partenariat public/privé, dans lequel le gouvernement local confie les décisions de fonctionnement et de financement à une société, qui à son tour sous-traite le fonctionnement quotidien des services et de l'enseignement dans

les écoles. Les partisans des chartes estiment qu'ils peuvent gérer les programmes éducatifs de manière plus efficace et économiser l'argent des contribuables. Aujourd'hui, environ 125 des plus de 635 écoles publiques de Chicago sont des écoles à charte. Mais le *Chicago Teachers' Union (CTU)* s'est opposé aux écoles à charte en organisant des campagnes de syndicalisation en milieu de travail qui ont permis d'obtenir des ententes syndicales pour les enseignants et le personnel de soutien des écoles à charte, centralisant ainsi le pouvoir d'organisation de tous les travailleurs et les unissant en tant que force de travail. Le *CTU* est même devenu le premier syndicat du pays à recourir à la grève dans une école à charte pour obtenir de meilleures conventions. L'histoire du *Chicago Teachers' Union* a attiré une attention internationale bien méritée. Les syndicats du secteur de l'éducation des États-Unis et d'ailleurs continuent d'étudier les progrès du *CTU* pour apprendre à lutter contre la privatisation. Après des années d'organisation systématique sur les lieux de travail et dans les communautés, le *CTU* a contribué à l'élection de Brandon Johnson, un organisateur du *CTU* depuis 2011, en tant que 57<sup>e</sup> maire de Chicago. Il ne fait aucun doute que l'élection de Brandon Johnson est une réalisation majeure qui contribuera à freiner les tentatives du secteur privé de s'emparer du système éducatif de cette ville; cependant, cette victoire ne s'est pas produite du jour au lendemain. Pour en arriver là, les organisateurs du *CTU* ont d'abord choisi la lutte de la classe ouvrière contre le système privatisé des écoles à charte de Chicago, une lutte qui a créé des relations significatives entre les travailleurs des écoles publiques et leurs communautés.

À la suite de la campagne de négociation très réussie du *CTU* en 2012, au cours de laquelle les travailleurs de l'éducation ont obtenu des avancées majeures en allant en grève et en gagnant le soutien de nombreux groupes communautaires, la direction des écoles publiques de Chicago a décidé de fermer immédiatement près de 50 écoles. Les fermetures

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d'écoles visaient à punir le *CTU* et ses membres. Plus important encore, la direction des écoles publiques de Chicago a permis aux écoles à charte de proliférer dans les quartiers urbains. L'augmentation soudaine du nombre de chartes a fortement réduit le nombre de membres du *CTU*, mais ce n'était pas la seule préoccupation. Les écoles de la ville de Chicago comptent un plus grand nombre d'élèves racialisés, ce qui signifie que les fermetures d'écoles, ainsi que les problèmes associés aux écoles à charte, ont eu un impact disproportionné sur les élèves hispaniques et noirs. Depuis lors, l'idéologie de l'organisation a permis de conclure des conventions syndicales dans 25 % des 12 réseaux d'écoles à charte de Chicago. Les dirigeants du *CTU* préféreraient que le gouvernement municipal élimine complètement les écoles à charte et l'enseignement à but lucratif, mais en at-

tendant, l'obtention de conventions syndicales pour améliorer les conditions de travail des éducateurs et les conditions d'apprentissage des enfants est le meilleur moyen de lutter contre la privatisation. Cela permet de rassembler les travailleurs semi-privatisés et de les placer dans un environnement syndiqué qui peut favoriser les relations entre la communauté et les travailleurs, tout en se concentrant sur le rôle vital que joue l'éducation publique dans l'obtention des meilleurs résultats pour tous les élèves.

Organiser des écoles à charte signifie lutter contre les poches profondes des intérêts privés à but lucratif. Les titulaires de chartes disposent d'un immense capital financier et politique pour protéger leurs intérêts. Ils mènent des campagnes publicitaires élaborées et font des dons importants à des campagnes électorales clés. Ils diabolisent le CTU en attaquant la direction du syndicat dans les médias avec des termes ciblés comme « prise de pouvoir », arguant que le CTU est contre « l'innovation » et ne veut que créer plus de « paperasserie ». Les partisans de la charte qualifient les efforts de syndicalisation de « grands patrons syndicaux » qui s'opposent au choix des parents. Ils affirment que les conventions syndicales sont très restrictives pour la concurrence. Qui plus est, les capitalistes de la charte maintiennent inébranlablement le faux récit selon lequel les conventions collectives du CTU signifient des réductions de personnel et de ressources. Ces tactiques sont des exemples classiques de privatisation qui visent à discréditer les services fournis par un système d'éducation public. Pourtant, malgré les attaques des partisans de la charte, le CTU s'organise en profondeur au sein de ses membres et dans les communautés.

Le *Chicago Teachers' Union* ne se contente pas de défendre les conditions de travail et d'apprentissage des éducateurs et des élèves contre la privatisation, il trouve des moyens d'exercer son pouvoir et son influence. Les dirigeants du CTU choisissent délibérément de passer à l'offensive, en particulier pour faire face à la désinformation et à la propagande néolibérale,

en écoutant les récits des membres. Les membres racontent des histoires de classe ouvrière sur les enfants dont les familles n'ont pas les moyens d'acheter les produits de première nécessité et sur l'enseignement dans des écoles mal dotées en ressources et en personnel, en particulier dans les écoles à charte. Les organisateurs du CTU aident les membres actifs à affiner ces récits et à démystifier les mythes sur les écoles à charte. C'est pourquoi la lutte du CTU contre la privatisation est si importante. Il prouve qu'avec une bonne organisation relationnelle, un syndicat du secteur de l'éducation peut inciter les membres de la base à établir des partenariats avec la communauté et à s'opposer à l'enrichissement pédagogique. Par exemple, le CTU organise chaque année en juillet un programme de formation d'organisateurs appelé *Summer Organizing Institute*, dans le cadre duquel 30 candidats apprennent à utiliser les principes et les pratiques de l'organisation dans leurs communautés scolaires respectives. Ils sont embauchés en tant que stagiaires et rémunérés pour effectuer des tâches basées sur leur apprentissage. Certains stagiaires de l'institut sont choisis en raison de leur affiliation à des groupes progressistes comme les organisations de justice sociale et climatique. La formation comprend de la théorie en classe et de la pratique sur le terrain. Au cours de la formation, les stagiaires organisateurs se rendent au domicile des membres pour poser des questions destinées à optimiser l'écoute et à soutenir les réunions de groupes organisés dans les quartiers. Cela signifie que les membres du CTU apprennent rapidement l'importance de l'alliance avec la communauté comme base du syndicalisme. L'institut de formation annuel du CTU veut que les nouveaux organisateurs apprennent que la lutte matérielle et sociale des membres a un impact sur tout le monde, comme les intersections entre le travail dans des bâtiments scolaires insalubres, la vie autour de la pollution industrielle locale et la respiration de la fumée des feux de forêt produits par le réchauffement climatique. Par-dessus tout, le CTU est un syn-

dicat organisateur, parce qu'il considère les éducateurs comme des membres des communautés et pas seulement comme des travailleurs dans des écoles financées à même les deniers publics.

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...le bon fonctionnement de tout système d'école à charte exige une marge bénéficiaire, qui ne renvoie pas les ressources et les bénéfices vers les écoles et le soutien aux élèves.

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Les dirigeants et les organisateurs du CTU expliquent clairement pourquoi la lutte contre les écoles à charte est une question qui concerne la classe ouvrière. Un système éducatif financé par l'État et composé d'éducateurs non syndiqués érode et dévalorise les intérêts socioéconomiques des familles et des travailleurs. L'administration des écoles publiques de Chicago pourrait soutenir que les écoles à charte sont une solution financière viable pour l'éducation, mais les impacts socioéconomiques suggèrent le contraire, car le bon fonctionnement de tout système d'école à charte exige une marge bénéficiaire, qui ne renvoie pas les ressources et les bénéfices vers les écoles et le soutien

aux élèves. Les écoles publiques de Chicago financent les écoles à charte et les écoles ordinaires au même taux par élève, mais, contrairement aux écoles à charte, la comptabilité des écoles non à charte n'a pas à servir une part de pourcentage au détenteur de la charte. Les coûts administratifs des écoles à charte de Chicago tendent également à être élevés, car les 12 réseaux d'écoles à charte nécessitent des structures commerciales distinctes. La privatisation des systèmes scolaires financés par l'État, comme celui de Chicago, ne se contente pas de détourner les fonds des salles de classe, elle promeut l'idée classiste selon laquelle, pour disposer de services publics de qualité comme l'éducation, certains doivent s'enrichir (et, par conséquent, les autres doivent s'en passer). Pour lutter contre le néolibéralisme, les membres du CTU attirent l'attention sur le fait que les écoles à charte n'opèrent pas dans les quartiers riches des banlieues et que les écoles à charte comptent moins d'éducateurs spécialisés, de conseillers et de travailleurs sociaux. Ils ont réussi à obtenir des plafonds d'inscription dans les réseaux d'écoles à charte afin d'empêcher la dérive des élèves et de stabiliser le système. Ils font valoir que leurs membres vivent et travaillent en ville et veulent ce qu'il y a de mieux pour leurs élèves, qu'investir dans les salles de classe permet d'améliorer le taux d'inscription des élèves et donc de renforcer la croissance fiscale dans les quartiers urbains.

Au cours de l'Institut d'organisation d'été 2023, les éducateurs inscrits au programme d'organisation du CTU ont passé du temps à sonder les résidents d'une école élémentaire à charte dans le quartier du centre-ville. Les organisateurs du CTU ont sensibilisé les parents et les membres de la communauté à la réticence de la direction de l'école à charte à devenir une école « refuge ». Les membres du CTU de l'école élémentaire travaillent dans le cadre d'une convention échue et la direction refuse de revenir à la table pour renégocier une entente équitable, qui inclurait une disposition réservée importante. Cette disposition signifie

que la direction et le personnel de l'école font de leur mieux pour soutenir les nouveaux arrivants, par exemple en offrant des services d'interprétation lors de réunions importantes sur l'éducation de l'enfance en difficulté. Mais surtout, les écoles refuges ne coopèrent pas avec les autorités fédérales chargées de l'application des lois sur l'immigration. Ceci est particulièrement important pour les nouveaux arrivants qui passent par les procédures d'immigration, car un gouvernement fédéral anti-immigration pourrait décider de poursuivre agressivement et de détenir les enfants sans-papiers pendant qu'ils



...l'apprentissage qui se déroule dans les salles de classe n'est pas une activité commerciale. En d'autres termes, l'éducation des enfants n'est pas un capital.



sont à l'école. Elle stipule que l'éducation est un droit de la personne pour tous les élèves. Le libellé refuge a été négocié avec succès pour toutes les écoles de la CPS en 2019, mais les chartes ne sont pas obligées d'adopter des pratiques d'école refuge si elles ne le souhaitent pas.

La mise en œuvre d'une politique d'école refuge ne se limite pas à protéger les enfants vulnérables et racialisés dans le bâtiment contre les agences fédérales de l'État, telles que l'*Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)*

créée par l'administration Trump, qui cible et déporte les familles de migrants à la recherche d'une nouvelle vie. Elle illustre le fait que les travailleurs peuvent utiliser l'action collective pour lutter contre les fondements des puissants néolibéraux, qui défendent les politiques de bas salaires et qui blâment l'immigration pour les problèmes économiques et sociaux de la société. Le CTU négocie l'obtention d'un libellé refuge afin de repousser l'empiétement de l'éducation privatisée et le racisme institutionnel et négocie des écoles refuges parce qu'elles protègent les enfants et l'éducation financée à même les deniers publics. Mis à part la diligence raisonnable et la bonne gestion de l'infrastructure publique, l'apprentissage qui se déroule dans les salles de classe n'est pas une activité commerciale. En d'autres termes, l'éducation des enfants n'est pas un capital. Les écoles à charte érodent et sapent cette croyance centrale en tirant un profit pécuniaire de l'apprentissage aux dépens des enfants, des familles et des communautés.

Ainsi, nous pouvons voir comment le CTU a mené et poursuit un discours clé sur le rôle transformationnel de l'organisation au sein des membres et de la communauté en son cœur même. Ce que cela signifie pour l'éducation publique et la propre lutte d'OSSTF/FEESO pour protéger et améliorer notre propre système exige que nous examinions en profondeur la manière dont nous nous organisons avec les éducateurs, les parents et les élèves en tant que collectif. L'Institut d'été sur l'organisation nous a appris que l'organisation consiste à permettre aux gens de travailler collectivement à une cause dévouée et qu'il est nécessaire de rester vigilant face à la privatisation croissante. Nous ne pouvons pas attendre une crise existentielle pour nous défendre, nous devons construire le pouvoir maintenant avant qu'il ne soit trop tard.

Jared Hunt (il/lui)

Personnel enseignant, District 4, Near North

Munib Sajjad (il/lui)

Organisateur communautaire d'OSSTF/FEESO

PUBLIC EDUCATION  
AND  
PRIVATIZATION  
IN  
**AUSTRALIA**



**Debunking the myth  
of privatization's benefits  
to education**

by Maurie Mulheron

It was the economist Milton Friedman decades ago who described public education as “an island of socialism in a free market” society.<sup>1</sup> As a high priest of neoliberal economic theory, the highly influential Friedman and others called for all public services to be privatized including public education, which they argued needed to be turned into a free market characterized by competition and choice. Initially regarded as the viewpoint of extremists this ideology has, certainly since the 1980s, become a political and economic orthodoxy central to policy positions of many governments across the globe, including Australia.

