

# ESPecially Yours

Volume 16, Issue 1

November 2015

## Message from Your President

Well, another stressful year has begun.

School opening was very difficult this year with teachers, both elementary and secondary, taking strike action through withdrawal of services since the beginning of school. We appreciate your support for teachers by not performing any extra duties that teachers would normally do.

We then evolved into our own Support Staff Central Sanctions. This has been very difficult for members, who had lots of questions to begin with. We thank you all for taking part; it has made a difference. The Ministry has extended deadlines and stopped some new initiatives. It is worth taking the time to review some of the sanctions (such as taking lunch and breaks, not doing time in lieu overtime) and continuing those after our strike action is finished. Those are your rights in our contract.

As I write this, Central Bargaining is still taking place; by the time you read it we may have a deal. However, we are still working on our local bargaining. I hope you all continue to monitor your personal emails and the OSSTF Members only secure website for updates. If you



receiving emails at your personal (non OCDSB) email address, please send the email address to [leif.walther@d25.osstf.ca](mailto:leif.walther@d25.osstf.ca). If you do not yet have access to the OSSTF secure website, please call OSSTF Provincial at 1-800-267-7867 and ask for member services.

This has also been a difficult start up in terms of mental health, conflict and other issues. It is important that all members feel safe and respected in their workplace. You should not be subject to bullying, or lack of respect. If you are, please feel free to contact me so that we can provide assistance with resolving issues. If you feel threatened, make sure your supervisor knows. On the other side, it is important that all members treat everyone else with respect. When you are stressed, it is important to take a deep breath and think before you say something. Is it kind; is it necessary; is it respectful?

As ESP members, we are often on the front line and must deal with difficult people, whether it is parents, students or other staff members. It is important to remain calm and deal with situations with respect

and fairness. It is not necessary to like

everyone, but it is important to be professional. Please refer to the Board Respectful Workplace and Harassment policies to see the expectations for everyone.

The Business Process Review Committee was due to receive a report from the consultants from At Focus. Some of you may have had consultants in your schools to watch and review your business processes and duties. Due to sanctions, the meeting has not yet been scheduled. We are hoping that the report will provide some options to provide a more manageable workload for members. Stay tuned.

Please continue to contact either Leif or myself ([nancy.akehurst@d25.osstf.ca](mailto:nancy.akehurst@d25.osstf.ca)) if you have any questions or concerns.

## In the News



Paul Elliott, Resident of OSSTF

Photo: CBC

***OSSTF president calls threat to dock support staff pay 'disrespectful'***

***Elliott says government should focus on 'how we can return to bargaining table'***

Paul's statement to the media:

<http://www.osstf.on.ca/en-CA/news/mn-nov-03-2015.aspx>

## Education Funding Problem

People for Education, October 2015

Nearly \$1 Billion in funding for school boards is based on demographic data. But because of the loss of the mandatory long form census, the province says that 2011 census data is not reliable enough to "support using it to update some or all of the grants that currently use 2006 census data."

Every year, the Ministry of Education goes through a complex process to decide how much money to allocate to each of Ontario's 72 school boards. The funding is based on a number of factors, including things such as enrolment, the number of schools in a board and whether those schools are rural or far from each other, estimates of costs for things like busing, utilities and maintenance, administration costs and more.

One component of boards' funding from the province is based on demographics: the percentage of low income families in the board, percentage of recent immigrants, single parent families, families with Aboriginal status and families with low parental education.

The demographic component affects funding for special education, Safe

and Accepting Schools, and grants for English Language Learners in English boards and French Language Learners in French boards. It also affects the amounts boards get for their Learning Opportunities Grants which, in part, are intended to fund things like social workers, support staff and smaller class sizes for students whose socio-economic status might put them at risk of struggling in school. Part of boards' funding for Aboriginal education is also based on demographics.

Up until now, governments have relied on census data from Statistics Canada to provide the information they needed to allocate funding in a number of areas. But the province, in its consultation guide for this year's funding, states that "The Ministry is continuing to analyze the impact of utilizing the results of the 2011 National Household Survey, which replaced the mandatory long-form census. This analysis has progressed far enough to give rise to concerns that the NHS does not provide reliable data or data (even if valid) at a level of detail that would support using it to update some or all of the grants that currently use 2006

*census data."*

Funding for education based on demographics includes:

- Special Education
- Learning Opportunities Grant:
- Language Grants (ALF and ELD)
- First Nations, Métis and Inuit education
- Safe and Accepting Schools

Total funding based on demographics according to the Ministry, is approximately \$932 Million. In the consultation guide, the Ministry explains the seriousness of the problem: "This is especially significant for the grants that provide funding for specific education priorities and support the goal of equity in education. An important principle of the funding formula is that it should be based on current information to the greatest extent possible. That is, allocations should adjust to and reflect the educational needs that arise from the social, economic and demographic conditions facing students, based on the most recent reliable data."

