

Provincial Executive Liaison Report

To: District 10, District Council

From: Martha Hradowy, Vice-President

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1. Equity Update since November Provincial Council

OSSTF/FEESO is deeply committed to equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression work so that our Federation, workplaces, and communities are equitable, inclusive, and accessible spaces. The Federation continues to be engaged in several activities as per the Action Plan to Support Equity, Anti-Racism, and Anti-Oppression. A few of the completed and ongoing actions are found below.

- Every February, OSSTF/FEESO celebrates Black History Month, an important opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the contributions of Black Canadians.

In February 2024, the Federation will launch a section under the [‘Member News’](#) webpage of the provincial website that will highlight resources and information that can assist Members with learning about Black history in Ontario and Canada. OSSTF/FEESO social media platforms will amplify the resources and information throughout the year.

- In January 2024, The Canadian Teachers’ Federation (CTF/FCE) sought an education consultant with experience preparing classroom resources and developing lesson plans for their [International Decade for People of African Descent](#). Teachers who identify as members of the African diaspora were invited

to apply for this contract position (January 2024 to April 2024). This opportunity was shared with OSSTF/FEESO members through an *Update News* email.

- OSSTF/FEESO provided a sponsorship contribution to [Harmony Movement](#) for their upcoming in-person [Educator's Anti-Racism Conference](#) on February 21, 2024 (9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.- Old Mill Inn) Members interested in attending should confirm with their Bargaining Unit President if they are eligible for time release to attend.

This conference will:

- Outline the impacts of racism on Black, Indigenous, and other racialized student mental health and wellbeing.
 - Educate attendees on how to establish inclusive teaching practices in their classroom and improve the well-being of the school community.
 - Create a space for attendees to engage in cross-cultural dialogue to foster solidarity across diverse communities.
- Provincial funding is available through accounts [#2016 \(Anti-Racism and Equity Training for Members\)](#) and [#2018 \(Anti-Racism and Equity Training\)](#). Districts and Bargaining Units are encouraged to submit an application.
 - The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) International Women's Day (IWD) Pin Project has supported women's organizations across Ontario as they rise, resist, and organize for equity across the province. OSSTF/FEESO will again be supporting this project and encourages all Districts and Bargaining Units to support this worthwhile project. For more information, please click [HERE](#).

Save the date: [IWD Toronto March](#) - Saturday, March 2
Event details coming soon.

- The Status of Women Committee will host their regionals for District Status of Women Officers during April 2024. A D/BU Memo with registration instructions will be issued in the upcoming month.
- The sixty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women will take place in-person at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from March 11 to 16, 2024. OSSTF/FEESO invited three women Members to participate, by application, as part of the CLC delegation to the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68). Preference was given to Members of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and equity-seeking groups.
- The Human Rights Committee will host their triennial conference from Friday, April 19 to Saturday, April 20, 2024. The Addressing Anti-Black Racism/Racism Committee along with a variety of other workshop presenters, facilitators, and panelists will participate in this event. More details to follow.

2. **Empire Club of Canada Event feat. Minister Stephen Lecce/Op-Ed from OSSTF/FEESO**

On December 8, 2023, the Empire Club of Canada hosted a fireside chat featuring the Hon. Stephen Lecce. The title for the event was, [Standing Up For What's Right: Reflections on Leadership, Resilience & Change](#). Video of his presentation and discussion are available on the Empire Club website.

The Empire Club billed the event as a “discussion about the necessity to drive change and how the province is creating better schools, focused on improved student outcomes that meet the economic and labour market needs of our country for generations to come.”

The sponsors for the event were Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA), the Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON), and the Greater Toronto Sewer and Watermain Contractors Association.

Members of the Provincial Executive, including President Karen Littlewood, and staff attended the event, along with other education stakeholder representatives. The Minister did not offer any new announcements or insights, primarily focusing on his track record as the Minister of Education and his belief in the government's agenda on public education.

At the event, Minister Lecce introduced himself to OSSTF/FEESO representatives and chatted briefly with President Littlewood. President Littlewood also had the opportunity to meet Colleges and Universities Minister Jill Dunlop and inquire about the Minister's response to OSSTF's invitation to attend a meeting with D35 representatives during AMPA 2024.

Following the event, [an opinion column](#) from President Littlewood was featured in the Toronto Star on December 15 as a response to the Minister's commentary and to cast a spotlight on the impact of the Ford Government's chronic underfunding of public education in Ontario. This served as an opportunity to continue to share our message about investing in education and the shortcomings of the Ford government.

3. **Privatization in Education and Human Rights Consortium (PEHRC) Joint Statement – International Education Day, January 24, 2024**

The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation / Fédération des enseignantes-enseignants des écoles secondaires de l'Ontario (OSSTF/FEESO) has been a member of the Privatization in Education and Human Rights Consortium shortly after our participation in *The Future is Public* conference in November 2022.

OSSTF/FEESO staff continue to attend monthly virtual meetings to discuss global trends in privatization, upcoming events, and opportunities for policy submissions by PEHRC internationally and to develop, share, and deploy tactics aimed at achieving the consortium's priorities and goals.

