

The Ottawa-Carleton

The official newsletter of OSSTF D25 Teachers

December 2015

OSSTF District 17 local leader acclaimed as Secretary-Treasurer of the Ontario Federation of Labour.

Patty Coates, OSSTF D17 –Simcoe President of the Educational Assistant Bargaining Unit, was acclaimed as Secretary-Treasurer of the OFL during elections of OFL officers on Tuesday November 24th. In addition to serving as an OSSTF/FEESO Bargaining Unit President, Patty has served as the President of the Barrie and District Labour Council for the past eight years. Patty ran on the #FEDFORWARD slate along with Chris Buckley (UNIFOR) and Ahmad Gaied (UFCW). Delegates to the 13th Biennial Convention acclaimed Chris Buckley as their new President, while the position of Executive Vice-President was contested. Ahmad Gaied, was elected to the office on the first ballot.

Convention delegates attended two rallies during the week. The first was in support of the “Fight for \$15 and

Fairness” march to Queen’s Park. The rally was aimed at the Provincial government and amendments to the Employment Standards Act. This is a perfect example of how organized labour can come to the aid of all workers to improve living and working conditions. The second important rally was designed to bring awareness to ongoing health and safety issues. The “Justice for Injured Workers” march took us to the WSIB office on Front Street. The most momentous part of the march occurred during the walk down University Avenue when two window washers whistled loudly in support of our chant: “Kill a worker - go to jail!”. The 13th Biennial Convention was the largest in OFL history with over fifteen hundred delegates registered.

Dan Maxwell, OSSTF/FEESO D25 TBU President



Left: Patty Coates, newly acclaimed Secretary Treasurer of the Ontario Federation of Labour (on right) with Chris Buckley, President (centre), and Ahmad Gaied, Executive Vice-President (left).



It's the “Time For Another Contest” Contest!

If you read Stephen Hoogenraad’s article about field trips, you’ll notice he doesn’t mention which national institution was the destination for his recent field trip.

Think you can guess where he went? E-mail me (Andy Wilson) with the correct name of the national institution Mr. Hoogenraad visited to win some union swag! We’ve got USB power chargers! Mugs! Water bottles! Toques! And more!

- First 10 people to e-mail me with the correct answer win a prize.
- Contest is open to OSSTF D25 contract teachers.
- Contest closes December 31st.
- Send submissions to: andy.wilson@d25.osstf.ca



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Another contest!



Exercising Professional Judgement is Our Right and Our Duty!

When we became teachers, we were told about the expectation that we (quoting from the OSSTF/FEESO motto) “uphold the honour, dignity, and ethical standards” of our profession, and that we act in the best interests of our students. But few of us, I think, realized what an uphill battle this can be, and just how often we would have to stand up collectively in order to carry out these professional responsibilities.

Take, for example, our strong defence of collective agreement language around preparation time and class size. We recognize that more students in our classes, and less time to prepare, mark, communicate with parents and colleagues (among all the other things we do on a daily basis) means a decline in the quality of instruction, evaluation, and feedback we will be able to provide to our students. And, as professionals who take pride in our work and want to give our best to our students, being forced to do less than that because we simply have too much to do and too little time, is unacceptable.

Professional judgement, in my view, is a clear responsibility we have to make decisions around instruction, assessment, and evaluation in the best interests of our students. And we do this in our everyday teaching. We all go into a semester, or a year, or a course with students, with a plan of how we will teach the curriculum for that course. In the OCDSB, we now refer to these as assessment plans or “placemats,” but in any event, it is our job to be familiar with the expectations students must meet/demonstrate by the end of the course, and to have a good idea of how we are going to get there. Integral to successfully getting students “there” is getting to know them as learners, as people and as a group. And invariably, once we start to get a sense of who our students are, it becomes clear that some aspects of our plan might have to change – either for the class as a whole, or almost certainly for individual students. Of necessity, our instruction, assessment and evaluation needs to be flexible in order to adapt to the needs of our students, while adhering to the provincial curriculum and *Growing Success*.