## Schools

Australian schooling was always characterized by deep inequalities but, as neoliberal economics became dominant from the 1980s onwards, the divide between socially advantaged and disadvantaged students widened considerably as policy settings designed to favour private schooling were enacted. Enrolments in private or non-government schools in Australia, almost all of which are owned and run by religions, have now reached approximately 40% of all students.

Private schools have the right to charge uncapped fees, have total autonomy as to which students they enrol, and are exempted from anti-discrimination laws. What this has created is a form of educational apartheid where over 80% of low socio-economic status (SES) students are enrolled in public schools with only approximately 18% enrolled in private schools. Similar enrolment ratios remain constant for Indigenous students, those living in remote locations, students from a refugee background, those with a language background other than English, and students with a disability.

School funding policies introduced to embed ‘competition and choice’ have meant that private schools in Australia receive significant annual federal government funding, including huge grants for capital works. In addition, at the state government level, private schools re-

ceive recurrent and capital funding. A landmark review in 2011 created a national Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) intended to measure the amount of additional public funding schools should receive based on student need.<sup>2</sup> Despite this, it is estimated that private schools will be over-funded by approximately \$1 billion for the period 2020–23 while public schools will be under-funded by \$19 billion.<sup>3</sup> Essentially, the public system which is doing the ‘heavy lifting’ is vastly under-resourced for the challenges its teachers face on a daily basis.

Successive Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reports have confirmed that social segregation is a defining feature of Australian schooling. The ideology of treating schooling as a market-place has resulted in Australia having the highest degree of school choice of any OECD country but with huge concentrations of disadvantaged students, low equity in provision, and social segregation.

There are now massive gaps across Australia in academic achievement between high SES and low SES students of up to several years of schooling. For example, recent national testing data reveals that 29% of low SES Year 9 students (15 years of age) were below the writing standard and 16% were below the numeracy standard. For Year 9 Indigenous students, the proportion not achieving the national reading standard is 11 times higher than for high SES students.<sup>4</sup>

Choice has not enlarged the educational opportunities of the poor. Indeed, the tendency for choice to segregate children in the lower bands of socio-economic status has created worsening conditions for the populations who most depend on the effectiveness of public schools. Growth in public and private spending in the non-government sector has operated to remove more culturally advantaged children and young people from the public systems, leaving these systems less supported culturally by a balanced mix of students from different family backgrounds.<sup>5</sup>

While the history of how Australia found itself in this situation is as complex as it is torturous, the experience of prioritizing private advantage over social good contrasts with other countries as shown in a 2013 comparative study of Australia and Canada,

The relationship between school SES and student outcomes is generally stronger in Australia than in Canada. An important and visible difference between the Australian and Canadian educational systems is the degree to which they are marked by school choice, privatization, and social segregation. In Australia, these features of educational marketization have provided unequal access to resources and “good” schools and have led to levels of social exclusion and segregation higher than in comparable, highly developed countries such as Canada.<sup>6</sup>

Of course, while funding policies have weakened the public education system in Australia, there are other forces at play. Governments in Australia, as elsewhere, no longer regard the provision of public services as primarily their responsibility with privatization occurring throughout the public sector including in: postal and communication services, transport, roads, shipping ports, airports, health care, welfare, prisons, security services, employment services, housing, and energy. It could be argued that schooling is the last great public enterprise. But since the 1980s national systems of education have been left unprotected from an emerging global education industry that sees compulsory schooling as an under-capitalized market with a permanent and ever-increasing customer base, children.

Governments have created the conditions for the commercialization of education services. National testing regimes, such as the Australian National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) along with accompanying accountability and data infrastructures, have gifted enormous influence to education technology gi-

ants, sidelining teachers and too often wresting control of the curriculum from them. Further, as government education departments retreat from providing professional support and resources to teachers, the vacuum is filled by firms in the obvious areas of student assessment, but also in school administration, student well-being, teacher professional development, and curriculum delivery. “Commercialization is big business. Many commercial providers generate large profits for shareholders by selling goods and services to schools, districts, and systems.”<sup>7</sup>



**It could be argued that schooling is the last great public enterprise.**



However, the role of large corporations is much more opaque at the government level. Global consultancy firms, such as the “Big 4”: Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC), Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler (KPMG), Deloitte, and Ernst and Young, work inside of government departments such as the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Education with direct control over policy development and strategic planning. In the state of NSW, tens of millions of dollars are paid to these firms, without consultation with the teaching profession and in the absence of public scrutiny.<sup>8</sup> In a report commissioned by the NSW Teachers Federation the researchers found that:

The reduced capacity of the state has opened up spaces and opportunities for edu-businesses to expand their role in schools and schooling systems, largely on a for-profit basis. Private corporations have also sought an enhanced role in all stages of the policy cycle in education (from agenda setting, research for policy, policy text production, policy implementation and evaluation, provision of related professional development, and resources) in what has been referred to as the 'privatization of the education policy community'.<sup>9</sup>

In the five years since the report was published, the direct influence of the corporate consultancies and edu-businesses has increased dramatically. It should come as no surprise that the Big 4 consultancy firms are generous donors to Australia's two major political parties.<sup>10</sup>

### **Vocational Education and Training: A case study**

The most striking example of the catastrophic impact of the application of market forces to education is in the area of Australia's post-compulsory Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector.

Until relatively recently, the provision of vocational education and training was largely the responsibility of the public system known as Technical and Further Education (TAFE). It existed as a national system in every state and territory of Australia, administered at a state level, and with an enormous reach into local communities. Despite chronic underfunding compared to other sectors, TAFE was highly regarded, providing skills training for industries, trades, small business, and emerging professions. In addition, it provided more general and further education, particularly to those re-joining the workforce, or those mature age citizens seeking additional qualifications including entry to university. In contrast to the Australian university sector, enrolments by students from a disadvantaged

background was much higher in TAFE.

The watershed moment was April 2012 when all state and territory governments met with the federal government at a Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting and agreed to introduce a radical restructuring of vocational education and training. Within a short period, a new funding regime based on the market model was introduced. There were two key requirements which became the architecture for the privatization of the sector and the destruction of the public provider, TAFE. Firstly, what was called entitlement funding was introduced. This was simply a voucher system. Secondly, a student loan scheme, an income contingent loan model, was introduced. Both these mechanisms were underpinned by a requirement that state governments had to open up all funding to the private sector and that the funding had to be allocated on a competitive basis.

It soon became clear what the national agreement meant. Voucher funding detached the funding from the actual TAFE college and attached it to the individual student. The connection between funding and the TAFE college was severed. In short, the public provider's funding was now precarious, no longer guaranteed.

VET students were to pay the full cost of a qualification, without any government subsidy, to either private for-profit providers which under the national agreement were allowed to charge fees up to AUD\$99,000, or to TAFE. This became the incentive for private for-profit training companies to increase tuition fees dramatically, and offer only those courses that would maximize profits. Students and their families soon found that the charging of fees was completely unregulated. Within the first two years of the scheme, 84% of income contingent loans from government to students went to private for-profit companies.

Student debt ballooned but many students also discovered that the private training organizations did not necessarily complete the course or even offer the actual training. Students in this situation were left with the debt but no qualification. Media stories began to appear of private

training organizations aggressively targeting disadvantaged students with brokers waiting outside employment agencies to sign up students or setting up kiosks in suburban shopping malls offering incentives such as free iPads.

The impact of the 2012 national agreement on the teachers in TAFE was devastating. Without guaranteed funding, the employer attacked salaries and working conditions. In some states of Australia the levels of casualization grew to 80% of the workforce. Across Australia some TAFE colleges closed, courses were scrapped, and student numbers plummeted. In 2012, the number of permanent and temporary teaching positions in just one state, New South Wales, was 17,104. Ten years on from the national agreement, by 2022, this had dropped to 8,197, a net loss of 8,907 teachers from the public system in just one state.

Of course, VET teachers, through their national and state unions, and academics working in this area had warned government of the dire consequences if the market model was introduced.<sup>11</sup> They were ignored. Fewer Australians are in vocational education and training now than when the privatization agenda was introduced.

## Conclusion

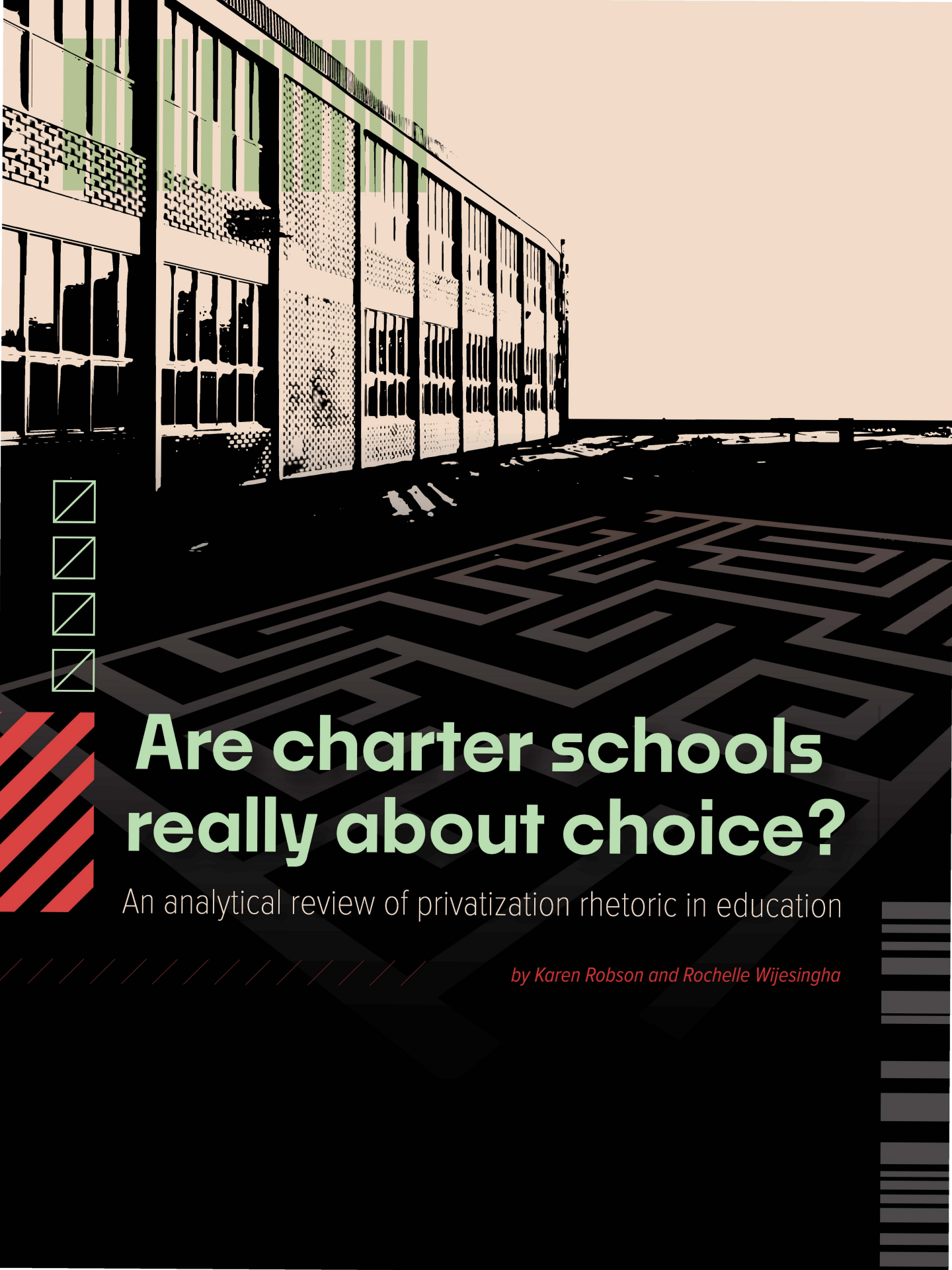
While education has always been an area of public policy that has been contested, where historically, tensions between church and the state have played out, where individual privilege keeps challenging the very idea of public good, and where social conservatives have consistently attempted to control the school curriculum, in recent years we have witnessed a much more aggressive, coherent, and global campaign against public education that is underpinned by the ideology of the market. It is this influence of neoliberal ideology that is having the most dramatic effect on public education around the world. It is up to teachers, professional allies, and the community to be alert to the dangers and to fight to retain control. Our children and young people deserve nothing less.

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# Are charter schools really about choice?

An analytical review of privatization rhetoric in education

*by Karen Robson and Rochelle Wijesingha*

Discussions about school choice in Ontario have received significant media attention, especially since the election of a Conservative government in 2018. Recently, the disruptions in learning due to school closures as a result of COVID-19 as well as pre-pandemic labour disputes have sparked some critics to offer charter schools as a solution to improve educational outcomes for students in Ontario.<sup>8;10;12;18</sup> Charter schools have also been offered as a way for low-income to middle-income families to exercise choice in the education their child receives. What exactly are these schools? Charter schools are publicly funded, but differ from public schools because they are independently operated and therefore do not have to follow the same regulations as public schools. Charter schools follow a “charter” that they must uphold. The charter is essentially the school-specific program the province approves, and it is what makes the school unique, allowing it to offer programming that is supposedly distinct. Alberta is the only province to currently have charter schools in Canada. Provincial legislation was enacted in 1994 in Alberta to permit two charter school authorities in the province.<sup>1</sup>

Examples of charter schools in Alberta include the “Suzuki Charter School” in Edmonton which delivers music instruction using the Suzuki method and “Mother Earth’s Children’s Charter School” which focuses on traditional Indigenous teachings. While schools such as these sound a lot like alternative schools in Ontario, they are distinctly different because they do not report to the local school board, but directly to the provincial ministry. Thus, charter schools are not accountable to publicly elected trustees. They are basically publicly funded private schools that can essentially pick and choose the students that they want through an application process, and which often include hidden fees for registration or programming. More information on the Alberta charter school experience can be found in Heather Ganshorn’s 2023 article from this publication’s spring 2023 issue.<sup>5</sup>

In Ontario, critics of the public system have

suggested that charter schools can improve educational outcomes for students and can even be a solution to declining provincial math test scores.<sup>12</sup> But is there any evidence to support this claim? Do students at charter schools outperform their public school counterparts? The answer is not so simple. Even those who argue in favour of charter schools in Ontario admit to the limitations of comparing test scores of charter school students to that of public school students.<sup>11</sup> For example, 17% of Alberta’s charter school students attend a school for gifted learners while less than 1% of students attend schools for at-risk youth.<sup>17</sup> Catering schools to gifted learners will have obvious positive effects on test scores. Moreover, if gifted students are opting out of public schools to attend charter schools, this will clearly have negative impacts on public school rankings.<sup>17</sup> Johnson indicates that a possible explanation why charter schools may outperform public, separate, and private schools on standardized tests is because “they are able to select the best students out of other schools and reject weaker applicants.”<sup>7</sup> Charter schools also do not have to make accommodations for students with special education needs, as their special status enables them to bypass parts of the *Education Act* that ensures appropriate accommodations are made for students with disabilities.