***Another reason to be thankful the long form census is being reintroduced!***



## What's going on in November



### OMERS Pension Workshop

Wednesday  
November 25th, 2015  
4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

CUPE 4000 BUILDING  
32 COLONNADE NORTH  
SUITE 200  
OTTAWA



The workshops are approximately 2½ hours long and provide opportunities for members to ask questions during the presentation or to speak privately with the Pensions Officer and/or presenter.

Members find the practical approach of the OSSTF/FEESO pension workshops to be useful and enjoyable. Participants say the workshops provide them with all the retirement information they need.

Contact Marcelle Ghantous on GEM or call the District 25 office at 613-729-7211 to register. Registration deadline is November 20.

The Federation's OMERS workshops focus specifically on pension planning and retirement. Whether members are 15 years from retirement or six months away, they'll discover common sense financial strategies and retirement planning ideas.

Poster available here:

[http://www.d25.osstf.ca/OMERS PensionWrkshp\(Nov2015\)](http://www.d25.osstf.ca/OMERS PensionWrkshp(Nov2015))



November is Women Abuse Prevention Month in Ontario. **Purple** is used as a symbol of courage, survival and honour, and, for the month of November, symbolizes the fight to end woman abuse.



Wear Purple on November 13th  
#wearpurpleday  
#shinethelight - take a pic and share it with us on social media! @OCTEVAW  
[facebook.com/OCTEVAW](https://www.facebook.com/OCTEVAW)

# OSSTF Leadership Conference



L to R: Secretary Margaret Elson, Amir Ismail, Vice-President Saul Mogelonsky, President Nancy Akehurst, Chouy Johnston

My first time at Leadership Conference in 9 years was quite the experience. It's the first time it has ever been held in Ottawa. About 400 OSSTF members gathered at the Westin Hotel for two and a half days. The theme of the conference was Collective Action.

The conference had a great start for our Teacher Bargaining and Occasional Teacher Bargaining Units. President Paul Elliott announced a tentative central agreement with OPSBA and the government and then said "We are continuing the battle to get local deals and to achieve a fair deal at the support staff central table." All support staff presidents and chief negotiators met with Provincial Executive to discuss strategies for upcoming negotiations.

Two keynote speakers spoke to the membership. Michael Harris talked about Steven Harper's leadership style changing the country in a negative way. Canadian environmental activist Tzeporah Berman talked to members about the need to go beyond educating people about the environment to promoting action. All members had over 50 workshops to

choose from on a wide range of topics over the course of the conference.

SAUL

I really liked the fact that the Leadership Conference was held in Ottawa for a change. It meant that ESP could afford to send more of the executive to it since accommodation and transportation was not an issue.

The most meaningful workshop I attended was a full day workshop on mental health. It is one of the workshops developed by OSSTF -- by members for members -- and made available for presentation.

This is such an important topic when you stop to consider the statistics:

- Seven million Canadians will experience

a mental health problem this year.

- Mental illness is the number one cause of disability in Canada.
- Chances of having a mental illness in your lifetime in Canada --one in four.

Mental illness touches all of us. If not you yourself, it could be a student, colleague, family member, friend or neighbour. We all need strategies to deal with the issue in the best possible way. There can be no Health without Mental Health.

MARGARET





## DID YOU KNOW?

“One out of every four to five employees is affected by mental health issues every year. Many workers choose to go untreated rather than risk being labeled as “unreliable, unproductive, and untrustworthy”.

*Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2012*



You can cheer someone up by sending them a fun I.O.U e-card! It is available on the “Not Myself Today” website which is sponsored by a number of major companies who have taken a stand for workplace mental health.

Check it out at

[http://www.notmyselftoday.ca/iou/?utm\\_source=A+fun+way+to+celebrate+Health+y+Workplace+Month&utm\\_campaign=7d070cf567-PFMH\\_EN\\_PFMH\\_ACTION\\_ALERT\\_OCT\\_2015&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_03e4f02f8c-7d070cf567-59981473](http://www.notmyselftoday.ca/iou/?utm_source=A+fun+way+to+celebrate+Health+y+Workplace+Month&utm_campaign=7d070cf567-PFMH_EN_PFMH_ACTION_ALERT_OCT_2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_03e4f02f8c-7d070cf567-59981473)

Make someone’s day today!