PEHRC members created a statement for International Education Day on January 24, 2024, please see: <https://www.educationbeforeprofit.org/sign-our-statement/>

PEHRC is calling on States to “realize the human right to free, inclusive, quality public education for all learners, throughout life. We believe that the future of human society depends on our collective investment in public education. We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, call on everyone, especially States, to protect against

private actors supplanting the public interest and to fulfil the human right to quality, publicly well-funded, free public education.”

Specifically, PEHRC members call for action in five key areas: prioritize the public, robustly fund public education, stop funding education privatization, regulate and enforce regulation on private actors, and a narrative change.

The statement is part of the long-term goal of protecting and enhancing public education as a human right and, more specifically, to counter the global education privatization agenda. The statement aligns very well with OSSTF/FEESO priorities, action plans, and existing constitution, policies, and procedures.

4. OTIP and OTF Awards for Education Workers

Ontario Teacher’s Insurance Plan (OTIP) Awards for Teachers and Education Workers, in collaboration with the Ontario Teachers’ Federation (OTF) are given each year to four teachers and two education workers (support staff) who meet the nomination criteria.

Each of these awards is presented at a ceremony in Toronto where the recipient receives a certificate and a \$1,000 cash prize.

Teaching Awards

The OTIP Teaching Awards recognize and celebrate teachers who make a difference - teachers who ignite a spark in students, inspire their colleagues and give confidence to parents.

Sponsored by OTIP and administered by the [Ontario Teachers’ Federation](#), the OTIP Teaching Awards recognize the essential contribution of teachers to society. Awards are given each year to outstanding teachers in the categories of elementary, secondary, and beginning teacher (within their first five years of practice).

Support Staff Worker Awards

The OTIP Support Staff Worker Awards recognize support staff workers, who are insured by OTIP, for their outstanding contributions to the education community.

Sponsored and administered by OTIP, these awards are given each year.

On October 27, 2023, OSSTF/FEESO staff was able to meet virtually with staff from OTIP. Concerns raised by OSSTF/FEESO included:

- That, the OTIP Teaching Awards and OTIP Support Staff Worker Awards be presented differently on the website, with the Teaching Awards taking front stage on the site and are much more easily accessible.
- That, the access to the OTIP Support Staff Worker Awards site is very difficult to navigate and does not flow like the Teaching Awards do.
- That, the name “Support Staff Worker” does not accurately describe, in the opinion of OSSTF/FEESO, the many education workers who contribute in meaningful ways to the education of our students.

OTIP mentioned that the Teaching Awards and Support Staff Awards are administered differently, with the Teaching Awards being administered by both OTF and OTIP, while the Support Staff Awards are only administered by OTIP. For this reason, they have a different look and feel. OTIP noted that even though the award is administered differently, that does not mean there isn’t room for continued improvement and is willing to discuss it

further. In addition, OTIP has identified opportunities such as improving digital experience and navigation and confirming the need for rules and regulations. OTIP's continued improvements and follow-up on the Support Staff Awards led to over 600 nominations being received for the award last year.

5. **Ministry Kindergarten Curriculum Announcement**

In a press conference January 23, 2024, Minister Lecce announced that a new curriculum for kindergarten will be in effect as of September 2025. Currently, the Ministry of Education curriculum begins in grade one. Since its conceptual introduction in 2010, Full Day Kindergarten in Ontario has provided programming to students that is learner-initiated, team-constructed (teacher and early childhood educator). In order to "continue to relentlessly advance back-to-basics education," this shift to curriculum will include new and mandatory learning and expectations.

Referencing both *Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)* results and the *Ontario Human Rights Commission's Right to Read Report*, Lecce emphasized the need for developing foundational skills in literacy and math through direct instruction with specific vocabulary.

Details regarding content and implementation have not yet been shared. During the press conference, Lecce highlighted that the plan is to provide training for 700 specialist-literacy teachers who are "the best of the best." Individual boards would then deploy those teachers.

The press release does state that the curriculum will be "Combined with hands-on and play-based learning." However, beyond teachers, Minister Lecce did not reference Early Childhood Educators or any other professionals working in early learning.

Assigned Staff will be liaising with affiliates and unions involved in Early Learning regarding training, content, implementation, and impact on OSSTF/FEESO members.

6. **Subject Association Grants**

Each year OSSTF/FEESO provides grants of up to \$2,500 each to support Subject Associations with their activities and/or projects that are of benefit to OSSTF/FEESO members.

To be eligible for a grant, applications must be from Ontario provincial Subject Associations listed as members of the OTF Curriculum Forum and whose members include OSSTF/FEESO members. Applications from individuals or from organizations not on this list, would not be considered. There is \$25,000 total in funding available for this grant.

OSSTF/FEESO received ten (10) applications and the requests for funding totalled \$24,468. Funding was allocated based on the submitted budget requests in the respective applications. Since the requests did not exceed the amount available, all requests that met the criteria were able to be fulfilled in full.

The following Subject Associations were approved for a grant:

- Ontario School Library Association (OSLA)
- Ontario Art Education Association (OAEA)

- Ontario Association of Geographic and Environmental Education (OAGEE)
- Ontario Music Educator's Association (OMEA)
- Science Teachers' Association of Ontario (STAO)
- Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators (CODE)
- Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (OPHEA)
- Ontario Association for Developmental Education (OADE)
- Ontario Society for Environmental Education (OSEE)
- Ontario Cooperative Education Association (OCEA)

The funding will help to support the various Subject Associations with the creation of teaching materials, resources, and lesson plans with an equity and inclusion lens; the offering of conferences and workshops – both in person and virtually; networking; and enhanced websites and digital access to resources – all available to members across the province.