Charter schools are also often advertised as a way for low-income to middle-income families to exercise choice over the education their children receive.<sup>12</sup> Yet, data has shown that charter school attendees in Alberta come from the wealthiest socioeconomic groups. For example, the median socioeconomic scores for a charter school in Alberta is 1.3 while it is 3.1 for public and separate schools.<sup>13</sup> This is not surprising given that parents have to pay supplemental fees for attending charter schools even though they are advertised as being tuition-free. A school such as Alberta Classical Academy charges a required resource fee of \$265 per year for a student from grade 1 to 8 and a transportation/busing fee of \$975 per year. In addi-

tion to these fees, there is also the high cost of uniforms. Riep writes that “the list of supplemental fees associated with attending a charter school make them cost-prohibitive for many learners, and represent hidden impediments to real choice.”<sup>17</sup> Thus, in Alberta charter schools may be sites of segregation based on wealth. Data on the racial composition of charter school attendees in Alberta is not available.

If we look to our neighbours to the south where charter schools abound, there is little evidence that the presence of charter schools serves to level the playing field for students. Like in Alberta, we see different types of segregation emerging due to how charter schools attract and select students. Evidence from the U.S. shows that charter schools increase racial segregation.<sup>14</sup> Data from diverse cities like New York City (NYC) actually show high levels of school racial segregation. Di Carlo and colleagues examine data from NYC and show an overrepresentation of Black and Hispanic students in charter schools and an underrepresentation of White and Asian students.<sup>4</sup> The authors found that while only 9.1% of NYC students attend a charter school, 54.2% of charter school attendees are Black, followed by 38.9% being Hispanic students. In contrast only 4.5% of charter school attendees are white and 2.4% are Asian.

Attending highly segregated schools has adverse effects on health and well-being for Black children.<sup>19</sup> However, attending segregated schools does not have the same effects on white children. Hahn found that attending a segregated school results in lower rates of high school graduation among the U.S. Black population, which is then associated with reduced life expectancy of about 9 years.<sup>6</sup> Apart from the effects of segregation, charter schools in the U.S. also have higher overall suspension rates than non-charter schools and disproportionately suspend Black students and students with disabilities at a rate much higher than their non-charter counterparts.<sup>9</sup> Black students in charter schools are suspended at rates higher than any other race.<sup>6</sup> This is far from leveling the playing field.

In fact, the NAACP has called for a moratorium on charter school expansion.<sup>15</sup>

Charter schools have increased pressure to achieve and maintain high test scores. Low test scores literally put a charter school at risk of closure. As such, charter schools in the U.S. have been found to prevent students with disabilities from enrolling in order to maintain high test scores.<sup>16</sup> Strategies to dissuade students with disabilities include, “not providing the services mandated in Individual Education Plans (IEP), by repeatedly over-disciplining students with disabilities, and by advising families of children with disabilities that their student will be better served elsewhere.”<sup>16</sup>

“  
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”

Perhaps even more pertinent to the current argument, American charter schools, despite how long they have been in existence, have also not resulted in significantly better academic outcomes. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) found no differences in reading and math scores between students who attend charter schools and those who attend public schools.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, other research has shown that charter schools actually widen the achievement gap between Black and white students.<sup>2</sup>

While the situation in the U.S. seems bleak, charter schools are advertised as being able to offer parents in Ontario choice over the schools their children attend. However, evidence seems to suggest that charter schools more so offer schools a choice in which students they can admit and serve to exacerbate existing inequalities all under the guise of choice.

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**PEX**

Public Education Exchange  
Réseau d'échange sur  
l'éducation publique

## The Public Education Exchange

A place for real  
conversations  
about education  
privatization

For decades, there has been a well-coordinated effort to unmake public education in Canada. As explained in *Unequal Benefits: Privatization and Public Education in Canada* (written by this article's second author, Sue Winton and reviewed later in this publication), privatization is encouraged through myriad policies, including the persistent decline of public investment in public education. By design, government cuts validate and legitimize an increased reliance on private sources. The public passively accepts private influence as it becomes the only perceived option to offset budget shortfalls; in turn, consent for privatization is manufactured.<sup>1</sup> This not only transfers the public responsibility of education funding to private companies, it also invites their interests into the system—interests that do not prioritize the public good.

Alongside cuts, the neoliberal reform movement has increasingly pushed to commodify, privatize, and marketize public education. To do this, ideas and practices are imported from the private sector to design and deliver aspects of education.<sup>2</sup> For example, schools adopt efficiency models that necessitate increased managerialism, auditing, and surveillance of both students and teachers. Moreover, schools are encouraged to compete for students which results in a focus on branding and marketing combined with a view of students as consumers. Market “logic” is used to celebrate and motivate increased student and parental ‘choice’ in education. School choice is also encouraged through fear tactics surrounding ‘ideologically motivated teaching’ and a supposed lack of parental rights.<sup>3</sup> Privatization is presented as a way to preserve parental cultural authority.<sup>4</sup>

When these tactics fail, reformers manufacture crises surrounding student achievement, test scores, and the need to ‘modernize’ schools.<sup>5</sup> Coincidentally, reformers use the panic created by these supposed crises to undermine teacher professionalism and public boards.<sup>6</sup> These manufactured crises are used to undermine confidence in the current system, veil underlying issues (such as poverty and underfunding), distract the populace from government defunding of public schools, and encourage “buy in” for reforms that advance marketization and privatization. All of this diminishes the collective aims, benefits, and responsibility of/for public education and instead encourages systems that ration education. This rationing exacerbates inequities and runs counter to the purpose of public education.

Attempts to marketize, commodify, privatize, and undermine public education are well-organized and coordinated. However, the different ways in which these reforms manifest provincially create the illusion of distinction. For example, the increased reliance on charter schools in Alberta may seem distinct from mandatory online learning in Ontario; yet both are motivated by neoliberal reforms that seek to undermine public education and motivate increased privatization. Provincial fragmentation veils the well-organized rhetoric and tactics of neoliberal education reforms. As a result, community and political responses are often confined within provincial borders. The reformers are centrally organized while resisters are not—until now.

## **The Public Education Exchange**

The Public Education Exchange (PEX) is a new project that will connect researchers, educators, public education advocates, and other members of the public so

they can share their knowledge about education privatization across Canada. Coordinated by Dr. Sue Winton, a Professor at York University's Faculty of Education, the PEX is a formal partnership between York University, the University of Manitoba (U of M), the University of Windsor (U of W), the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF), the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA). The PEX is led by a Steering Committee and involves individuals and organizations from across the country. OSSTF/FEESO, a PEX collaborator, will help the project achieve its three key goals: build a network; engage the public; and create knowledge.

The PEX Network will connect teachers, researchers, policymakers, community-based practitioners, and members of the public, enabling them to exchange knowledge about education privatization policies, practices, and effects. The Network will provide opportunities for information to flow to and from local, regional, and national levels to inform policy decisions. For example, school boards considering public-private partnerships (PPPs) as a strategy for addressing funding gaps will be able to learn about their effects in other sites.<sup>7</sup> The PEX website ([www.pexnetwork.ca](http://www.pexnetwork.ca)) is the virtual home of the network and will make research and other resources (e.g., videos, fact sheets) about education privatization in Canada available to everyone.

The PEX will engage the public through a virtual speaker series, its dynamic website, and policy dialogues. Through structured discussions, participants across the country will share their experiences of education privatization. Knowledge exchanged and generated through the dialogues will contribute new understanding of the impacts of education privatization in classrooms and communities. Comparing findings from each dialogue will highlight similarities and differences across Canada.

A team of PEX researchers will also study the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education privatization in Canada. They will analyze policies introduced or revised since March 2020 to determine the values and practices they advocate and how they impact schools. Where policies are found to support education privatization they will be compared with pre-pandemic policies to determine how they changed during or after the pandemic. The PEX is funded by a grant from Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

### **PEX partnerships**

In order to start building an interprovincial network of researchers, educators, and activists concerned about privatization of/in public education across Canada, PEX collaborator, Dr. Shannon D.M. Moore, and PEX co-leader, Dr. Ee-Seul Yoon, along with Dr. Melanie Janzen, hosted a symposium in May, 2023 at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) in Toronto, Ontario. The symposium, *Public Conversations About Privatization: Rejecting the Marketization of Public School Systems in Canada*, brought together academics, educators, activists, and community groups from across Canada to discuss: a) the ideological motivations of educational reforms; b) the way these reforms are manifesting "uniquely" in each province; and c) the political and community resistance to the reforms. The two-day symposium included ten thought-provoking presentations on the three symposium themes.

### Theme 1: Ideological motivations

Dr. Ee-Seul Yoon (U of M) opened the symposium with their presentation, “From GERM (Global Educational Reform Movement) to NERM (Neoliberal Educational Reform Madness).” Through this presentation, Dr. Yoon spoke about the strengths and limitations of Pasi Sahlberg’s theorizing on the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM). In order to do this, Dr. Yoon drew on their own research on school choice and fundraising. Following Yoon, Erika Shaker (CCPA and PEX co-leader) presented their piece “Parental Choice: Another Play to Privatize.” Since the symposium, Shaker has published a version of this presentation in *The Monitor*, “Parental choice is a dog-whistle—let’s recognize it as such.” Pamela Rogers (CTF and PEX co-leader) and Nichole Grant (CTF) concluded this theme with their presentation, “‘Data my ass’: Tracing the political levers of privatization in public education.” The title for this presentation was inspired by the words of New Brunswick Premier, Blaine Higgs when he refused to consider evidence he had requested.

These three presentations were followed by one hour roundtable discussions with all of the presenters and invited attendees at the symposium—OSSTF/FEESO Public Policy Analyst & Researcher, Chris Samuel, was among the invited guests at the symposium. A graphic artist from Fuselight, Brittany Datchko captured the presenter’s main ideas and the subsequent conversations around these themes within the roundtables.



### Theme 2: Provincial privatization

As education is a provincial and territorial responsibility, discussions about the erosion of public education are often confined within borders. Yet, as the presenters under this symposium theme demonstrated, the seemingly disparate attacks on public education within provincial borders share many similarities. Dr. Lana Parker (U of W and PEX co-leader) and PhD student, Adamo Di Giovanni (U of W) opened this theme with their presentation, “Is it a choice? Selling neoliberal marketization and privatization in Ontario education.” Heather Ganshorn (Support Our Students and PEX collaborator), followed with the presentation, “Extreme ideologies, ‘parent



Graduate student, Justin Fraser (U of M), followed with their presentation “Exposing the spectre: Resisting neoliberal education reform in Manitoba.” Dr. Vidya Shah (York and PEX collaborator), Dr. Stephanie Tuters (OISE), and Dr. Sachin Maharaj (University of Ottawa) used their presentation, “In defence of public education: Attacks on critical race theory and democratic approaches to anti-Racism in public education,” to speak about a province-wide study they are currently conducting into how school boards are attempting to achieve greater racial and social justice. Dr. E. Wayne Ross closed out this theme with their presentation, “School activism and resisting G.E.R.M.” Dr. Ross then got everyone out of their seat dancing to think about the path of activism.

Dr. Melanie Janzen ended the symposium with a discussion about the ways we can continue to collaborate and collectively respond to educational reforms aimed at commodifying, marketizing, and privatizing public education.

Through the summer of 2023, Dr. Shannon D.M. Moore co-hosted a special series of the podcast, Public Good. This special series includes interviews with the symposium presenters and will be released in September, 2023. Finally, article versions of the presentations will appear in a special issue of *Critical Education* to be published in 2024.

This symposium was supported by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. It also received funding and in-kind support from: U of M, Faculty of Education; OISE, U of T; and the journal, *Critical Education*.

The symposium helped to launch interprovincial connections that will be further fostered through the PEX project.



### Join the Public Education Exchange (PEX)!

In its first year (2023–2024) the PEX is looking forward to the launch of its dynamic website and its virtual speaker series. Inspired by the success of the Public Conversations About Privatization symposium, the PEX is planning to host an in-person symposium in Montreal in May 2024. Check out the PEX website at [www.pex-network.ca](http://www.pex-network.ca) and consider signing up to receive updates about the PEX’s research and events, including the times and sites of its public dialogues in 2024–2025. Everyone is welcome to join the PEX to defend and celebrate public education in Canada!

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# Dissecting privatization

Shedding light through an analysis  
of the dismantling of public long-term care

by Pat Armstrong

Privatization is the move away from shared responsibility for the collective provision of and control over goods and services that provide for our community and individual needs. There is a lot of confusing discussion of what we mean by private and public, and thus about privatization. We have found it useful to analyze six forms of privatization, although we keep adding to the list as others do as well.<sup>1</sup> We also find it useful to use examples from our years of research in long-term care, although these patterns appear across the public sector.