### ***Undo the Send***

This is the most important Gmail setting ever. It came from Google Labs, and has since graduated to a regular feature. Go to the General tab under settings, check off “Enable Undo Send,” and select how long the cancellation period is (5, 10, 20, or 30 seconds). Then, whenever you send a message, you’ll see an Undo link in a yellow box floating at the top. If you click it in time, your message will not go out, and you’ll get a chance to re-edit it before you try again, or delete it entirely. You can even undo discards, so when you delete a message in progress, you can bring it back and start again.

AMIR



Steve Carr and Jeff McLaurin from Printing Services were the People’s Choice Winner of this year’s pumpkin carving contest at 133 Greenbank for the second year in a row. Their entry - the Minion Family! After being on display for a few days all pumpkins were auctioned off to raise money for the United Way.

The Editor of *ESpecially Yours* is Margaret Elson. Comments, suggestions and contributions may be sent to her by GEM anytime. Next issue - February 2016

## HELPING A TROUBLED CO-WORKER

What if you have a co-worker who seems increasingly unsettled each day? Often, he looks tired and upset, as well as distracted. The manager said that he is still getting his work done so it's not a problem. You are worried and wonder what you should say or do.

While there could be any number of explanations for the change in his behaviour, early intervention can reduce the chances that his current problem will become chronic or escalate. Like all health problems, it is not the responsibility of co-workers to deal with these issues. However, if you are someone who wants to reach out or support another, know that each situation comes with unique elements. What follows are some possible options for you to consider where the circumstances are appropriate.

### 1. Exploring the situation

- Tell your co-worker that he does not seem to be himself lately, and specifically state what you see. "You don't look as well as you usually do. You seem upset and distracted. Are you feeling okay?"
- Resist making any judgments or conclusions about what is going on. Instead, invite your co-worker to talk about what he is experiencing. When he is done, repeat what you heard and ask him if that is correct.
- Resist giving him advice about what to do. Instead, continue to listen and ask what you can do to help. There are two reasons for this approach. The first is that you avoid giving the wrong advice or unwanted advice - both of which could have unintended consequences. The second is that you are able to help your co-worker focus on what it is he needs. When any of us are consumed by negative or fearful thoughts, we can lose sight of what we need to move beyond them.

### 2. Encouraging action - when your co-worker is ready for change

- Try to help your co-worker preserve workplace relationships and his reputation at work. This can include helping him to avoid unnecessary conflict or acting out when he is not well.
- Encourage your co-worker to take the work breaks that are provided to go for a walk, or out for fresh air. These changes in focus and physical movement can ultimately help him to increase concentration at work.
- Help your co-worker focus on one small step forward at a time. Trying to "fix" everything at once can be overwhelming.
- If your co-worker is overwhelmed with work, encourage him to write down all of the tasks that he is currently doing and if this seems overwhelming to him, consider offering to help complete the list. Encourage him to take the list to his manager to help him prioritize those tasks that are most important.
- Help your co-worker to focus on solutions rather than problems. If he is worried or upset about something or someone, ask what he would like to do about that, and if he is unsure, offer some ideas, but make sure he chooses his own path forward.



### 3. Seeking additional support

- Look through your benefits plan to see if there are any services that may be helpful such as acupuncture, massage therapy, psychological services, etc.
- Suggest your co-worker speak to a health care professional - such as an employee health resource or his family physician.
- Based on what he says he is experiencing, look up resources in the community, online, and at the workplace. Share these with him and ask if he needs anything further.
- If your co-worker is having personal or financial issues, direct him to your Employee Assistance Program, or other community resources that help with these situations.

OCDSB Wellness:

<http://www.ocdsb.ca/sta/employeewellness/Pages/default.aspx>

OCDSB Employee Assistance Plan

[www.workhealthlife.com](http://www.workhealthlife.com)

### 4. Looking after yourself at the same time

- Remember that you are not a therapist. Refer instead to appropriate resources and just continue to be a concerned co-worker who is there for support. Do not allow your days to become filled up with discussion about problems. Help your co-worker to focus on solutions for the workplace issues.
- It is honourable that you want to help your co-worker. Remember, however, to protect your own health and well-being at the same time.

A resource from the OSSTF "Mental Health—Let's Act!" workshop  
Source:

[https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/pdf/Helping\\_troubled\\_coworkers.pdf](https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/pdf/Helping_troubled_coworkers.pdf)

# Health and Safety - Everyone's Business

## STRESS ON THE JOB

Aching muscles, upset stomach, loss of appetite or binge eating, difficulty sleeping, short temper, migraine headaches, high blood pressure, frequent viruses, heartburn, difficulty concentrating, disliking your job, suicidal thoughts... yes, you are getting old but these are also all symptoms of stress.

Job stress is defined as "harmful physical and emotional responses when requirements of a job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of a worker." Job stress and job challenges are not the same. Challenges motivate and energize you, while stress depletes your energy and concentration.