7. OSSTF/FEESO 2024 Pre-Budget Consultation

On Tuesday, January 23, 2024, OSSTF/FEESO participated in the 2024 Pre-Budget Consultations held in Brockville, Ontario. OSSTF/FEESO Vice President Martha Hradowy presented the federation's submission to the Ontario government's Finance and Economic Affairs Committee.

The 2024 solution-focused submission contains seven themes and thirty-eight recommendations that call on the government to invest in and strengthen Ontario's public education system. The submission has been shared with MPPs and is available on the provincial [website](https://www.osstf.on.ca/resource-centre/briefs-and-submissions.aspx) - <https://www.osstf.on.ca/resource-centre/briefs-and-submissions.aspx>.

A recording of the OSSTF/FEESO presentation is available on the Federation YouTube [channel](#) and clips were shared across the Federation's social media channels.

The pre-budget consultations concluded on February 1, 2024.

The Minister of Finance will table the draft budget sometime in March. Another round of public consultations for the draft budget is likely to take place between March and April before it and the associated legislation are introduced in the Ontario Legislature for debate later this spring.

8. Ontario Liberal Leadership Election

On December 2, 2023, Ontario Liberal Party members elected Mississauga Mayor and former Member of Parliament, Bonnie Crombie as the new leader of the Ontario Liberal Party.

It took three rounds of ballot counting for Crombie to beat Liberal MP Nate Erskine-Smith, Liberal MP and former provincial cabinet minister Yasir Naqvi, and former Liberal MP and current provincial caucus member Ted Hsu at an Ontario Liberal leadership convention that went through three rounds of ballot counting.

This was the first time an OLP leader was elected using a weighted, non-delegated, all-member vote since the policy was passed at the party's 2023 annual meeting.

Vote Results

Ballot 1	Points	%	Ballot 2	Points	%	Ballot 3	Points	%
Crombie	5,559	43.0%	Crombie	6,047	46.7%	Crombie	6,911	53.4%
Erskine-Smith	3,320	25.7%	Erskine-Smith	3,792	29.3%	Erskine-Smith	6,029	46.6%
Hsu	1,300	10.0%	Naqvi	3,101	24.0%			
Naqvi	2,760	21.3%						

Increase in Party Memberships, Low Voter Turnout

According to the OLP, the leadership race saw the candidates sign up a record number of members, with more than 100,000 people eligible to vote for the new leader - up from 44,000 and 38,000 in the two previous contests.

Overall, 22,827 members voted in the leadership election, up from 12,988 who voted in the 2020 leadership race and more than the 19,438 in 2013.

The Potential Crombie Effect on the Ontario Political Landscape

Numerous public polls have suggested that of all the Liberal leadership candidates, the party stands to perform best against the Progressive Conservatives in the next election with Crombie leading the way.

Example December 1, 2023 – [ABACUS Poll](#)

“The impending leadership change in the Ontario Liberal Party, especially with Bonnie Crombie’s candidacy, introduces an element of competitiveness and potential political transformation.

With a new Liberal leader, Ontario may be heading back to a more competitive political environment. Recent Polls indicate Bonnie Crombie may represent the greatest threat at the moment to Ford and the PCs in large part because of her name recognition advantage over the other three candidates.” David Colletto - founder, Chair, and CEO of Abacus Data.

New Liberal Leader’s education platform priorities

Table 1 Summary of Bonnie Crombie’s Education Platform

Education K-12	
Class Size	Reduce average class size. Create class-size caps for grades 4 to 12. Lower existing class-size caps for Kindergarten to Grade 3. Establish mandatory ratios between students and teachers/education workers from Kindergarten to Grade 12, developed in collaboration with stakeholders.
Funding	Reverse the Ford government’s cuts to per-student funding. Deliver targeted increases to the Grants for Student Needs (GSN).
Worker Recruitment and Retention	Recruit more teachers and educators by introducing a one-year teaching degree. Expand French-language training programs to address the shortage of French-speaking teachers. Boost retention of educators by adopting well-being initiatives for educators that improve mental health and reduce burnout.

