

# OSSTF Limestone District 27

## Teachers' Bargaining Unit



735C Arlington Park Place, Unit 11, Kingston, Ontario K7M 8M8  
Tel: 613-546-6985 Fax: 613-545-1295 Email: john.vince@d27.osstf.ca

To: OSSTF Members Date: October 5, 2018

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From: John Vince, Teachers' and Occasional Teachers' Chief Negotiator

Re: **Education consultation, scary Ford stuff**

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Dear Members,

This memo is to inform you of the Provincial governments 'consultation' on education and to prepare you for what may be coming.

### **Education Consultation**

During the Ontario election campaign, the Conservative's touted removing the 2015 Health and Physical Education curriculum. Once elected, the government has moved ahead and, in the Elementary panel, have returned to the 1998 curriculum. The Secondary curriculum has not been changed. The Government has now launched the first stage of a three tier 'consultation' on the curriculum. The link for the consultation process is:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/for-the-parents>

We have obvious concerns about the agenda of this Government. The survey itself, is leading and presumes certain outcomes. Some example questions from the survey:

*"What steps could schools take to ban cellphone use in the classroom? "*

*"What elements should be included in a Ministry of Education Parents' Bill of Rights?"*

If you choose to fill out the survey, consider writing responses that align with our priorities. For example, scrapping the EQAO and invest the money into classrooms; change the funding formula so that our rural schools can survive; lower class sizes; more support staff; and increased attention to violence in schools.

### **Line-by-Line Audit Results**

With parallels to the 'Lock-her-up' demagoguery in the U.S.A., Doug Ford has said that the former Premier "should be in prison" due to (alleged) financial mis-management. Following this, the Government commissioned a so-called line-by-line audit. The report generated from this are available here:

[https://files.ontario.ca/ey\\_report\\_2018\\_en.pdf](https://files.ontario.ca/ey_report_2018_en.pdf)

The report indicates that 27.1 billion dollars are allocated to Education. This makes Education the second biggest spending sector; the first being Healthcare. Several concerns arise out of the analysis:

#### **1. Gains Sharing (doublespeak translation: everyone loses)**

The report highlights the idea of going to 'mutual gains bargaining' in public service bargaining. This term means that the funding envelope for a sector is frozen. In order to achieve gains, another area must be

cut. This was introduced in B.C. in 2012 and was highly problematic as the quote below from the B.C. Teachers' Federation attests:

***“Government’s new mandate for this round of bargaining is the so-called “co-operative gains” mandate, which is really very much the same as the old net-zero mandate. Under co-operative gains, government will not fund any increased costs, including salary increases, for teachers or support staff. Any salary or prep-time increases for teachers, or other improvements that have cost implications such as class size and composition provisions or guarantees of specialist teacher support for students, would have to be offset by reductions in other areas. The co-operative gains mandate requires that savings for any increases be found through “operational cost reductions, increased efficiency, service redesign, business gains, and other initiatives.” School boards have already told government that there are no such savings to be found.”***

This form of bargaining led to a great deal of disruption in the B.C. education system. It contributed to widespread job-action and a full-out strike by the B.C. Teachers in 2013. If you are on the Twitter, do a search for #thisismystrikepay for some scenes from the times. Look closely at our recommendations for school-board trustees and councilors, as we need to elect progressive candidates.

## **2. Alternate Arrangements for Funding (aka Vouchers and Charter Schools)**

An especially alarming section of the report reads:

***“Governments around the world are moving towards alternate arrangements for funding, including tying funding to the achievement of outcomes, and providing funding to individuals, who can then choose their service providers through a form of market activity and discipline.”***

Tying funding to achievement of outcomes sounds a lot like ‘merit pay’. The section also touches on having individuals choose their service providers. This appears to be analogous to a voucher-type system as is common in the U.S.A. This can allow parents to subsidize private school education. The report also says:

***“Research from the OECD18, for example, suggests that the most important factor in driving efficiency into public services is not necessarily engaging private sector actors as is often thought, but imposing competitive pressure on public sector providers.”***

Treating the parents as a ‘consumer’ and the offer of private sector ‘choice’ is a very American view of education. It has been devastating to public education in the U.S.A. If you have time, this article from the Washington Post outlines some of the big problems with the charter school system:

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2017/05/03/three-big-problems-with-school-choice-that-supporters-dont-like-to-talk-about/?utm\\_term=.2202a9c4045f](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2017/05/03/three-big-problems-with-school-choice-that-supporters-dont-like-to-talk-about/?utm_term=.2202a9c4045f)

### **What do we do?**

Build support in your community. Talk to your non-teacher friends and neighbours about the importance of public education and of the dangers of spending public dollars to subsidize private schools. Write letters to the newspaper. Get on social media. Fill out the consultation. Show solidarity with OSSTF and other unions.

Yours in Federation,  
John Vince – TBU Chief Negotiator