Though everyone is different and our stress tolerances are different, there are some jobs that are deemed to be more stressful than others, such as air traffic controllers or first responders.

When you add on home stressors such as a sick parent, child or spouse, financial difficulties, a death or divorce, there is now a situation for illness or injury.

If a man-eating tiger enters a room (yes they'll eat a woman too) an involuntary alarm goes off in your brain. You will need to either fight

the tiger or run. This is short term stress and your body will recover with no harm done, unless you break a heel.

Job stress, if chronic, causes the same involuntary reaction but over a long period of time. This can cause damage to your body's ability to repair and defend itself against diseases, and can cause illness and injury.

Diseases caused by stress are hard to prove because they can have other causes, but more evidence is piling up that shows chronic stress leads to cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, mental illness including suicide, some cancers, ulcers and low immune system.

Job stressors may include a heavy workload, no times for breaks, lack of support from your supervisor or co-workers, lack of job security, and physical stressors like noise, air quality, ergonomics, over crowded offices, and too many hats to wear.

Many of our school office people are familiar with this. The phone is ringing, you have a student with a bloody nose, another with a skinned knee, two sent to the office for fighting, another student with a photocopy request from a teacher, a parent sitting on the school buzzer and the newsletter has to get out. At these times you daydream of lockdown drills where you get to sit quietly and do nothing.

What can be done?  
Take your breaks, visit your doctor, talk to your supervisor, talk to the union, make an appointment with the Board's Employee Assistance Program, take your breaks, learn

relaxation techniques, meditation, don't eat



at your desk, go for a walk during your lunch break, get training or retraining, take your breaks. A book I have on efficiency states that if you don't take your breaks, you are not working at full capacity even though you think you are.

Reducing your job stress should be your number one job task. Remember to breathe, eat healthy, exercise, avoid salt and sugar and limit caffeine and did I mention, TAKE YOUR BREAKS!

Resources:  
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), "Stress".

Solutions, Caroline Chow of Family Services, EAP Calgary, "Dealing with Job Stress"

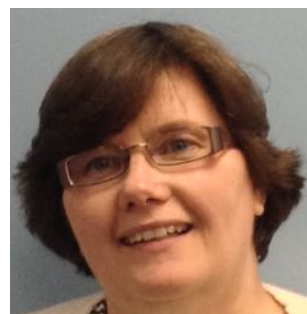
Employee Assistance Program:  
Shepell.fgi 1-800-387-4765,  
workhealthlife.com

**Bev Charles**



"I'm learning how to relax, doctor - but I want to relax better, and faster! I want to be on the cutting edge of relaxation!"

ESP  
Health  
and  
Safety  
Officer  
OSTF  
District  
25





## ON THE LIGHTER SIDE ...



"No warmth, no cheerfulness, no healthful ease,  
No comfortable feel in any member.  
No shade, no shine, no butterflies, no bees,  
No fruits, no flowers, no leaves, no birds --  
November!"

*Thomas Hood, No!*

The tribal wisdom of the Plains Indians, passed on from generation to generation, says that "When you discover that you are riding a dead horse, the best strategy is to dismount, then get rid of the horse."

However, in government more advanced strategies are often employed, such as:

1. Buying a stronger whip;
2. Changing riders;
3. Appointing a committee to study the horse;
4. Arranging to visit other countries to see how other cultures ride dead horses;
5. Lowering the standards so that dead horses can be included;
6. Reclassifying the dead horse as living-impaired;
7. Hiring outside contractors to ride the dead horse;
8. Harnessing several dead horses together to increase speed;
9. Providing additional funding and/or training to increase the dead horse's performance;
10. Doing a productivity study to see if lighter riders would improve the dead horse's performance;
11. Declaring that as the dead horse does not have to be fed, it is less costly, carries lower overhead and therefore contributes substantially more to the bottom line of the economy than do some other horses;
12. Rewriting the expected performance requirements for all horses; and, of course...
13. Promoting the dead horse to a supervisory position.

One also could look in the root causes, i.e. what kind of parents the horse had, its socio- economic background, maybe he was bullied or his mother was single, etc. etc. etc...

*Disclaimer - Although care has been taken in preparing the information contained in this publication, accuracy cannot be guaranteed. The opinions and views expressed do not necessarily reflect the opinions or views of OSSTF, or District 25.*





## The last word ...



Message from Leif Walther, Chief Negotiator

As I have been saying since 2014 ...

NO CONTRACT YET

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT

STAY TUNED

Please check your personal emails for updates.

The *Members Only* section of the OSSTF Provincial website can also be checked for regular updates. To get access to the *Members Only* section, please contact Provincial Office at 1-800-267-7867 and ask for Membership Services.