Special Education Support	Hire new psychologists, social workers, and other education workers to support students with individual education plans. Recruit additional teachers and education workers who specialize in supporting children with learning disabilities.
Anti-Privatization	Keep profits out of our public education system, oppose charter schools and vouchers for private education.
Student Mental Health	Establish a comprehensive strategy for students' special needs and mental health that includes wraparound services. Implement a dedicated youth mental health strategy, recognizing suicide is the number one health-related cause of death for young people in Canada
Respect for Educators	Repeal Bill 124. Offer better wages to teachers and educators, negotiated through free, fair, inclusive, and equitable collective bargaining. End last-minute curriculum changes and prioritize consultation with students, parents, and educators.
Building Inclusive Schools	End academic streaming and ensure that all students have equitable access to appropriate academic support within the classroom. Develop an updated culturally sensitive curriculum that incorporates Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, adopts an equity-centred approach, and broadens opportunities for students to learn in French.
School Safety	Promote safety by ensuring the presence of additional caring adults (child and youth counsellors, school-based safety monitors, mental health workers, guidance counsellors, and other support staff).
School Infrastructure	Fix Ontario's schools with a minimum doubling of the annual investment to address the repair backlog. Prioritize state-of-the art upgrades in schools, including high-speed internet, HVAC systems, and air conditioning.
Assessment and EQAO	Eliminate EQAO testing and partner with parents, teachers, and education experts to develop a new assessment strategy.
Online and Hybrid Learning	End mandatory online learning credits.
Other	Create a free, on-campus, after-school supplementary homework help program, guided by qualified teachers. Prevent school closures that force students to travel long distances and provide educators with economic incentives to stay in the North. Deliver targeted programs to improve retention and graduation rates in Northern schools by hiring guidance counselors to provide academic and career planning. Expand opportunities for learning Indigenous history, cultures, and languages in the caring presence of Indigenous elders and knowledge keepers.
Postsecondary	
Accessibility	"Every student in Ontario deserves the opportunity for an accessible, affordable, and high-quality postsecondary education... comprehensive, needs-based, financial aid system that ensures the cost of a postsecondary education does not come between a student and their future."
Funding	Increase the provincial contribution of operating revenue to better balance the cost-sharing model.
OSAP, Loans, Interest	Eliminate the provincial interest portion on OSAP loans, including former students with outstanding loans. Increase the annual income threshold for repayment to \$40,000. Extend the grace period for the provincial portion of OSAP repayment to two years. Increase funding for all eligible students, with a particular focus on supporting low-income and underrepresented groups.
Academic Programming Priorities	Deliver academic programs that meet with the needs of the labour market, have hands-on training and expanded experiential learning opportunities such as co-op and paid internships. Promote skilled trades, support union-led training, apprenticeships and mentorships, and collaborate with employers and post-secondary institutions to develop flexible reskilling, upskilling, and micro-credential programs.

Worker Recruitment and Retention	Support increase tenure-stream faculty hiring and positions, while keeping tuition fees low and ensuring the sustainability and quality of Ontario’s postsecondary institutions.
Safety	Supports proactive measures aimed at addressing sexual and gender-based violence on postsecondary campuses.
Tuition	Keep tuition fees low.
Other	<p>Invest in farm-to-classroom learning opportunities through secondary and post-secondary education programs focused on agriculture, agri-businesses, veterinary sciences, livestock management, and dairy, poultry, and food processing so more youth can have careers in agri-food.</p> <p>Prevent school closures that force students to travel long distances and provide educators with economic incentives to stay in the North.</p> <p>Deliver targeted programs to improve retention and graduation rates in Northern schools by hiring guidance counselors to provide academic and career planning.</p> <p>Expand opportunities for learning Indigenous history, cultures, and languages in the caring presence of Indigenous elders and knowledge keepers.</p>

9. OTF Survey re Associate Teachers

The *Ontario Teachers’ Federation* (OTF), in partnership with the *Ontario Association of Deans of Education* (OADE), is seeking input on a survey about associate teaching.

A District Bargaining Unit memo, along with social media posts, will be released as soon as the survey is live. The survey will remain open February 12 – March 15, 2024.

The anonymous survey takes 15-20 minutes, asks for input about associate teaching, whether the participant has ever been an associate teacher, the supports that are currently available to associate teachers, and the supports that would encourage associate teachers to continue in this role, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant changes. An optional town hall will also be publicized.

OSSTF/FESSO and all affiliates are supportive of this survey and are looking forward to the information it will provide.

10. Stratcom: Workload Violence Study – Leveraging the Final Report Background

In April 2023, the Provincial Executive directed staff to commission Stratcom Communications to conduct a study into workplace violence in the K-12 education sector. Provincial Executive received a final report and a presentation of recommendations in November 2023 and January 2024 respectively. This led to a productive discussion on strategies for leveraging the data for advocacy purposes. Stratcom has also prepared a targeted version of their report for inclusion in OSSTF/FEESO’s voluntary binding interest arbitration submission.

Next Steps: Leveraging the study results to win changes in policy and practice

The Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO) released the results of a comparable study in May 2023. A summary of those results and the full Stratcom report for ETFO can be found here: <https://www.etfo.ca/news-publications/publications/etfo-violence-survey-results>.

While ETFO did gain some initial media interest upon release of their study, they do not appear to have extended that initial coverage into sustained attention to the issue of workplace violence. Not only does a commissioned study, such as this, represent a considerable financial investment, the issue of workplace violence is extremely pressing for many OSSTF/FEESO members. Therefore, it is important that the Federation commit to achieving more than a few days of media attention.

To support OSSTF/FEESO in moving the findings of the report from information to action, Stratcom made a presentation to the February 2, 2024 meeting of the Provincial Council. The presentation provided a brief summary of the study's findings, recommendations about messaging, and recommendations about potential campaign strategies and tactics to ensure continued attention on the issue.

Preliminary work has already begun to develop a white paper and legislative strategy in support of OSSTF/FEESO's advocacy on workplace violence.