The lack of flexibility in our Board’s A&E policy – and specifically, the requirement that we have two summative tasks and/or exams – frustrates teachers because it does not allow us to choose the type and format of summative evaluation that would be most appropriate for our students, based on the courses they are taking. Now, I may opt to have a summative task and an exam, as that meets the needs of the students and works well with the subject and level of course I am teaching. But for a number of courses, having a second summative task or exam during the exam period might not make a lot of sense. In practical/hands-on courses, the traditional paper and pencil exam is not likely the most authentic or valid way to measure what they know. Even in other courses, other formats might be better ways to assess student learning. But those don’t lend themselves to the structure of the exam period that we have. Why can’t they be done before the exam period? And in other situations, such as in senior university level math and science courses (or even English), why can’t teachers opt for a 30% final exam, as it would help to prepare students for university where it is not uncommon for exams to be worth more than 30% of their final grade?

Perhaps what bothers us most is implied by what we tend to see as micromanaging: that if we are not told exactly what to do, when to do it, and how to do it, that we won’t. That maybe we won’t do summative evaluation. Maybe we won’t even teach. And that is pretty discouraging.

Teachers are proud professionals who want to do what’s best for their students. We need to be supported in using our professional judgement in the classroom—and we need the tools, time, support and flexibility necessary to carry out our duties properly.

Stephanie Kirkey, OSSTF D25 TBU Provincial Councillor



As of press time, a tentative agreement has been reached centrally for OSSTF/FEESO support staff. Ratification votes for the central agreement are underway. Ottawa-Carleton's five support staff bargaining units continue to bargain locally. None have yet started local sanctions. Please support our support staff colleagues in this stressful situation.

Top left: OSSTF/FEESO members at OTSS rally in support of striking support staff.

Right: OSSTF/FEESO support staff are joined by members of other bargaining units at a rally outside Yasir Naqvi's constituency office.



Not the Field (Trip) of Dreams

Recently, a colleague and I took our classes on a field trip. We had reserved a morning at one of our national institutions here in Ottawa. This is a field trip I've been participating in with my classes most years out of the last 15. I'm seriously considering not doing this anymore.

When reserving, the person on the other end of the line was adamant about the institution's requirement of a student to teacher ratio of 10-1. We've been hearing this for the last three years or so and I generally ignore it. It's not like I have that ratio in my classroom or in the halls. It's not that we don't want volunteers to come along, it's just difficult to get them together, and I don't particularly see the need for it when I've got so many other things that need doing. It's not like the institution refused us admittance when we have arrived anyway. We just sign off that we're responsible for our students.

We haven't been kicked out yet.

When we do arrive, the welcoming committee is now asking that school groups stay together with their teachers in sight at all times. You can just imagine how exciting that is for the students. Constant supervision instead of independent exploration. It really takes the fun out of scavenger hunts. I can see why this would really be important for elementary age students, but not high school students who could be admitted on their own anytime anyways.

A new twist to signing in and paying admission fees this year was a request that my colleague and I prove that we are teachers. We were asked for our OCT cards to be admitted for free with our classes. We pointed out that we had made reservations and they were billing our school, but we did not carry around OCT cards all the time. After showing our driver's licenses and being sternfully told that we should carry our teacher cards, they helpfully opened up a web browser and looked us up on the OCT online registry while our students waited.

After that, we were in.

The costs involved with our trip included admission fees, the cost of an occasional teacher for the other class I wasn't taking with me, and the cost of a school bus. These things add up and it took a great deal of time to sort out who would be paying for what. It seems every time I turn around each element of this equation increases or changes in some way. Who is responsible for what? What forms should be filled out? Do your volunteers (if we actually had some) have a police check? One newer problem I've found in the last couple of years, are the number of students who don't want to go. When I was in school everybody went on school trips. This was also the case earlier in my career. Now the problem is, what do we do with the students who don't come along? With school budgets seemingly decreasing all the time, how can we afford to look after the kids we leave behind? Where do those 10 kids in a class of 30 go who give vague answers like "I'll bring in the form tomorrow" and never show up in the end? Some just never give a straight answer. It's frustrating.