### The privatization of ownership

The first and most obvious form of privatization is for-profit ownership. This ownership takes some visible and some less visible forms. It can be ownership of the land, of the building, of the service delivery, or of all three—privately owning the land, the building, and operating what is primarily a publicly funded service. Contrary to popular defenses of these kinds of privatization, they do not mean more innovation, cost savings for the public, better quality, or more choice. We see all four kinds of ownership in long-term care and their consequences for care and care work. The 2020 Ontario Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission confirmed what researchers have been demonstrating: namely, that for-profit long-term care homes have lower staffing and retention rates, pay less, provide lower quality care, and send more residents to the hospital, where care costs us all more.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, for-profit homes are often the last choice of those needing care. And during COVID-19, for-profit homes cost more lives. All Ontario long-term care homes receive the same public funds, so there is no cost savings, and the only innovation seems to be in profit-making.<sup>3</sup>

Public/private partnerships can combine these forms, with a for-profit company financing and building a hospital, for example, as well as providing services like housekeeping and maintenance but leaving the medical services mainly to the public sector to deliver. Such partnerships

have been used for schools as well even though research has consistently shown that such partnerships cost more and often result in failures and delays, among other problems.<sup>4</sup>

— “ —

...for-profit long-term care homes have lower staffing and retention rates, pay less, provide lower quality care, and send more residents to the hospital, where care costs us all more.<sup>2</sup>

— ” —

It does not stop there, however. The ownership can include staff from temp agencies, other contracted services like food, housekeeping, laundry, security, and even management. And the costs are higher to the public purse compared to having employees do the work. Temp agencies are making millions of public dollars out of the consequences of staff burnout and working conditions during the pandemic. In Ontario long-term care, a temp agency charges \$150 for a Registered Nurse (RN), while staff RNs are usually paid around \$60, a charge that “does not include the 35% surcharge called the ‘agency fee.’”<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the employees of the contracted services have precarious employment and service quality is lower than it is with in-house services. Continuity and teamwork are undermined.

It is important to note that it is not only the volume of for-profit ownership that has expanded rapidly. It is also the nature of the ownership. The owners are increasingly giant corporation and private equity financing. If you visit the web-

site for Toronto's Women's College Hospital, for example, you find the parent company "BBGI Global Infrastructure SA is an infrastructure investment company."<sup>6</sup>

### **The privatization of managerial practices**

Along with neoliberalism came the notion that governments and their services should copy the for-profit sector to make them both more efficient by running them like businesses. New Public Management theories have been adopted in the public sector with profound implications for the quality of work and services. Performance indicators, increasing documentation, and surveillance of the work and the workers were combined with a focus on a more parsimonious use of resources.<sup>7</sup> Like just-in-time production, it is just-enough care and just-enough teachers, or barely enough and not enough as became increasingly obvious with the pandemic. Part-time and casual employment increased. Public sector wages and benefits came under attack, based on an argument that wages and benefits were higher than in the private sector, undermining the labour market. Yet research indicates that the differences largely reflect a smaller pay gap between women and men, especially in lower-level jobs, and greater equity by age and occupation, differences which themselves are a result from higher unionization rates along with the application of pay equity and other equity policies. Such managerial strategies undermine equity and increase job precarity overall.

### **The privatization of payment**

A third form of privatization relates to who pays. As individuals and households, we pay more for critical public services. This kind of privatization includes both new fees and the failure to provide sufficient public services, thus forcing people into paying privately for the service or going without.

The fees are more obvious. They may appear, for example, when physicians charge an

annual fee to join their practice or to provide you with your health records, when nursing homes charge for footcare or physiotherapy previously provided as part of the care, and when schools charge for activities.

Less obvious is the cost shift that results from reducing the availability of public services or ceasing to provide them at all. Increasingly, families are hiring private companions in nursing homes<sup>8</sup> or at home to make up for the gaps in public care. Or they pay for for-profit retirement homes because there are 40,000 individuals waiting for long-term care, people who have been diagnosed as needing such care. Or families pay for private tutors to make up for the large class sizes that can limit individual attention. Some public services are simply no longer available or only exist in limited supply, like some kinds of mental health supports and various kinds of eye care.

Shifting to fees and providing inadequate public services not only increases inequality in access, it also undermines faith in the public system and encourages those with the money to seek private services, further undermining the support for public services from those who can pay. At the same time, we all pay for at least part of this cost shifting directly as some of the costs can be used as tax deductions that further increase inequality and lower our collective resources.

### **The privatization of labour**

By cutting back and by not providing sufficient staff or services, governments are shifting work to those who are unpaid for the labour. When there are insufficient numbers of teachers, care workers, day care spaces, or home-care services, for example, necessary labour is either left undone or left to be done by those unpaid for the job. Sometimes the work is taken up by those otherwise paid for the job, as when teachers come in early or stay through lunch to help students in need and when nurses fail to take their breaks and stay long after their paid

hours are done. Much of the burden created by under servicing is taken up by those untrained for the job, leading to those with the least financial resources most likely to provide more of this unpaid work, placing an increased burden on women, immigrant populations, newcomers to the country, and other work-marginalized groups.

In our research on long-term care, we have come to talk about labour of unpaid worrying. Those paid for the labour, as well as family and friends who do it without pay, stay awake at night worrying about the work left undone.<sup>9</sup>

With COVID-19, some of this unpaid labour became more visible to the media and policy makers. When families were barred from nursing homes, for example, it became clear that families had long been a secondary support, providing essential labour in an under-funded system. Recognizing this during COVID-19 restrictions, governments scrambled to let the families back in as soon as possible. But the unpaid labour remains necessary without enough paid staff.

### **The privatization of decision-making and governance**

All of these forms of privatization have an impact on decision-making—moving many decisions from the public to the private realm of corporations and managers, in turn moving decision making away from governments and the public. As the management professor Henry Mintzberg so succinctly puts it, “Business is in the business of selling us as much as it possibly can,”<sup>10</sup> and I would add, paying as little as it can for resources, including the labour force, to make a profit. To do so, they often claim, they must keep many processes secret so as to keep their supposed competitive edge.

Closing the books to public scrutiny is not the only way corporations limit their accountability. Using the case of long-term care, Tamara Daly talks about public funds and private data to show how the quality indicators required of nursing homes and promoted as allowing public accountability obscure more than they reveal.<sup>11</sup>

But even better public data may not ensure that for-profit organizations are held accountable for our public money. As Hugh Armstrong and others involved in our research on long-term care have shown, the increasing involvement of private equity firms and complex corporate structures make it difficult to know who owns what, especially with the rapid changes in ownership that is characteristic of corporations.<sup>12</sup> The lack of transparency is combined with lack of public control, an absence that becomes particularly obvious when corporations go bankrupt or simply decide to leave because profits are too low.

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...for-profit  
organizations are  
required to search  
for profit first...  
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And of course, even if we had better data and could identify easily who owns what we would still need governments to hold these organizations accountable, and we have had little evidence of that. Indeed, we see the reverse. For example, the Ontario Progressive Conservative Government introduced liability shield legislation to protect nursing homes from lawsuits in the wake of COVID-19. At the same time, individual purchases of services or investment in them can also shape the extent to which services are privatized, providing another limit on collective governance.

### **The privatization of our heads**

These forms of privatization help undermine our commitment to public services. Increasingly,

we are not only held responsible for services that we and our families need, but we also feel responsible for services and our own health. Similarly, it seems to make sense to be able to purchase health care and education if you can afford it, for example, and to accept that for-profit services are better and that they offer more choices. We think this despite the evidence to the contrary and the evidence showing the negative consequences for equity. In health care, Ontario Government assurances that profits for clinics will be covered by OHIP undermine claims that payment means inequitable access while ignoring our ultimate shared payment for the profits. This spin also obfuscates the ways private clinics create more fragmentation as well as exacerbate some forms of inequity.

Dissecting the various forms of privatization helps us move past the confusion over the different forms it takes and helps address the claim that because we already have lots of private delivery of public services, there should be no concern with more. We need also to address the undermining of public services by talking about profitization. Keeping profitization in mind when considering privatization, highlights that for-profit organizations are required to search for profit first, thus transforming public services and the work involved to carry out those services in ways that undermine our fundamental rights, our control over our collective funds, and our solidarity.

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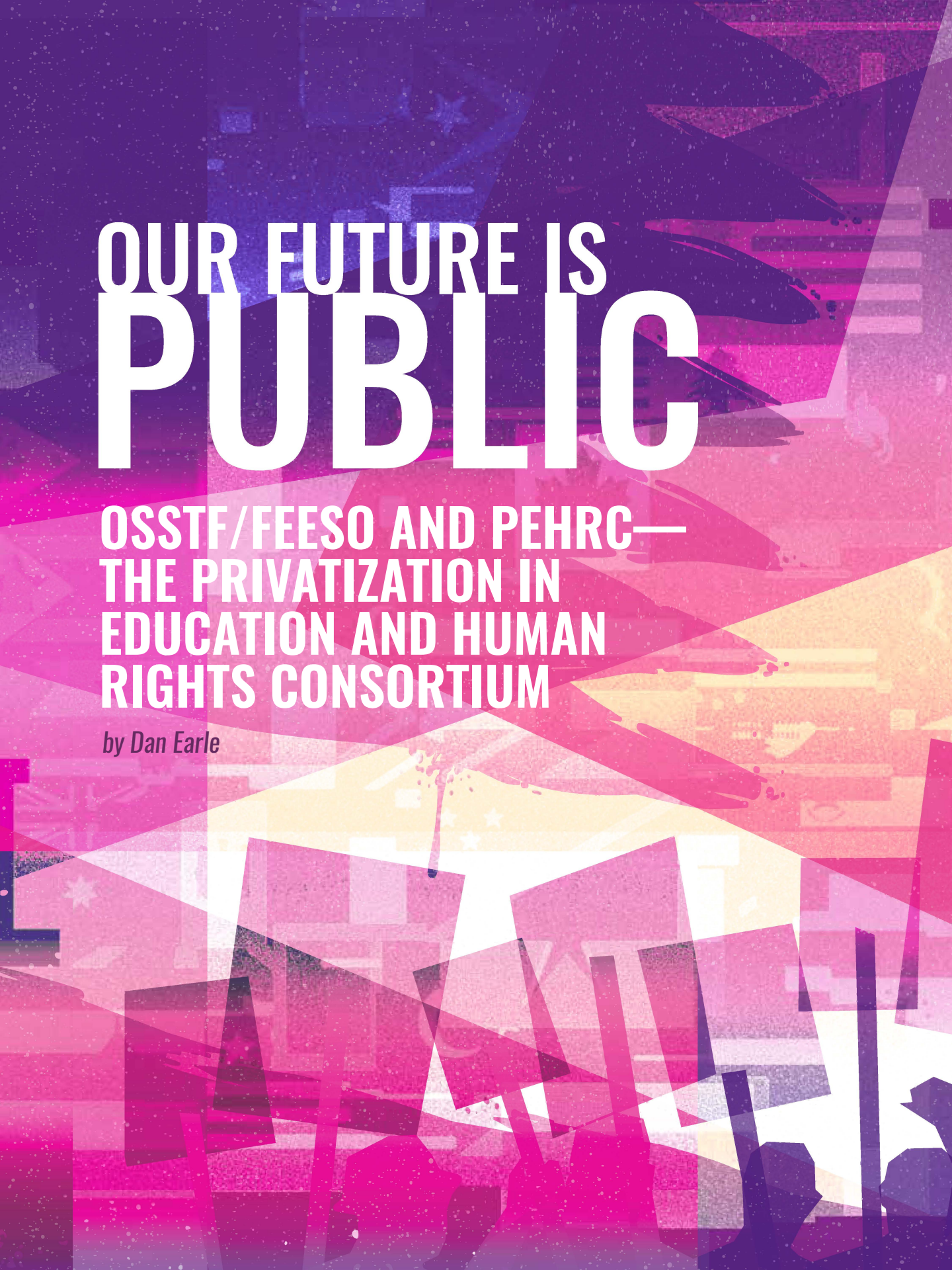
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## NOTES

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**Investing  
in Public  
Education  
just  
makes  
sense.**

The background is a complex, abstract composition of overlapping geometric shapes, primarily triangles and polygons, in shades of purple, magenta, and pink. These shapes are layered to create a sense of depth and movement. In the upper left, there are faint, stylized outlines of the United States flag, including stars and stripes, integrated into the geometric pattern. The overall aesthetic is modern and graphic.

# OUR FUTURE IS PUBLIC

**OSSTF/FEESO AND PEHRC—  
THE PRIVATIZATION IN  
EDUCATION AND HUMAN  
RIGHTS CONSORTIUM**

*by Dan Earle*

In Ontario, the election of a Ford Progressive Conservative (PC) government in 2018 signalled the beginning of a new phase of attacks and the deployment of the privatization playbook on the healthcare and public education sectors. Many, including organizations like the Transnational Institute, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Education International (EI), the Privatization in Education and Human Rights Consortium (PEHRC), and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO), have noted the ease at which privatization can be implemented by government authorities. This approach is common because it is pushed by influential players who provide plenty of international funding and are enabled by favourable legal conditions; in essence, the fix is in.

Privatization is a global phenomenon. That is why it is so crucial that organizations, unions, and civil society groups, including OSSTF/FEESO, embrace opportunities to learn from, and support, united efforts to combat its destructive effects on public education.