11. Strategic Blueprint: Preliminary Insights and Plans for Alleviating Workload Challenges Among University Sector Members

The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation/Fédération des enseignantes-enseignants des écoles secondaires de l'Ontario (OSSTF/FEESO) currently represents a workforce of over 2600 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) support staff members.¹ OSSTF/FEESO members work at six out of the 23 publicly assisted universities in Ontario².

OSSTF/FEESO support staff members serve a multifaceted role in fostering student success, for instance, by ensuring the seamless functioning of crucial processes such as admissions, registration, and academic record-keeping. Their efficiency in managing these tasks directly impacts the ease with which students navigate administrative processes, allowing them to focus more on their academic pursuits.

Further, the roles undertaken by support staff directly align with some of the strategic priorities outlined in individual universities' Strategic Mandate Agreements (SMAs). For example, initiatives related to fostering student engagement often require the expertise of support staff in organizing extracurricular activities, student clubs, and events. Support staff members are also essential in implementing programs that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, ensuring that the university community reflects a rich tapestry of backgrounds and experiences.

A. Background – Changes in Membership FTE and Enrollment

Over the past seven years, there has been a marked increase in membership FTE within District 35, totaling 11% overall. However, it is crucial to contextualize this change, as despite this overall increase, three of our six bargaining units experienced a decline in FTE.

¹ In comparison, CUPE Ontario represents 30,000 members in 39 locals on 17 university campuses, although this number also includes sessional instructors, teaching assistants, post-doctoral students and workers in student unions, student-run services and student-run businesses.

² Saint Paul University is not counted as one of the 23 publicly assisted universities in Ontario as it is federated with the University of Ottawa. For more information, please refer to the following HEQCO publication: https://heqco.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Affiliated_and_Federated_Universities.pdf

The increase was influenced by alterations in the recognition scope of the PSUO bargaining unit at the University of Ottawa³, and the fact that during this period, our Bargaining Unit at Algoma University experienced a substantial growth of nearly 40%. This expansion is directly correlated with the significant rise in student enrollment and the establishment of the Brampton campus in 2018.

Conversely, within the same timeframe, three of our bargaining units—specifically those at Brock University, University of Guelph, and Saint Paul University—experienced a decline in FTE. The most pronounced decrease occurred at Brock University, with a substantial contraction of almost 25%. These fluctuations underscore the dynamic nature of FTE within our represented universities, with varying trajectories that warrant closer examination and consideration.

It's essential to note that over the same period, the cumulative enrollment across all six universities increased by 14 percent. Again here, it is crucial to recognize the considerable variation in enrollment growth at each institution. Algoma University stands out with the most substantial increase at 160%, while Brock University has experienced a most modest uptick of only 3 percent. Furthermore, a noteworthy trend is the surge in international student enrollment across all Ontario universities, reflecting a remarkable growth rate exceeding 80 percent.

Figure 1. Comparison of D35 FTE in 2015-2016 and 2022-2023

	2015-2016	2022-2023	Change	% Change
Algoma	86.873	120.397	33.524	39%
Brock	185.545	141.904	-43.641	-24%
TARA	211.564	189.846	-21.718	-10%
PSUO	1290.101	1523.67	233.569	18%
PSAUSP	55.1	47.496	-7.604	-14%
WLUSA	524.874	585.028	60.154	11%
D35 TOTAL	2354.057	2608.341	254.284	11%

Figure 2. Comparison of enrollment in D35 universities⁴

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	% Change
Algoma	1415	1307	1228	1232	1915	1722	2766	3682	160%
Brock	18294	18411	18484	18721	19404	19268	19189	18910	3%

³ The PSUO collective agreement ratified on November 11, 2020, incorporated a revision to the recognition scope, allowing all contract/term employees engaged in Bargaining Unit work to become members from day one, instead of waiting for 12 months. This modification led to a notable increase of 120 members and a corresponding increase in FTE.

⁴ Due to reporting structure numbers for PSAUSP are included within PSUO numbers. Further attempts will be made to calculate PSAUSP specific numbers.

TARA	28674	29614	29900	30034	30332	30409	29827	31194	9%
PSUO	42611	42786	42369	43244	44199	45833	47984	48814	15%
WLUSA	18897	18987	19868	20298	21069	21960	22872	22615	20%
TOTAL	10989 1	11110 5	11184 9	11352 9	11691 9	11919 2	12263 8	12521 5	14%

B. Assessing Workload Concerns – Initial and Next Steps

The variations in overall enrollment and the rising numbers of international students provide crucial context for delving into concerns regarding the workload of support staff in the university sector. This is particularly pertinent because the growth in the number of staff supporting students has not kept pace with the increase in enrollment.

While various bargaining units within District 35 have voiced concerns regarding workload, the available information primarily consists of anecdotal evidence. There are two fundamental challenges to identifying systemic workload issues for members working in post-secondary education: (i) the fact that each university operates independently, and (ii) the considerable diversity in the roles of OSSTF/FEESO support staff within the six District 35 bargaining units. District 35 members undertake a broad spectrum of responsibilities, ranging from direct support to students to overseeing critical functions such as financial and facilities, services, library management, and even the care of animals at university research stations. The diversity of these roles is a testament to the multifaceted nature of our union, which represents workers across hundreds of job classes.