Over the last year, our field trip forms and procedures have been under review and are changing in several ways. It will be interesting to see if this will have a positive impact on field trip planning. I'm feeling that despite the benefits of the experience my students receive from our field trips, it's perhaps not worth the added workload and stress to continue. Maybe it's just me.

Stephen Hoogenraad, Teacher, Nepean High School.



Left: The Imperial War Museum in London. Definitely NOT the museum that Mr. Hoogenraad took his students to.



[United for Refugees](#) is a community initiative focused on raising funds for the sponsorship and settlement of people affected by the Syrian crisis. In October, United Way Ottawa launched this initiative in collaboration with the Community Foundation of Ottawa, Mayor Jim Watson and the City of Ottawa, and Refugee 613.

By [donating to United for Refugees](#), you are helping to give these families the best start in their new lives.

"It's time for Ottawa to be #UnitedforRefugees" *United Way Ottawa*. Dec, 2015.
<https://www.unitedwayottawa.ca/its-time-for-ottawa-to-be-unitedforrefugees/>



The United Way includes organized labour in all its decision-making structures. This year's OCDSB United Way campaign has been modified in part due to labour disputes. OSSTF/FEESO encourages you to participate. If you have not done so already, please consider donating [here](#).

Parent-Teacher Interviews, Then and Now

Parent-teacher interviews have always evoked a myriad of emotions. From the beginning of my career, I'd feel a bit anxious and a bit curious. Would the parent match the student? How would it feel to talk to adults instead of kids? Is the ten minutes going to be more difficult for me or the parent? What would I learn? What could I teach? What would be shared?

Now I mostly just feel angry. From the time we receive notification. To the day of. And even more so, the day after. Anger, anger, anger. Sometimes there's frustration and indignation. Maybe confusion. But always I'm angry, angry, angry. This fall, I wrote down why. And when I shared my thoughts, others agreed.

Until very recently, the process at my school for parent-teacher interviews, was to run four shortened class periods, have an artificially late lunch and no classes in the abbreviated afternoon. Parent-teacher interviews were held for a few hours in the late afternoon and early evening. For the most part, staff felt this was fair and reasonable. Administration seemed happy. To our knowledge, not a single parent ever complained to the school.

During the abbreviated afternoon, some teachers rushed around to prepare for interviews. Last minute marking. Reviewing information. Preparing information to share. My department head enjoyed a twice yearly lunch at a restaurant, because it made him happy. Several people took heed of wellness suggestions and went for a good brisk walk. A few went home to rejig childcare, pet care or other household responsibilities.

Everyone felt in relative control of their mood and energy levels as they entered parent-teacher interviews. Teachers tended to be positive, enthusiastic and professional as they conversed with parents – one of the most important aspects of our jobs. They were certainly tired the next day, but usually in an 'I've done a good thing' kinda way.

Very recently, an edict apparently came from on high, that our school's practise contravened someone's idea of appropriate scheduling. Apparently someone important, and with a great deal of power, believed that it is the quantity rather than quality of teacher-student contact minutes which counts. Maybe they weren't aware that kids can learn (or rest) without sitting in class under the supervision of a teacher. Apparently they also believed that there is an endless supply of good-will among their workers. Our administration repeated profusely that it wasn't their idea but that they had been ordered to change things, for no apparent net benefit.

So now teachers at my school teach for a full day, take a quick breath and work an extra shift for the evening. They struggle to be positive, enthusiastic and professional, while many are actually feeling bitter, disrespected and exhausted. They paste on fake smiles and do their very best. Then they drag themselves into work the next morning and try to do better than simply be present.