Fortunately, progressive forces can counteract the privatization agenda by offering a vision for alternatives rooted in solidarity and cooperation. The vision is supported by empirical evidence, but also by staunch advocacy for concrete solutions such as decent jobs, as well as improved access to public services for all as fundamental human rights and to strengthen local communities and economies.

OSSTF/FEESO has a long history of solidarity and cooperation against neoliberal ideas and actors fueled by a desire to monetize and corporatize public education provincially, nationally, and internationally. However, the surge in policies, legislation, and regulations that, directly and/or indirectly, promote a privatization agenda has necessitated OSSTF/FEESO to: perform greater analysis of the privatization movement, develop new strategies, form new coalitions, and develop action plans focused on countering the privatization of public education in Ontario.

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“  
...progressive forces **can counteract the privatization agenda** by offering a vision for alternatives rooted in solidarity and cooperation.  
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That is what led to OSSTF/FEESO Provincial Executive and staff participation in the Our Future is Public (#OFIP22) Conference in Santiago, Chile in November, 2022. During the conference Federation representatives joined over 1000 attendees from over 100 countries, representing grassroots movements, advocacy, human rights and development organizations, feminist movements, trade unions, and other civil

society organizations. This diverse group of activists met in person and virtually, to discuss the critical role of public services for our future, and to mobilize a global effort to defend them from privatization.

In Chile, OSSTF/FEESO representatives had the privilege of actively engaging in education sector-specific meetings led by the Privatization in Education and Human Rights Consortium (PEHRC). Those meetings led to the creation of the Santiago Declaration.



Countering the privatization movement **cannot be successful if done in isolation.**



In addition to helping craft and being a signatory of the declaration, OSSTF/FEESO quickly recognized the strength of the Privatization in Education and Human Rights Consortium (PEHRC). Thankfully, shortly after the #OFiP22 Conference, OSSTF/FEESO applied and was accepted as a new member of PEHRC.

Countering the privatization movement cannot be successful if done in isolation.

As a provincial union, OSSTF/FEESO must continue to develop new relationships with other organizations worldwide that have experience, have utilized evidence-informed strategies, and have a history of effective mobilization tactics. All these are meant to strengthen and defend public education at the provincial, national, and even continental levels. By collaborating with coalition groups like PEHRC, OSSTF/FEESO will significantly improve its chances to defend public education and public services at home and worldwide.

#### **PEHRC—a relatively new but significant, progressive actor in the defence of public education**

Created in 2014, PEHRC is an informal, grassroots network of national, regional, and global organizations and individuals whose mission is to fight for education before profit and to actively mobilize and fight back to reverse the ongoing creep of privatization of education while ensuring there are public services in place capable of realizing economic, social, and cultural rights.

In July 2023, Alice Beste, PEHRC Coordinator, along with other coalition members, discussed the history, organizational structure, and successes of the consortium with *Education Forum*.

## The genesis of PEHRC

As a network, PEHRC began in 2014 as an informal space for organizations to share collective concerns about the number of private actors entering the education space. The group organized a horizontal network of members, endorsed by one another to join. Today in 2023, PEHRC includes nearly 150 members from around 90 organizations across the globe.

## 5 values drive the Consortium's actions and efforts:

- 1 the defense and promotion of human rights, particularly the right to education, as defined in national and international law;
- 2 the promotion of the humanistic nature of education to achieve both personal and collective realization;
- 3 the provision of free quality public education for all without discrimination or segregation of any kind;
- 4 the protection of labour rights, in particular teachers' rights, as defined at the international and domestic levels; and
- 5 the promotion of social justice and cohesion in and through education.

## Flexible, informal, strategic

PEHRC uses a flexible, informal governance model that seeks to be horizontal in its operational and strategic decision making, functioning without a board of directors, thus allowing the organization to respond to the needs of member organizations quickly and with appropriate cultural understandings. The current coordinator of PEHRC points out that since its inception several similar consortia models have emerged focusing on public health and other public services, as well as on public education specific to Francophone regions.

The movement works on various levels—locally, nationally, regionally, and globally—thereby reaching various levels of society. It has also spawned a side network of academics and a students' network to connect civil society organizations with those researching this field. Despite being an informal network, through extensive collaboration, PEHRC has managed to amplify its voice and achieve some concrete outcomes since its inception less than a decade ago. PEHRC has had several significant achievements since its inception, including helping achieve several public divestments in private for-profit enterprises.

## Abidjan Principles—a tool for supporting the worldwide right to public education

One external achievement frequently referenced at the November 2022 confer-

ence and, arguably the most significant accomplishment initiated by PEHRC, are the Abidjan Principles.

Initiated by PEHRC, but drafted by a group of independent human rights experts (non-PEHRC members), and then adopted by a broader group of experts in Côte d'Ivoire, on February 13, 2019, the Abidjan Principles outline the human rights obligations of States to provide public education and to regulate private involvement in education. They serve as a “reference point for governments, educators and education providers when debating the respective roles and duties of states and private actors in education. They compile and unpack existing legal obligations that States have regarding the delivery of education, and in particular the role and limitations of private actors in the provision of education. They provide more details about what international human rights law means by drawing from other sources of law and existing authoritative interpretations.”

Thanks in large part to PEHRC members, the Abidjan Principles have been cited throughout the world by UN agencies, judges, and governments, and have become a foundational guiding document on the right to education.

Internationally, the Abidjan Principles have equally become a mechanism to ensure that donor funding is compliant with human rights approaches, while the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) has acknowledged the Abidjan Principles and no longer funds for-profit education.

Locally, the Abidjan Principles are used as the basis for training of local groups and organizations so they shift their mindset away from the corporate value of education and instead, through the principles, advocate for universally accessible public education as a human right.

For example, in Kenya, the East African Centre for Human Rights (EACHRights) conducts training for policy-makers that now include registration guidelines for basic education institutions. In Spain, PEHRC members supported a local member to make the case for the Abidjan Principles, including translating presentations and creating a short video. In addition, the Civil Association for Equality and Justice and Equal Education used the Principles to bring cases to court challenging private interests that were interfering with access to education for all. The Nepalese Coalition used the guidelines in discussion for the development of local and national education policies. PEHRC continues to monitor where the Principles are being implemented and runs sharing sessions with members to support this process as a means of extending the impact of these Principles.

Some PEHRC members are setting the Abidjan Principles by creating useful international legal tools which are used regularly to defend and advocate for public education worldwide.

### **PEHRC efforts limit World Bank investment in private education**

In terms of a specific example of PEHRC's successes, in 2022 their actions contributed to the decision by the World Bank's private sector arm, the International Financial Corporation's (IFC), to freeze investments in the for-profit chain of schools, Bridge International Academies.

Together with other factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, this contributed to

academy closures in Kenya and Uganda, caused Bridge International Academies to stagnate globally leading to an ultimately-unsuccessful rebranding campaign to try and revive their pursuit of education privatization.

PEHRC's continued and cumulative pressure, evidence-based advocacy, joint statements, and collective action were undoubtedly significant factors in affecting this change. Although Bridge International Academies still exists, this case demonstrates how effective united, progressive, movements can protect public education as a fundamental human right.

PEHRC's achievements have been made possible through cross-country collaboration, the sharing of best practices, and a swarm approach whereby a rapid and strong mobilization targets a specific problem raised by a PEHRC member. PEHRC can collect information at the national level for international advocacy efforts and share and use evidence across countries for national advocacy purposes.

### **The complexities of privatization in education**

On the issue of privatization of education, one PEHRC member noted that “the biggest threat is not necessarily private actors themselves but their enablers who influence the systems being built.” The member went on to point out that it is the enablers, the private companies, philanthropists, and global organizations like the World Bank and World Economic Forum with their—“neoliberal outlook” who exert dangerous influence over educational program design and delivery.

These groups provide and invest in the tools that enable government underinvestment in public services, including education, and lead to pro-privatization legislation and destructive regulations, that undermine public education and fuel the proliferation and deployment of the “privatization playbook” OSSTF/FEESO referred to in 2019.

One PEHRC member from EACHRights Kenya, told OSSTF/FEESO that “privatization is complex and often misunderstood” as an all-or-nothing approach whereby groups like PEHRC are fixated on the elimination of any and all private actors in education.

The member clarified that “in many countries, Kenya included, they [private interests in education] play a role in fixing the failures by the government. However, it's a result of failure or intentional actions by governments to kill public facilities and prosper private of which they belong to them.”

PEHRC members emphasize the importance of unpacking privatization in a way that demonstrates a commitment to improving access to and the value of public education around the world rather than focusing on the fight against well-resourced and organized private actors.

Instead, as OSSTF/FEESO and other stakeholders have been prioritizing since 2019, the consortium focuses on increasing public accountability and investment in public resources and services.

“Privatization is seeping through organizations and entities. This is why people and groups connected to anti-privatization movements should also work in a network, and work to strengthen transnational and cross-regional movements,” said another PEHRC member from Nepal. There is a need to “share the stories of success and chal-

lenges in raising voices against privatization” and focus on the rights-based advocacy to hold governments accountable for their international human rights obligations.”

Many PEHRC members in Chile emphasized how important it is to have collective efforts that reinforce State obligations to provide a well-planned and fully funded public education system as a fundamental human right. At the same time, progressive groups should prioritize actions and advocacy focused on strictly regulating private actors’ roles in any education system.



The Future is Public is not a  
theme/tagline, it is a movement.



#### **International coalitions— strength through collaboration, solidarity, and joint advocacy**

The Future is Public is not a theme/tagline, it is a movement.

As a key participant in #OFIP22 Conference, PEHRC’s strength lies in its ability to unite members around a common cause, with clear objectives and without competition.

OSSTF/FEESO believes there is tremendous opportunity and strength associated with belonging to such a diverse, global, cross-sectional network of members from over 90 organizations from over 40 countries from 5 continents, including the allied Francophone subgroup—*Le Réseau francophone contre la marchandisation de l’éducation*.

PEHRC’s regional and international gatherings—virtual and in-person, special/topical work groups, joint communications, declarations, as well as their practical action kits and resource hubs represent a wealth of information for OSSTF/FEESO.

Joining international coalitions affords the Federation the chance to expand its knowledge about the depth and breadth of privatization efforts from a more holistic and global perspective. And, although OSSTF/FEESO’s membership in the coalition is only in its infancy, the collaboration with PEHRC members should inspire hope as their accomplishments demonstrate the strength of the collective.

As a union of teachers and education workers, OSSTF/FEESO will continue to develop provincial, national, and international networks and coalitions to help understand, strategize, and work collaboratively against the relentless attempt to dismantle public services including education at home and abroad. Thanks to the Privatization in Education and Human Rights Consortium it can do so alongside other advocates, civil society, and human rights organizations from across the globe.

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Dan Earle (he/him)  
OSSTF/FEESO Communications/Political Action Department



# NOTRE AVENIR EST PUBLIC

**OSSTF/FEESO ET LE PEHRC—  
LE CONSORTIUM SUR LA  
PRIVATISATION DE L'ÉDUCATION  
ET LES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE**

*par Dan Earle*

En Ontario, l'élection du gouvernement progressiste-conservateur (PC) de Doug Ford en 2018 a marqué le début d'une nouvelle phase d'attaques et le déploiement du manuel de privatisation des secteurs des soins de santé et de l'éducation publique. Plusieurs, y compris des organisations comme le *Transnational Institute*, l'*American Federation of Teachers (AFT)*, l'Internationale de l'éducation (IE), le Consortium sur la privatisation de l'éducation et les droits de la personne (PEHRC) et la Fédération des enseignantes-enseignants des écoles secondaires de l'Ontario (OSSTF/FEESO), ont noté la facilité avec laquelle la privatisation peut être mise en œuvre par les autorités gouvernementales. Cette approche est courante parce qu'elle est poussée par des acteurs influents qui fournissent de nombreux financements internationaux et bénéficient de conditions juridiques favorables; en substance, la solution est toute trouvée.

La privatisation est un phénomène mondial. C'est pourquoi il est crucial que les organisations, les syndicats et les groupes de la société civile, y compris OSSTF/FEESO, saisissent les occasions d'apprendre et de soutenir les efforts conjoints visant à combattre ses effets destructeurs sur l'éducation publique.

Heureusement, les forces progressistes peuvent contrecarrer le programme de privatisation en proposant une vision d'alternatives ancrées dans la solidarité et la coopération. Cette vision s'appuie sur des preuves empiriques, mais aussi sur un plaidoyer acharné en faveur de solutions concrètes comme des emplois décents, ainsi qu'un meilleur accès aux services publics pour tous en tant que droits de la personne fondamentaux et pour renforcer les communautés et les économies locales.

OSSTF/FEESO a une longue histoire de solidarité et de coopération contre les idées et les acteurs néolibéraux alimentés par le désir de monétiser et de transformer en société l'éducation publique à l'échelle provinciale, nationale et internationale. Cependant, la multiplication des politiques, des lois et des règlements qui, directement ou indirectement, favorisent la privatisation a obligé OSSTF/FEESO à effectuer une analyse plus approfondie du mouvement de privatisation, à élaborer de nouvelles stratégies, à former de nouvelles coalitions et à élaborer des plans d'action visant à contrer la privatisation de l'éducation publique en Ontario.



...les forces progressistes **peuvent contrecarrer le programme de privatisation** en proposant une vision d'alternatives ancrées dans la solidarité et la coopération.





## La lutte contre le mouvement de privatisation **ne peut réussir si elle est menée de manière isolée.**



C'est ce qui a conduit l'Exécutif provincial et le personnel d'OSSTF/FEESO à participer à la conférence Notre avenir est public (#OFIP22) à Santiago (Chili), en novembre 2022. Pendant quatre jours, les représentantes et représentants de la Fédération se sont joints à plus d'un millier de participants de plus de cent pays, représentant des mouvements populaires, des organisations de défense des droits de la personne et de développement, des mouvements féministes, des syndicats et d'autres organisations de la société civile. Ce groupe diversifié de militants s'est réuni en personne et virtuellement pour discuter du rôle critique des services publics pour notre avenir et pour mobiliser un effort mondial afin de les défendre contre la privatisation.