As a result, of this lack of homogeneity, identifying systemic issues that impact the entire university sector and formulating one-size-fits-all solutions is a formidable obstacle. Overcoming that obstacle requires further research into the underlying causes of the problem.

The goal in undertaking this research is to build our understanding of the root causes of workload concerns among support staff. Preliminary research shows that the well-being and working conditions of support staff are not a topic that has been researched or explored in as extensive way as, for example, workload and working conditions of post-secondary faculty.

The initial examination of collective agreements within the PSE sector substantiates this preliminary hypothesis, revealing a scarcity of workload protections for support staff. As of the preparation of this report, no collective agreement language directly correlates the number of support staff positions to enrollment. It is noteworthy that some workload provisions exist within Faculty collective agreements, where the fixed number of courses (or credits) taught during the year is specified.

Over the upcoming months, we plan to enrich our research, foster greater engagement, and advance our advocacy efforts, with the aim of achieving the following key objectives:

1. Offer a comprehensive overview of the number of support staff in the university sector, emphasizing the diversity within this workforce. This aspect of the research aims to shed light on the varied roles, responsibilities, and demographics of support staff members.

2. Investigate how working conditions for university support staff have evolved over the past five years. This analysis becomes crucial in understanding the impact of significant policy shifts, such as the introduction of new government measures tying funding to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as outlined in Strategic Mandate Agreements (SMA 3), along with the implications of tuition freezes. Identifying the root causes of these changes is a pivotal aspect of this research goal.
3. Examine the repercussions of the identified changes in working conditions on the wellbeing and mental health of university support staff. This critical component of the research aims to illuminate the potential correlations between shifts in work environments and the mental health outcomes of support staff members.
4. Provide recommendations and strategies for addressing the observed changes in working conditions. By identifying tangible solutions and possibly a model collective agreement language, the research seeks to contribute actionable insights not only to our leaders, but also policymakers, university administrators, and relevant stakeholders to foster an improved and supportive working environment for university support staff.

In essence, this endeavor not only aims to fill the existing gap in academically verified information but also strives to be a catalyst for positive change within the university sector with an ultimate goal of better understanding of the challenges faced by university support staff and proposing viable pathways for improvement.

12. **Bill 307 and the Elections Finances Act – SCC Appeal**

With the passage of *Bill 254, Protecting Ontario Elections Act, 2021*, The Ford government updated the *Election Finances Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016*, changing the rules governing third-party political advertising. Amongst the changes most significantly affecting OSSTF/FEESO as a third-party advertiser are the allowable spending limits, the doubling of the pre-election period to 12 months before the writ is dropped, the broadening of the definition of third-party advertising, and restrictions on collaboration with other advertisers.

Bill 254 restricted spending by third-party advertisers during two periods of the election cycle:

- 1) Pre-election period – May 4, 2021 to May 3, 2022, a spending limit of \$637,000
- 2) Election Period – May 4, 2022 to June 2, 2022, a spending limit of \$106,000

Court Challenge to Bill 254

In 2021, Working Families, along with OSSTF/FEESO, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) successfully challenged the constitutionality of *Bill 254*: "The decision that nullifies key provisions of the Ford government's *Bill 254*, the *Protecting Ontario Elections Act, 2021*, were found unconstitutional by the court and violated the Charter section 2(b) (freedom of expression)." said Patrick Dillon, Official Spokesperson for Working Families.

Bill 307, Protecting Elections and Defending Democracy Act (PEDDA), 2021

Shortly after the court released its decision on *Bill 254*, the Ford government passed *Bill 307*, which contained the same restrictions but also invoked the notwithstanding clause to attempt to shield their unconstitutional law from legal scrutiny. "The government was upset

that they didn't get their way with the earlier court judgement and decided to use the nuclear option to silence potential critics," noted Dillon.

OSSTF/FEESO, along with Working Families, again challenged the constitutionality of Bill 307, as a violation of the right to vote enshrined in s. 3 of the Charter (to which the notwithstanding clause does not apply), and as an improper use of the notwithstanding clause of the Charter. in *Bill 307*. Our challenge was initially dismissed, as the Superior Court held that the use of the notwithstanding clause was not improper, and the re-enacted spending limits on third party advertising during the pre-writ period did not infringe the right to vote under s. 3. This decision was partially overturned at the Court of Appeal, however, as, though the majority agreed that the notwithstanding clause was properly invoked, the Court concluded that the spending restrictions were unconstitutional under s. 3 of the *Charter*. The Court suspended the effect of that declaration for 12 months to allow Ontario to fashion new legislation compliant with s. 3 of the Charter.

Appeal at the Supreme Court

On November 9, 2023, the Supreme Court of Canada granted the Attorney General of Ontario's Leave to Appeal. This case will provide the SCC with its first opportunity in two decades to address the constitutional limits of spending caps on third party political advertising.

13. Data Collection on Employer Discipline of Members – SAP 2023

In 2021, AMPA passed an Action Plan to Support Equity, Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression. Through it we reaffirmed our commitment to dismantling all forms of racism and oppression within the Federation and beyond. As part of our ongoing work, we are dedicated to identifying areas of concern, conducting research, developing, and implementing the recommended actions, and continually assessing and evaluating our practices to determine next steps.