It's a totally different situation than staying late for extra-curriculars or marking into the wee hours because they choose to. The blanket imposition of unfair demeaning working conditions grates. A lot. And in a profession that relies so much on attitude, perspective and intrinsic motivation, that makes all the difference in the person who shows up for work each day.

Experienced teachers know what we've lost. Some newer teachers may believe workers have always been treated so poorly. Either way, neither staff, nor parents, nor students get the high quality education system that they deserve. What kind of leadership would it take to rethink our priorities?

Written by an OCDSB teacher with 25+ years experience. Check with your colleagues. How long has your school had your current parent-teacher schedule? How much good will would be garnered by treating you more humanely?

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHEER
PROUDLY HELPING UNION FAMILIES SINCE 2004



To date, we have 5 locals on picket lines in Ontario. We expect a few more locals to announce strikes/lockout before the Holidays and they will be added to our list. All monetary contributions collected are used to purchase grocery gift cards (from unionized grocery stores) for active union families collecting strike pay during the Holidays. OCC will deliver Labours Cheer on the dates and times listed below.

- **OPSEU 294:** CarePartners – 70 members on strike since Apr 10, 2015. 21 members are still walking the picket line. - 32 weeks. **Delivery Date: December 14, Monday @11AM**
- **USW Hamilton:** Max Aicher – 36 members on strike 175 weeks. **Delivery Date: December 14, Monday @2PM**
- **UNITE HERE 75 North York:** Holiday Inn Express – 28 members on strike since Oct 5, 2015 **Delivery Date: December 15, Tuesday @10AM**
- **UNIFOR 1688 Ottawa:** Conventry Connection - 240 members locked out since Aug 11, 2015. **Delivery Date: December 21, Monday@11AM**
- **UNIFOR 4266 Ottawa:** Gardaworld – 135 members on locked out since May 14, 2015. 73 members are still walking the picket line. 26 weeks. **Delivery Date: December 21, Monday @ 11am**



Please make any donation cheques payable to:

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHEER
and mail to:

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHEER

C/O: Casandra Robinson
101 Lockhaven Private, Ottawa, ON, K2J 5L5



Want to help this Christmas? It's SUPER easy...

Post the attached poster in your local office or workplace + just fill in the blanks! Have one person coordinate it and a box for members to drop-off donations in → easy peasy! If you are collecting non perishable food items and or toys, please give me a call at (613) 301-2988 to make arrangements for a pick up. Please note that OCC **MUST** be able to pick-up **TORONTO/GTA donations PRIOR TO DEC 13 + OTTAWA donations PRIOR TO DEC 18**

Give me 5!



Enter the **Give me 5 contest** today for your chance to **WIN \$5,000** in CASH and one of five \$50 VISA gift cards!

OTIP recognizes your commitment to the education community and we would like to express our appreciation by giving you the chance to WIN \$5,000 in CASH! In addition, you also have the chance to win one of five \$50 VISA gift cards.

Visit otip.com/winOSSTF to enter today!

OTIP is a proud partner of **Edvantage**

Status of Women and Human Rights Committee

Invites you to join our committee!

Next meeting: January 7, 2016

4:30 PM

9 Corvus Court

Please RSVP to Beth.Wallace@d25.osstf.ca

by Jan 4th, 4 pm



STP
Violence Against Women



On December 6th, OSSTF/FEESO D25 members attended a vigil at Minto Park to remember the victims of the Montreal Massacre.





the panel is political.

Founded in 2013 by Nicole Marie Burton, Ad Astra Comix is run as a partnership. Nicole is an artist and her partner, Hugh Goldring, is a writer. Together, they produce, review and publish comics with social justice themes. Visit Ad Astra Comix at: adastracomix.com

The following cartoon was commissioned by OSSTF D25 TBU. We hope it's the first of many!