Au Chili, les représentantes et représentants d'OSSTF/FEESO ont eu le privilège de participer activement aux réunions sur le secteur de l'éducation organisées par le Consortium sur la privatisation de l'éducation et les droits de la personne (PEHRC). Ces réunions ont abouti à la création de la Déclaration de Santiago.

En plus d'avoir contribué à l'élaboration de la déclaration et d'en être signataire, OSSTF/FEESO a rapidement reconnu la force du Consortium sur la privatisation de l'éducation et les droits de la personne (PEHRC). Heureusement, peu après la conférence #OFIP22, OSSTF/FEESO a posé sa candidature et a été accepté comme nouveau membre du PEHRC.

La lutte contre le mouvement de privatisation ne peut réussir si elle est menée de manière isolée.

En tant que syndicat provincial, OSSTF/FEESO doit continuer à développer de nouvelles relations avec d'autres organisations dans le monde qui ont de l'expérience, qui ont utilisé des stratégies fondées sur des données probantes et qui ont des antécédents de tactiques de mobilisation efficaces. En collaborant avec des groupes de coalition comme le PEHRC, OSSTF/FEESO améliorera considérablement ses chances de défendre l'éducation publique et les services publics dans son pays et dans le monde entier.

### **PEHRC—un acteur progressiste relativement nouveau, mais important dans la défense de l'éducation publique**

Créé en 2014, le PEHRC est un réseau informel d'organisations nationales, régionales et mondiales et d'individus, sa mission est de lutter pour que l'éducation

passer avant le profit et de se mobiliser activement pour inverser la tendance actuelle à la privatisation de l'éducation tout en veillant à ce qu'il existe des services publics capables de réaliser les droits économiques, sociaux et culturels.

En juillet 2023, Alice Beste, coordinatrice du *PEHRC*, ainsi que d'autres membres de la coalition, ont discuté de l'histoire, de la structure organisationnelle et des succès du consortium avec *Education Forum*.

### La genèse du *PEHRC*

En tant que réseau, le *PEHRC* a commencé en 2014 comme un espace informel pour les organisations de partager des préoccupations collectives sur le nombre d'acteurs privés entrant dans l'espace de l'éducation. Le groupe a organisé un réseau horizontal de membres, approuvés par les uns et les autres pour adhérer. Aujourd'hui, en 2023, le *PEHRC* compte environ 150 membres issus de quelque 90 organisations à travers le monde.

## 5 valeurs guident les actions et les efforts du Consortium :

- 1 la défense et la promotion des droits de la personne, en particulier le droit à l'éducation, comme défini dans le droit national et international;
- 2 la promotion de la nature humaniste de l'éducation en vue d'une réalisation personnelle et collective;
- 3 l'offre d'une éducation publique gratuite et de qualité pour tous, sans discrimination ni ségrégation d'aucune sorte;
- 4 la protection des droits du travail, en particulier des droits des enseignantes et enseignants, comme ils sont définis aux paliers international et national; et
- 5 la promotion de la justice et de la cohésion sociales dans et par l'éducation.

### Flexible, informel, stratégique

Le *PEHRC* utilise un modèle de gouvernance souple et informel qui cherche à être horizontal dans sa prise de décision opérationnelle et stratégique, fonctionnant sans conseil d'administration, ce qui permet à l'organisation de répondre aux besoins des organisations membres rapidement et avec des compréhensions culturelles appropriées. L'actuel coordonnateur du *PERHC* souligne que depuis sa création, plusieurs modèles de consortiums similaires ont vu le jour, axés sur la santé publique et d'autres services publics ainsi que sur l'éducation publique spécifique aux régions francophones.

Le mouvement travaille à divers niveaux : local, national, régional et mondial, atteignant ainsi différents niveaux de la société. Il a également donné naissance à un réseau parallèle d'universitaires et à un réseau d'étudiants afin de mettre

en relation les organisations de la société civile et les personnes qui font des recherches dans ce domaine. Bien qu'il s'agisse d'un réseau informel, grâce à une collaboration étendue, le *PEHRC* est parvenu à faire entendre sa voix et à obtenir des résultats concrets depuis sa création il y a moins de dix ans. Le *PEHRC* a obtenu plusieurs résultats importants depuis sa création, y compris aider à réaliser plusieurs cessions publiques au sein d'entreprises privées à buts lucratifs.

### **Principes d'Abidjan—un outil pour soutenir le droit mondial à l'éducation publique**

Les Principes d'Abidjan sont une réalisation externe fréquemment mentionnée lors de la conférence de novembre 2022 et, sans doute, la réalisation la plus importante initiée par le *PEHRC*.

Initiés par le *PEHRC*, mais rédigés par un groupe d'experts indépendants en droits de la personne (non membre du *PEHRC*), puis adoptés par un groupe plus large d'experts en Côte d'Ivoire, le 13 février 2019, les Principes d'Abidjan décrivent les obligations des États en matière de droits de la personne de dispenser un enseignement public et de réglementer la participation du secteur privé à l'éducation. Ils servent de « point de référence pour les gouvernements, les éducateurs et les prestataires d'éducation lorsqu'ils débattent des rôles et devoirs respectifs des États et des acteurs privés dans l'éducation. Ils compilent et décrivent les obligations juridiques existantes des États en matière d'éducation, et en particulier le rôle et les limites des acteurs privés dans l'offre éducative. Ils fournissent plus de détails sur ce que signifie le droit international des droits de la personne en s'appuyant sur d'autres sources de droit et sur les interprétations existantes qui font autorité. »

Grâce en grande partie aux membres du *PEHRC*, les Principes d'Abidjan ont été cités dans le monde entier par des agences des Nations unies, des juges et des gouvernements et sont devenus un document d'orientation fondamental sur le droit à l'éducation.

Au niveau international, les Principes d'Abidjan sont également devenus un mécanisme permettant de s'assurer que le financement des bailleurs de fonds est conforme aux approches des droits de la personne, tandis que le Partenariat mondial pour l'éducation (PME) a reconnu les Principes d'Abidjan et ne finance plus l'éducation à but lucratif.

Au niveau local, les Principes d'Abidjan servent de base à la formation de groupes et d'organisations locaux afin qu'ils s'éloignent de la valeur commerciale de l'éducation et qu'ils défendent plutôt, par le biais des Principes, une éducation publique universellement accessible en tant que droit de la personne.

Par exemple, au Kenya, le *East African Centre for Human Rights (EACHRights)* organise des formations pour les décideurs politiques qui incluent désormais des lignes directrices pour l'enregistrement des institutions d'éducation de base. En Espagne, les membres du *PEHRC* ont aidé un membre local à défendre les Principes d'Abidjan, notamment en traduisant des présentations et en créant une courte vidéo. En outre, l'Association civile pour l'égalité et la justice et *Equal Education* ont utilisé les Principes pour porter devant les tribunaux des affaires mettant en cause des intérêts privés qui entravaient l'accès à l'éducation pour tous. La Co-

alation népalaise a utilisé les lignes directrices dans le cadre de discussions sur l'élaboration de politiques éducatives locales et nationales. Le *PEHRC* continue de surveiller les endroits où les Principes sont mis en œuvre et organise des séances de partage avec ses membres pour soutenir ce processus afin d'étendre l'impact de ces Principes.

Certains membres du *PEHRC* mettent en œuvre les Principes d'Abidjan en créant des outils juridiques internationaux utiles qui sont régulièrement utilisés pour défendre et plaider en faveur de l'éducation publique dans le monde entier.

### **Les efforts du *PEHRC* limitent les investissements de la Banque mondiale dans l'enseignement privé**

En 2022, les actions du *PEHRC* ont contribué à la décision de la Société financière internationale (SFI), branche de la Banque mondiale chargée du secteur privé, de geler les investissements dans la chaîne d'écoles à but lucratif *Bridge International Academies*.

Avec d'autres facteurs comme la pandémie de la COVID-19, cela a contribué à la fermeture d'académies au Kenya et en Ouganda et a entraîné la stagnation de *Bridge International Academies* au niveau mondial, ce qui a conduit à une campagne pour redonner une nouvelle image, finalement infructueuse, pour tenter de relancer la poursuite de la privatisation de l'éducation.

La pression continue et cumulative du *PEHRC*, le plaidoyer basé sur des preuves, les déclarations communes et l'action collective ont sans aucun doute été des facteurs significatifs dans l'obtention de ce changement. Bien que *Bridge International Academies* existe toujours, ce cas démontre comment des mouvements progressistes unis et efficaces peuvent protéger l'éducation publique en tant que droit fondamental de la personne.

Les réalisations du *PEHRC* ont été rendues possibles grâce à la collaboration entre les pays, au partage des meilleures pratiques et à une approche en essaim par laquelle une mobilisation rapide et forte cible un problème spécifique soulevé par un membre du *PEHRC*. Le *PEHRC* peut collecter des renseignements au niveau national pour les efforts de plaidoyer internationaux et partager et utiliser des preuves entre les pays à des fins de plaidoyer national.

### **Les complexités de la privatisation de l'éducation**

Sur la question de la privatisation de l'éducation, un membre du *PEHRC* a noté que « la plus grande menace n'est pas nécessairement les acteurs privés eux-mêmes, mais leurs facilitateurs qui influencent les systèmes en cours de construction. » Le membre a poursuivi en soulignant que ce sont les facilitateurs, les entreprises privées, les philanthropes et les organisations mondiales comme la Banque mondiale et le Forum économique mondial, avec leur « perspective néolibérale », qui exercent une influence dangereuse sur la conception et la mise en œuvre des programmes éducatifs.

Ces groupes fournissent et investissent dans les outils qui permettent au gouvernement de sous-investir dans les services publics, y compris l'éducation, et con-



L'avenir est public n'est pas  
un thème/une ligne de conduite,  
c'est un mouvement.



duisent à une législation en faveur de la privatisation et à des réglementations destructrices, qui sapent l'éducation publique et alimentent la prolifération et le déploiement du « manuel de privatisation » auquel OSSTF/FEESO a fait référence en 2019.

Un membre du *PEHRC* de *EACHRights*, au Kenya, a déclaré à OSSTF/FEESO que « la privatisation est complexe et souvent mal comprise » comme une approche « tout ou rien » par laquelle des groupes comme la *PEHRC* sont fixés sur l'élimination de tous les acteurs privés dans le domaine de l'éducation.

Le membre a précisé que « dans de nombreux pays, dont le Kenya, ils [les intérêts privés dans l'éducation] jouent un rôle dans la réparation des échecs du gouvernement. Cependant, c'est le résultat d'un échec ou d'actions intentionnelles de la part des gouvernements pour tuer les installations publiques et faire prospérer les installations privées qui leur appartiennent. »

Les membres du *PEHRC* soulignent l'importance de décortiquer la privatisation d'une manière qui démontre un engagement à améliorer l'accès et la valeur de l'éducation publique dans le monde entier, plutôt que de se concentrer sur la lutte contre des acteurs privés bien organisés et disposant de ressources suffisantes. Au lieu de cela, comme OSSTF/FEESO et d'autres parties prenantes l'ont priorisé depuis 2019, le consortium se concentre sur l'augmentation de la responsabilité publique et de l'investissement dans les ressources et les services publics.

« La privatisation s'infiltré dans les organisations et les entités. C'est pourquoi les personnes et les groupes liés aux mouvements contre la privatisation devraient également travailler en réseau et s'efforcer de renforcer les mouvements transnationaux et interrégionaux », a déclaré un autre membre du *PEHRC* originaire du Népal. Il est nécessaire de « partager les réussites et les difficultés rencontrées dans la lutte contre la privatisation » et de se concentrer sur le plaidoyer fondé sur les droits afin de tenir les gouvernements responsables de leurs obligations internationales en matière de droits de la personne. »

De nombreux membres du *PEHRC* au Chili ont souligné l'importance des efforts collectifs qui renforcent les obligations de l'État de fournir un système d'éducation publique bien planifié et entièrement financé en tant que droit fondamental la personne. En même temps, les groupes progressistes devraient donner la priorité aux

actions et au plaidoyer visant à réglementer strictement le rôle des acteurs privés dans tout système éducatif.

### **Coalitions internationales—la force de la collaboration, de la solidarité et du plaidoyer commun**

L'avenir est public n'est pas un thème/une ligne de conduite, c'est un mouvement.

En tant que participant clé à la conférence #OFIP22, la force du *PEHRC* réside dans sa capacité à unir ses membres autour d'une cause commune, avec des objectifs clairs et sans concurrence.

OSSTF/FEESO estime que l'appartenance à un réseau aussi diversifié, mondial et transversal, composé de membres issus de plus de 90 organisations de plus de 40 pays des 5 continents, y compris le sous-groupe francophone allié, Le Réseau francophone contre la marchandisation de l'éducation, représente une occasion et une force considérables.

Les réunions régionales et internationales du *PEHRC*, virtuelles et en personne, les groupes de travail spéciaux/sujets, les communications conjointes, les déclarations, ainsi que les troussees d'action pratique et les centres de ressources représentent une mine d'informations pour OSSTF/FEESO.