The Action Plan to Support Equity, Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression includes a commitment to collect data on employer discipline of Members to examine disparities in disciplinary action. To fulfil this commitment, we will need to fund research on best practices for data collection and create a systematic process for data collection. As is the case with any data collection process, we recognize there will be challenges with the collection of this data, however, once collected, the data would help us determine next steps and formulate a plan to better protect the membership.

As part of this process, local leaders were surveyed in October 2023 to ask if they were collecting any data on member discipline in an effort to determine if there were any best practices already in the field that we could build on. While most expressed an interest in collecting this data, very few are currently doing so.

The collection of data through U-Link was explored and it was decided that a form of data collection which would record issues as soon as they came to the attention of the local leader was optimal. Some of these issues may eventually become a grievance but some may not for a variety of reasons. These include situations where:

- The issue is resolved at the local level because of a good relationship with the employer and so discipline is mitigated quickly and efficiently and does not turn into a grievance.
- The issues do not attain a minimum level of contract violation and are not grieved.
- The individual just wanted to have their issue "on record" but was not interested in pursuing a grievance.

It was felt that even those issues which did not rise to the level of a grievance being filed (for whatever the reason) should still be captured in this project. We know sometimes members can be disciplined but it is mitigated locally or settled and never reaches the grievance stage. Given that the research project is about discipline rather than grievances, in not collecting this data, we would miss important information/patterns pertaining to disparities in the issuance of discipline.

The Provincial Office Information and Technology department has proposed data collection through an Intake Worksheet (INTW) through U-Link. The basic concept is that a local leader would use U-Link to record any notes from the inception of an issue into a pre-grievance intake worksheet (so instead of GRV it would be labelled INTW). This could, potentially, replace the paper folders in a district office. The local could upload documents directly to this INTW file or use the file to write free-style notes. If this then evolved into a grievance – they would be able to export it – just like when a grievance file that has been filed through U-Link is then transferred to Provincial Office to be processed through the Member Protection Work Group. The file is essentially “cloned” and forms the basis for the grievance file if a grievance is filed. The Intake Worksheet can still be used for any other issues that come up with that member, LTD notes, meetings with the employer, etc. The local leader can choose which documents from the Intake Worksheet go into the grievance file. One of the main advantages to gathering notes on members in this manner is that it is housed centrally and securely through U-Link. It also ensures continuity in the event of turnover in a district office and makes the process for adding all the notes to a potential grievance seamless and efficient.

This new filing system creates a basis from which data can start to be gathered. Within the (INTW) Intake Worksheet there will be a communications button available for the local leader to activate. This button will appear whenever “discipline” is chosen from the drop-down menu. It will send a voluntary self-identification form to the member’s personal email address. This is the point at which demographic data can begin to be collected. It can be collected before a grievance is launched (INTW). The form will indicate why the data is being collected and that it will remain completely confidential so that the local leader will not be able to view it neither will anyone else at the local office.

In order to test the technology, and to be able to anticipate and respond to issues, we will pilot the project with a small group of bargaining units in the fall. This will also allow for greater socialization of the concept and better ensure member support.

Discussions about this project took place at the Presidents’ Symposium during the workshop on legal assistance for bargaining units. Relevant information was also shared during a similar workshop at New Presidents training in November. The project will also be featured in a short presentation by the PSC Equity Ad-Hoc work group during the February regionals where they will be outlining the project’s main concepts as well as the rationale for why it is important for OSSTF/FEESO to be collecting this data.

Relatedly, the PSC has invited Dr Scot Wortley to be the keynote speaker at its April 2024 Conference. Dr Wortley is one of Canada’s leading criminologists in the area of youth crime, crime prevention and racial equity within the criminal justice system. His work has informed Ontario’s new guidelines and standards related to race-based data collection. His presence as a keynote speaker will serve to further inform local leaders about the need for collecting demographic data on member discipline. Socializing the concept of gathering member data, particularly demographic data, is crucial to the success of this project.

Staff identified several criteria for the pilot project:

- Must be trained on U-link.
- Must have filed at least some grievances.
- Must be a mix of T, OT, and EW.
- Must have at least 1 Francophone unit.
- Must reflect geographical regions across the province.

Invitations to participate in the pilot project will be sent out in the spring. Local leaders will be invited to a training session in May/June (or when the technology is available for testing), with an anticipated start date for the pilot project of fall of 2024. Evaluation of the pilot program will be done during several intervals in the 2024-2025 year.

14. **Summary of FAO Expenditure Monitor 2023-24: Q2**

On December 10, 2023, the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario (FAO) released its Expenditure Monitor for the second quarter (Q2) of 2023-24. In order to manage and monitor its program spending during the fiscal year, the government divides its spending plan into expected spending by quarter, which reflects historical spending patterns, seasonality, and other factors. The Q2 report provides information on spending for the first two quarters of the 2023-24 fiscal year, a period from April 1, 2023, to September 30, 2023, and it is based on the FAO's analysis of unaudited transactions recorded in the government's financial accounting system as of September 30, 2023.

The complete report, briefing deck, and press release are available at: <https://www.fao-on.org/en/Blog/Publications/2023-24-expenditure-monitor-q2>.