BY HUGH GOLDRING & NICOLE BURTON @ AD ASTRA COMIX

Dealing with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

In early November, the Ontario Federation of Labour expressed concerns about the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board's treatment of injured workers. Overall, the concerns pertain to a slow process and rejection of claims by injured workers. Duane Faris, OSSTF/FEESO D25 TBU Executive Officer, has experience dealing with the WSIB, and offers the following advice:

If you find yourself in a situation requiring long term disability and filing a claim with the WSIB, here are some suggestions:

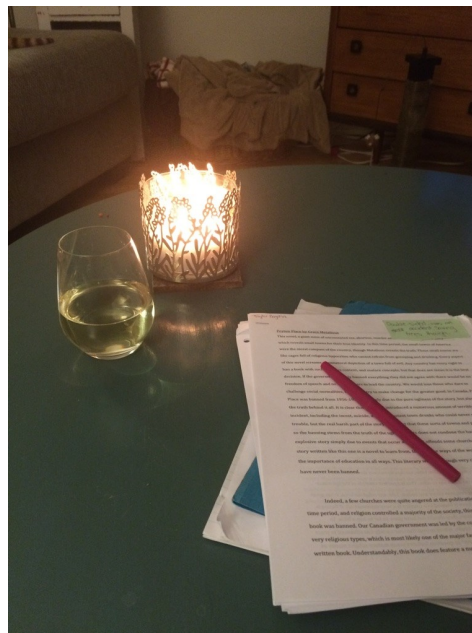
1. Be careful about what information you disclose about your case, and who you share it with. Limit details to what is specifically asked for.
2. If you have a union, make sure they know about your case. Keep them involved.
3. Regardless of your choice of health care provider (GP, chiropractor, naturopath, etc), it is pretty much mandatory that a GP be involved.
4. Keep extensive notes. Keep note of every time you speak to your employer: who called whom, time of call, date of call, length of call, notes on what was discussed. Keep the same list for person to person meetings, doctor/health care appointments, lab visits, treatment appointments, etc. Have notes for every single thing that is related to your case in even the most peripheral way. Keep notes in a ring-bound or glue-bound notebook. Notes kept on loose leaf paper are not admissible in court.
5. Keep all receipts. Parking. Food. Medication. Treatment. Phone bills. Gas/mileage. Have receipts for everything that is even peripherally related to your case.
6. Make an email account that you use only for your case that is NOT owned or run by your employer. Any email that you have to send about your case, send from that account. If you get an email regarding your case on another email account, copy it to the account you create.
7. Add a call recorder app on your cell phone. Make sure you record all calls related to your case and store them on your computer.
8. If you are going to try a new treatment, make sure that WSIB agrees IN WRITING that they will pay.
9. Start a physical file folder for your case. Throw every piece of paper related to your case in this folder.
10. Don't lie. Ever!



Below: A photo submitted from a D25 teacher of her Saturday night. We can all relate..



District 25 OSSTF/FEESO members' response to a question asking which issues they cared about in addition to Health Care, Child Care, Good Jobs and Retirement Security. Prime Minister Trudeau met with union leaders from across Canada during his first week in office. Although most of them didn't vote for him, they appreciated the effort and will hold him to his commitment to improve the lives of working Canadians. In particular, labour wants bills c-377 and c-525 repealed. The first places unparalleled crippling financial requirements on unions. The second makes it much more difficult for federally regulated industries to unionize .



The OC provides a forum for discussion and exchanging information on educational issues, but does not necessarily reflect the opinions or views of District 25 or OSSTF/FEESO. Submissions from members including articles, letters, photographs, or drawings are always welcome. Submission from non-members will be considered. The OC Editorial Board reserves the right to publish and edit submissions.

Contact Andy Wilson, OSSTF D25 TBU Communications Officer:

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OSSTF District 25

Email: inquiries@osstf25.on.ca