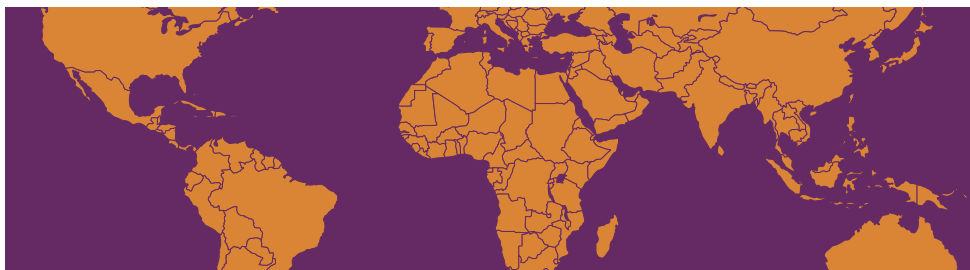
L'adhésion à des coalitions internationales permet à la Fédération d'élargir ses connaissances sur la profondeur et l'étendue des efforts de privatisation dans une perspective plus holistique et globale. Et, bien que l'adhésion d'OSSTF/FEESO à la coalition n'en soit qu'à ses débuts, la collaboration avec les membres du *PEHRC* devrait inspirer de l'espoir, car leurs réalisations démontrent la force du collectif.

En tant que syndicat d'enseignants et de travailleurs en éducation, OSSTF/FEESO continuera à développer des réseaux et des coalitions à l'échelle provinciale, nationale et internationale pour aider à comprendre, à élaborer des stratégies et à travailler en collaboration contre les tentatives incessantes de démantèlement des services publics, y compris l'éducation, au pays et à l'étranger. Grâce au Consortium sur la privatisation de l'éducation et les droits de l'homme, il peut le faire aux côtés d'autres défenseurs des droits de la personne, de la société civile et d'organisations de défense des droits de la personne du monde entier.

---

**Dan Earle** (il/lui)

Secteur des communications et de l'action politique d'OSSTF/FEESO



## The vital importance of adult non-credit programs

The Instructor Bargaining Unit in OSSTF/FEESO District 27, Limestone, is a small but dynamic unit comprised of permanent and occasional Instructors teaching Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) and English as a Second Language (ESL). Together we provide a vital service to students and their families within the communities of Kingston, Sydenham, and Napanee. Adult non-credit programs support families and the economy in our communities by strengthening the language and academic skills of young and older adults, many of whom have children in the public school system.

Our clientele ranging in age from 19–60 years old, largely represents the underserved members of our community affected by socio-economic and other inequities including disrupted education, trauma, learning disabilities, mental health, generational poverty, and in some cases incarceration. Many of our students are newcomers to Canada and are affected by issues such as trauma, culture shock, and language barriers.

### An example of a successful outcome

David and Marcus are brothers from the Congo who fled to Uganda where they lived as refugees before immigrating to Canada. David had his high school diploma from the Congo and an IT Certificate from the International University of East Africa. Marcus earned his high school diploma in Uganda. They had no proof of documentation because they left everything in Africa when they immigrated to Canada after the death of their parents.

They are both responsible for the care of their three younger siblings. They were both supported through the process of Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR) in the LBS program, and graduated last June. David also works part time in IT from home, and Marcus was working in the food service industry during his studies.

Students may be referred to LBS or ESL programs, in order to meet their language and/or educational upgrading goals. In some cases, once Canadian Language Benchmark (CBL) 6 is achieved, ESL students may register in the LBS program and work toward preparing for PLAR assessments to work toward their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) or generally improve their academic skills to prepare for employment.

### Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) program

The LBS program provides an opportunity to re-engage students who have left school without achieving their OSSD as well as those aiming to increase their skills for independence or employment. The role of the LBS Instructor is to:

- reduce barriers to learning by providing a safe, welcoming space;
- help students achieve their goals by teaching across various competencies to develop and apply communication, numeracy, interpersonal, and digital skills to successfully transition to employment, secondary credit, post-secondary education, apprenticeship, or increased independence; and
- provide a pathway for adult ESL students who wish to enter secondary credit and pursue further education.

### A typical day in LBS

LBS students arrive at locations in Kingston, Sydenham, and Napanee. Adult students returning to school are often referred to the LBS program first. It can take a great deal of courage for an adult student to take the steps to go back to school to earn their grade 12 or improve their

skills for other pathways. Students are greeted warmly by Instructors who work to instill an initial sense of confidence, praising students for taking the monumental first step to make a change in their lives. Each student works at their own pace on learning activities and tasks identified in their individualized learner plan. An LBS Instructor circulates in the classroom, providing instruction in math, reading comprehension, computer work, and written communication while working to instill a sense of hope, optimism, and success in each student.

## Johnny

Johnny entered the LBS program at 26 with 3 high school credits on his transcript. His background included issues with addiction and crime. He spent time upgrading his skills and preparing for prior learning assessments. He obtained a part time job in the food industry and stopped receiving Ontario Works payments. He graduated with his OSSD two years later and obtained a full time job. He saved money and was able to put a down payment on a house which he intended to renovate and rent. Today he is employed full time, owns 3 rental houses, and feels as though he has accomplished his dream of success.

## ESL Program

ESL Instructors focus on building skills in the competencies of speaking, listening, reading, and writing with an emphasis on building community, learning about Canadian culture, self-advocacy, and identifying supports addressing health, safety, and wellness.

Community is built by providing a welcoming space to connect with one another and to the broader Kingston community. Instructors provide opportunities for learning by arranging for guest speakers as well as field trips. Many adult ESL students also have children attending school in



Pictures provided by Wendy Bonnell, Carrie Barr, and Julia Perkins

Limestone District School Board. This increases their sense of belonging as they are also a part of the Limestone community.

## Sonia

Sonia is an Economics graduate from Moscow University in Russia. She immigrated to Canada, entered the ESL program in Limestone, and achieved her CLB level 8. She then registered in the LBS program, progressed to credit at an alternative education site, and graduated with her grade 12. She went on to Business Administration at St. Lawrence College. She is now finished her CPA and works as an accountant in a local firm.

### A typical day in ESL

On any given day, students from many countries including Syria, Korea, Lebanon, Sudan, Jordan, Iran, Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Taiwan arrive early to one of 5 classes ranging in levels from basic to advanced. The hallways are bustling with activity as each student spends time greeting friends in the ESL community and checking in with their Instructor. Classes start at 9:00 am with the odd students trickling in late after taking care of family needs such as dropping off a child at daycare or school. Lessons often begin with a focus on vocabulary organized into themes such as health care, education, or parent-teacher interviews. Instructors design and deliver lessons that have everyday relevance with conversation built into class activities ensuring each student has an opportunity to practice speaking English in a supported environment. Confidence is built so that students can interact in English and self-advocate in every area of their new life in Canada.

### Adult non-credit supporting the broader education system and the economy

In April 2023, a representative from each

of LBS, ESL, and the Teachers' Bargaining Unit (TBU) presented to the Trustees of the Limestone District School Board effectively making the connection regarding how the adult non-credit programs support the children and adolescents within the education system as well as their families as a whole. Building on language skills along with community connectedness, strengthens the ability of adult newcomers to Canada to interact in Canadian Society including self-advocacy, confidence in communications with professionals such as teachers, medical, and law personnel, and an enhanced ability to navigate public transportation, prepare for Canadian citizenship, and participate in democratic processes. In this way, adult non-credit programs support mental health and family cohesion—positively affecting our younger, more vulnerable students. This builds resiliency and strengthens families, which in turn, affects the success of their children in Limestone District School Board schools.

Similarly, the LBS program provides an opportunity to re-engage students who have left school without achieving their OSSD. Participating in LBS provides key opportunities to prepare for further education and employment. One of the main goals for the LBS program as stated by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) is to reduce the number of Ontarians accessing Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Programs by increasing literacy and employment skills to enter the workforce.

## Naila

Naila and her husband immigrated to Canada from Pakistan in 2004 and landed in Montreal under a Refugee status. They both had no prior English language skills, but required employment so they secured a position at a garment factory in Montreal where they worked for two years. Eventually, they made their way to Kingston and enrolled in English as Second Language

classes. Naila, who began studying at a Canadian Language Pre-Benchmark of 0, is now studying at a CLB 6. She has raised 3 children in Kingston, while her husband, a taxi driver, began establishing his business. Her husband now owns and operates two taxis. Recently, they purchased and moved into their very first home. Naila's 3 children attend school in Kingston, where she is grateful for their excellent education and well-being in a safe and friendly community. Her eldest child recently graduated from high school and is currently attending St. Lawrence College. Naila is working part-time in retail.

### Precariousness of funding

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development funds both LBS and ESL. Funding is renewed each year based on the numbers of students served, program outcomes, and average daily enrollment. In the last 2 Federation years, funding announcements for provincially funded ESL programs were not released until July in 2022 and May in 2023. This creates significant challenges to complete the staffing process in time for Instructors to make important decisions and for the Board to adequately plan for fall programming. Recently the Ministry reduced the funding to the ESL programs, creating the loss of a position in Limestone. Not only is funding for these programs precarious since they are not part of the Ministry of Education funding, but similar to other job classes, we are continually asked to do more with less!

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**Wendy Bonnell** (she/her)  
Instructors' Bargaining Unit President  
District 27, Limestone  
with **Carrie Barr** (she/her)  
ESL Instructor, District 27, Limestone  
and **Julia Perkins** (she/her)  
LBS Instructor, District 27, Limestone

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### **Humans of the House**

***Produced by the Samara Centre for Democracy***

Podcast Review by **Bill Hewitt** (he/him/il)  
Teacher, District 17, Simcoe

The podcast *Humans of the House* is a six-episode series that shines a light on working life as a federal Member of Parliament (MP). The podcast is produced by the Samara Centre for Democracy. *Humans of the House* centres around interviews with a dozen former MPs from the three major national political parties. All of the MPs featured left office between 2019 and 2021, making this podcast relevant and current. The MPs represent ridings from coast to coast to coast with a mix of rural and urban, varied gender perspectives, as well as diverse racial backgrounds and experiences.

The series takes the listener through six episodes covering different facets of life as a MP. It begins, logically, by hearing about the steps to becoming a nominee for a political party and moving through what it is like to win a nomination contest and then an election. It sets up and dives into party politics by pulling the curtain back on some aspects of the party structures that are not seen by the average voter.

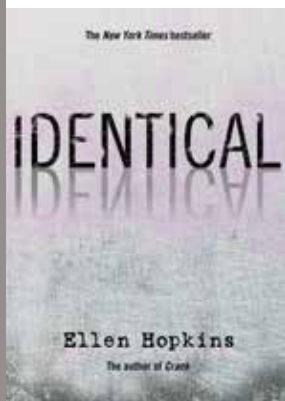
The series continues by examining the experiences of the MPs working and personal life on and off Parliament Hill. The MPs candidly speak about the struggle that can exist in representing their party, their constituents, their own personal beliefs, and the toxicity of party politics in the house. The podcast highlights the pressure that they felt in these moments and how hard they had to work to accomplish legislative wins. They talk about the schedule of being in Ottawa for the week before traveling across the country to perform their duties in their ridings. In the final

episode of the series, the MPs candidly reflect on their service in Ottawa and evaluate if the personal and professional sacrifices that they made were worthwhile.

The series uncovers some of the mystique of being an elected MP and gives a personal perspective of the humans who do these jobs. It also gives the listener pause to reflect on our democracy, how the wheels of government turn, and a chance to hear about the difficulty that comes with being in public life.

This series is worth a listen for anyone interested in Canadian politics and could be used as a tool professionally in the classroom. It can be found on all major streaming platforms.

The Samara Centre for Democracy is a non-partisan registered charity dedicated to realizing a resilient democracy with an engaged public and responsive institutions. Their research and programs make them a go-to resource for active citizens, educators, public leaders, and the media.



### **Identical** **by Ellen Hopkins**

Book Review by **Jeff Donkersgoed** (he/him)  
Teacher and Vice-President, District 24, Waterloo

At a meeting of the Board of Trustees for the Waterloo Region District School Board on March 20, 2023, a delegate spoke on the subject of library materials, and specifically challenged the board on its selection of resources with reference to “age appropriateness” and ease of access. In an attempt to prove their point, the delegate proceeded to read—without warning or context—a graphic passage from a young adult novel that was available in several of the board’s secondary school libraries.

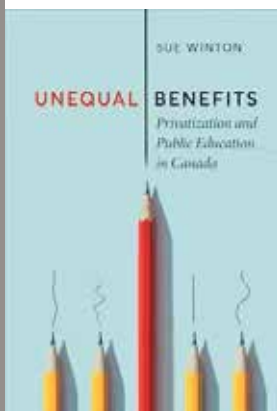
That passage was from the book *Identical* by Ellen Hopkins.

Using a combination of free verse, poetry, and prose, and told through the alternating perspectives of teenage identical twins Kaeleigh and Raeanne, *Identical* details a family’s struggle to cope following a horrific car crash. Kaeleigh is a high-achieving student who is suffering from anorexia, self-harm, and sexual abuse from her father, while Raeanne is a drug addict who is involved in a toxic relationship with a man who is physically and emotionally abusive. The book is frank and explicit in its depiction of sexual abuse, drug addiction, family dysfunction, suicide, and mental illness: it is a distressing, difficult, and emotional read. As such, because of its realism and content, the book has been subject to the inclusion of warning labels on its book cover and has been banned in several education jurisdictions in North America.

But the purpose of the public school system is to ensure equity of access and a high quality of education to all. Moreover, public libraries ex-

ist to give everyone access to information and to reading, regardless of any barriers that may exist. It is important to recognize the value of literature that explores difficult themes and that such books be made available. *Identical* is not a how-to guide for drug use, self-harm, or sexual abuse, nor does it attempt to romanticize, glorify, or shock the reader with its content; rather, it serves as a warning to the reader about the dangers of untreated pain and the importance of seeking help and support. Additionally, for those readers who have dealt with similar circumstances to those outlined in the novel, it may allow them to work through their own lived experiences and encourage them to share with people around them.

Since the delegation, the Waterloo Region District Board has released information to the public outlining its selection of library materials, which clearly follows and adheres to Ministry of Education and human rights guidelines. Censoring books that are deemed controversial by some should never be a default position, as we may risk depriving students of a chance to engage with these topics in a safe and supportive environment and to learn from the experiences of characters. *Identical* is an important read for anyone who is interested in exploring the complexities of trauma, abuse, and family dynamics, and shows the importance of literature as a tool for empathy and understanding.



### **Unequal Benefits: Privatization and Public Education in Canada by Sue Winton**

Book Review by **Dave Weichel** (he/him)  
Chief Negotiator, District 4, Near North

I was intrigued while reading the entirety of Sue Winton's book *Unequal Benefits: Privatization and Public Education in Canada*, but I can summarize the point it hammered home for me by jumping directly to its final line: "When a policy is shown to create or reproduce inequity or otherwise threaten the public school ideal, it must be abandoned. Let's start by abandoning education privatization."

Winton's book reads as part research review, part dissertation, and part call to action it deserves a spot on your reading list whether you are well-versed in the perils of privatization or are a newbie to neoliberal nudges in education.

The driving force behind Winton's work is her belief that we must do all we can to protect and advance both the public school ideal: "...a school that is free and accessible, provides all kids with opportunities to benefit from its offerings, prioritizes public benefits, and is accountable to the public," and critical democracy: "...a version of democracy where people live together in ways that reflect commitments to equity, inclusion, social justice, diversity, public participation in decision-making, and the public good."

Winton provides concrete examples to show how seemingly innocuous practices like fundraising, school fees, and recruiting fee-paying international students provides advantage for certain students, and ultimately leads to further segregation and stratification.

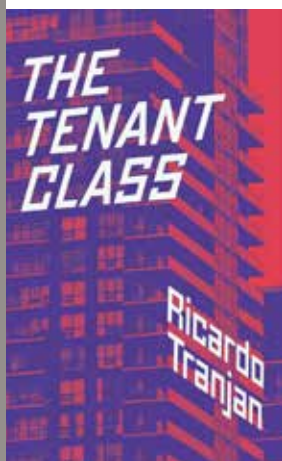
The author also goes on to clearly demonstrate how some families look to secure private benefit within the public system and subsequent

impacts on that system. Parents paying for private psychological testing, individual course credits, or private tutoring services stand in direct opposition (often unwittingly) to both the public school ideal and the concept of critical democracy. Winton takes aim at current policies and programs like open enrolment, alternative or specialized schools/programs—including French Immersion and International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advance Placement (AP), and e-learning as thinly veiled attacks on a properly functioning public school system.

Winton does believe that stopping privatization is possible and the chapter "Taking Action" on its own makes the book read-worthy. The author suggests direct actions (like asking critical questions and being part of the discourse) and resources (like the website *The Conversation*, and work done by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives) as means to fight privatization.

If your inner social scientist is so inclined the book even reviews research approaches and lays out the steps in conducting policy research.

Now, go grab a copy people. Read it. Act on it. Because as Sue Winton reminds us, "...it is people who privatize, and it is people who can choose to do otherwise."



**The Tenant Class**  
by Ricardo Tranjan

Book Review by **Derik Chica** (he/him)  
Teacher, District 12, Toronto

In *The Tenant Class*, Ricardo Tranjan beautifully builds a landscape that centres tenants, grassroots organizers, and progressive economics. He uses statistics and data to convince the reader that the housing crisis does not exist but instead, is an always-existent rental market that harvests economic exploitation. By integrating decolonization and social movements into his class analysis of landlord-tenant relations, he reminds us that historically, ‘asking nicely’ has never worked in pressuring upper social classes to give up power and wealth, and that we must “pick a side.”

As a landlord who rents my basement to support my family in affording stable shelter, this book helped reframe my analysis and more deeply support the systemic changes needed to rebalance power in housing. As with any other type of oppression, those of us with privilege must use it to support and centre those in disadvantaged situations to disrupt the system that maintains these immense power imbalances. In fact, Tranjan demonstrates that our dominant discourse of housing as a crisis serves real estate developers and landlords, ignoring the needs of a third of the Canadian population: tenants.

In a society that consistently pushes ‘moving up’ through home ownership, Tranjan’s read was a breath of fresh air with a tidal wave of reality. He destroys common myths about tenancy through carefully constructed economic arguments and paints a real mural of the identities, beliefs, and aspirations of tenants. He uses

current tenant social movements, and words directly from organizers, to teach us a lesson on the challenges, strategies, and tactics that social movements consider within the realms of geography, micro vs macro impacts, and electoral politics.

This book carefully led me to conclude that calling this situation a ‘housing crisis’ is an injustice because it lets landlords and governments off the hook by drawing attention away from an always-existent rental market that extracts income from the working class and transfers it to a capitalist-owning class. Through concrete examples of collective tenant resistances, the book provides hope through community organizing. It reminded us that unions have been and need to be involved in these organized resistances beyond institutional tactics.

I loved this book because of its medley of grassroots tenant and organizer voices, macro-economic statistics, and action-orientation. It is a must-read to better understand the Canadian housing market and what can be done to change it.





**Education  
Forum  
magazine  
through  
the years  
since 1975**





## Unity in the face of hate and greed

People power always wins

I wanted to start this piece celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> volume of *Education Forum*, but considering the recent increase in hate-based activism, including direct attacks on our 2SLGBTQI+ communities, I want instead to ask us all to remember our past, to embrace how far we have come as a society, and to pull on our collective strengths to heal and work through challenging times. Organized labour has a proud history of supporting human rights activism, including advocacy fighting anti-Black racism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of oppression. Looking back at past issues of *Education Forum*, we see just how embedded equity work is in all we do as a union. But it can't just stop with advocacy, it must continue as a united move towards inclusion, belonging, and understanding.

Similarly, the labour movement has also used its power to fight privatization of public services, to insist governments prioritize people over profits, and to protect the social safety net. As the Ford government faces some of its deepest and widest criticisms, including public outcry over their attempted sell-off of the Greenbelt, we see the true impact of the people united against putting profits in the hands of the few at the cost of the many. In the fall of 2022, Doug Ford and Minister of Education Stephen Lecce provoked an ill-conceived standoff with the Canadian Union of Public Employees' (CUPE) educational workers, dramatically misjudging the public's gullibility. And in the process of invoking the notwithstanding clause through Bill 28 to trample

labour rights, the Ford government picked a fight they couldn't win with the entire labour movement. Then, Bill 124 was struck down by the courts, and the floodgates opened for remedies to be won for workers across the public sector. It was another win for workers and a blow to Ford Nation—the power of the people continues to win out over greed.

These successes are thanks in part to our individual actions—hundreds of thousands of people in the province took action, contacted their MPPs, attended rallies, and engaged in debate with their friends and family. Every one of these actions added to the pressure that led to Ford's full reversal of the sell-off of public lands to a small number of wealthy contractors and builders. This is the pressure that will allow us to elect a labour, community, education, and equity-friendly Ontario government in June 2026.

The threat of privatization is real. The rise of hate is real. The trampling of workers' rights is real. But so is our power as communities and labour organizations. I thank each of you for the ongoing work you do as part of this resistance. We can't give up and we can't allow hate, oppression, and greed to rule the day. As this 50<sup>th</sup> volume of *Education Forum* showcases, the public good will always win over private interests.

Congratulations to all who have contributed to *Education Forum's* continued success.

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**Karen Littlewood** (she/her)  
OSSTF/FEESO President



## L'unité face à la haine et la cupidité

Le pouvoir du peuple sort toujours gagnant

Je voulais débiter cet article en célébrant le 50<sup>e</sup> volume d'*Education Forum*, mais compte tenu de l'augmentation de l'activisme haineux, y compris les attaques directes contre nos communautés 2SLGBTQI+, rappelons-nous plutôt notre passé et notre parcours comme société et puisons dans nos forces pour guérir et passer les périodes difficiles. Les syndicats sont fiers de toujours soutenir l'action pour les droits de la personne, comme la lutte contre le racisme anti-Noirs, le racisme, l'homophobie, la transphobie et d'autres formes d'oppression. En parcourant les anciens numéros d'*Education Forum*, nous voyons à quel point le travail en faveur de l'équité est ancré dans toutes nos actions comme syndicat. Mais ce travail ne doit pas s'arrêter à la défense des droits, il doit continuer dans un mouvement uni vers l'inclusion, l'appartenance et la compréhension.

Le mouvement syndical a aussi utilisé son pouvoir pour lutter contre la privatisation des services publics, exhorter les gouvernements à accorder la priorité aux personnes plutôt qu'aux profits et protéger le filet de sécurité sociale. Alors que le gouvernement Ford fait face à de sévères critiques, y compris l'indignation du public face à sa tentative de vendre la Ceinture de verdure, nous voyons l'impact du peuple uni contre la mise des profits dans les mains de quelques-uns au détriment du plus grand nombre. À l'automne 2022, Ford et Lecce ont provoqué l'impasse avec les travailleurs en éducation du Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique (SCFP), en jugeant mal la crédulité du public.

En invoquant la clause dérogatoire du Projet de loi 28 pour bafouer les droits des travailleurs, Ford s'est lancé dans une bataille ingagnable avec les syndicats. Ensuite, le Projet de loi 124 a été invalidé en cour et la voie s'est ouverte pour que les travailleurs du secteur public puissent obtenir des réparations. C'est une victoire pour eux et un coup dur pour Ford; le pouvoir du peuple continue de gagner sur la cupidité.

Ces succès sont en partie dus à nos actions individuelles; des centaines de milliers de personnes ont agi, contacté leurs députés, assisté à des rencontres et participé à des débats avec leur entourage. Chacune de ces actions a ajouté à la pression qui a mené à l'annulation complète par Ford de la vente des terres publiques à quelques entrepreneurs fortunés. Cette pression nous permettra d'élire un gouvernement favorable aux syndicats, aux communautés, à l'éducation et à l'équité en juin 2026.

La menace de la privatisation, la montée de la haine et le piétinement des droits des travailleurs sont réels. Mais notre pouvoir comme communautés et organisations syndicales l'est aussi. Merci à tous pour le travail continu dans cette résistance. Nous ne pouvons pas permettre à la haine, à l'oppression et à la cupidité de l'emporter. Comme le montre ce 50<sup>e</sup> volume d'*Education Forum*, le bien public l'emportera toujours sur les intérêts privés.

Félicitations à tous ceux qui ont contribué au succès continu d'*Education Forum*.

Karen Littlewood (elle)  
Présidente d'OSSTF/FEESO



## LOOP DESIGN AWARDS 2023

This year, the LOOP Design Awards witnessed a high number of participants and an exceptional quality of submitted entries, with 690 entries received from over 52 countries, representing all the continents. The People's Choice Award also saw a significant surge in participation, accumulating a record 185,000 votes in a single month, making the results all the more remarkable.

# 2023 CONCEPT CATEGORY WINNER

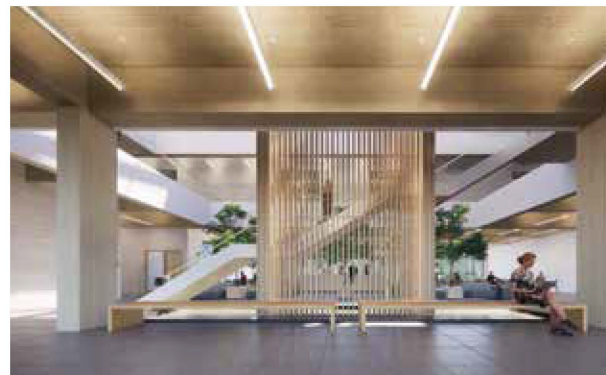
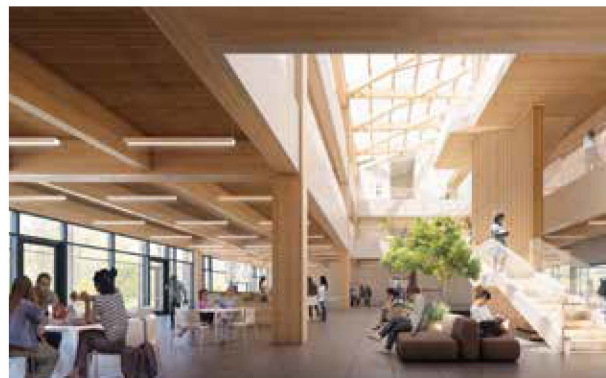
CONCEPT | OFFICE CONCEPT



### **The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) Headquarters and Multi-Tenant Commercial Building**

Moriyama Teshima Architects

For more information on the design of OSSTF/FEESO's new building, check out our *Education Forum* magazine volume 49 issue 2 at [education-forum.ca](http://education-forum.ca).





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\*Restrictions apply. You must speak with an OTIP broker on the telephone to review your quote to be eligible for the \$20 gift card. Must be a resident of Ontario and a member of the education community. Maximum of one gift card per household. Promotion ends December 31, 2023. The merchants represented are not sponsors of the rewards or otherwise affiliated with this company. Please visit each company's website for additional terms and conditions. Visit [otipinsurance.com/promotion-card2](https://otipinsurance.com/promotion-card2) for full eligibility criteria and offer details. The discount of up to 50% is a one-time offer and applies only to the home insurance premiums if the eligible member has both a home and an auto policy underwritten by Traders General Insurance Company, part of the Aviva Insurance Company of Canada. OTIP and Traders/Aviva have the right to withdraw this offer at any time. Must reside in Ontario to be eligible for this discount. NOTE: Please contact OTIP for eligibility as there are other conditions that may apply.

Fighting school privatization is a working-class struggle

Public education and privatization in Australia

Are charter schools really about choice?

PEX—the Public Education Exchange

Dissecting privatization

Our future is public

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