Changes to the 2023-24 Spending Plan

For the 2023-24 fiscal year, the government's spending plan is \$197.3 billion (including \$4.0 billion in unallocated funds in the Contingency Fund). The government may change its spending plan throughout the year, either by requesting additional spending authority from the Legislature or by reallocating spending among different programs through Treasury Board Orders. By the end of the first quarter, the spending plan had been reduced marginally by a net of \$32 million. No further reduction was made in the second quarter.

Changes to the spending plan include:

- \$180 million increase in health for home care health services,
- \$21 million increase in justice, for the Ontario Police College and for Attorney General, Agency and Tribunal Relations
- \$76 million increase in 'other programs'

Actual Unaudited Spending vs. Planned Spending

The government had expected to spend \$42.8 billion in the first quarter and \$46.3 billion in the second quarter of 2023-24. Through the first half of the year, actual unaudited spending was \$83.6 billion actual spending, \$2.0 billion (2.3%) less than was planned. Most sectors spent less than planned, with:

- Education spending down \$129 million (1.0%), including \$183 million less on childcare and early years programs

- postsecondary education down \$96 million (3.7%), including \$92 million less than planned in Support for Postsecondary Education (Capital), which provides capital grants to colleges, universities and Indigenous Institutes
- 'other programs' spending down \$1.5 billion (10.7%), including \$583 million less for electricity subsidy programs, \$253 million less for infrastructure programs, and \$148 million in capital funding for municipal transit infrastructure
- Children, community and social services down \$209 million (2.2%), including \$183 million less on Ontario Disability Support Program, Ontario Works and the Ontario Drug Benefit Plan

Spending was above plan for two sectors:

- justice spending up \$63 million (2.3%), including \$66 million more to operate correctional institutions and \$51 million on criminal, civil, family and small claims courts offset by less in large-scale telecommunications projects
- health spending up \$811 million (2.3%), including \$428 million more than planned for operation of services, \$279 million more on provincial drug programs and \$241 million more for specialized services, such as Canadian Blood Services.

2023-24 Spending vs. 2022-23 Spending

The FAO report also compares spending in the current fiscal year against spending in the previous fiscal year to provide context for provincial spending trends. In the first and second quarters of 2023-24, the government spent \$3.1 billion (3.8%) more than in the same period in the previous year. It is important to note that spending patterns can vary resulting in spending occurring in an earlier or later quarter.

The largest year-over-year changes in spending were:

- \$1.6 billion (4.6%) more was spent on health in the first half of 2023-24 than in the first half on 2022-23, including \$586 million on the operation of long-term care homes, \$397 on payments to physicians and \$334 million on drug programs and partially offset by \$349 million primarily due to the conclusion of COVID-19 response programs
- \$611 (5.1%) more on education, including \$401 million in school board operating grants and \$344 million on the province's commitment to \$10-a-day childcare by 2025
- \$39 million (1.2%) on postsecondary education, including \$161 million more on student aid programs
- \$302 million (4.8%) less was spent on interest on debt, due to higher interest revenue of cash reserves earnings.

Status of Contingency Fund

The Contingency Fund serves as a mechanism for addressing spending pressures or accommodating program changes throughout the fiscal year, with the allocation of these funds requiring execution through Treasury Board Orders, rather than direct expenditure by the government. The government has been criticized for using such high levels of these funds, as there is no parliamentary oversight on spending. The Contingency Fund was 4.0 billion at the start of the 2023-24 fiscal year. Notably, despite underspending by \$2.0 billion in comparison to the initial plan in the first half of the year, the government opted to transfer \$1.1 billion from the Contingency Fund, resulting in a remaining balance

of \$2.9 billion. In the November 2, 2023, Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review, the government added \$2.5 billion to the Contingency Fund.

Conclusion

While quarterly expenditures may exhibit fluctuations, it is noteworthy that FAO had forecasted a modest surplus of \$3 billion for the fiscal year 2023-24 based on the 2023 Ontario Budget, in contrast to the government's anticipated deficit of \$2.2 billion. Notably, during the first two quarters, the government has already fallen short by \$2.0 billion in its allocation for public services. The period spanning from 2022-23 to 2023-24 witnessed only marginal increases in service expenditures across most sectors, even as inflation persisted, with a September 2023 inflation of 3.8% on a year-over-year basis.

The government continues to underfund public services and underspend on its commitments. The combination of growing demand and persistently high inflation means that there are real cuts to services.

15. **FAO Report – Ontario School Boards: Enrolment, Finances and Student Outcomes**

On December 12, 2023, the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario (FAO) released a report called Ontario School Boards: Enrolment, Finances and Student Outcomes. The report, media release, briefing deck, interactive map, and data table are available at <https://www.fao-on.org/en/Blog/Publications/FA2207schoolboards>.

At the request of a Member of Provincial Parliament, the FAO undertook the report to examine how provincial funding was allocated to Ontario's 72 district school boards in 2021-22 and review differences across school systems. School board enrolment, including the availability of French-language and Catholic school spaces, provincial operating funding, total school board revenue and spending, school board budget balance and accumulated surplus, and student academic performance were analyzed.

In addition to district school boards, there are approximately 1,300 students who receive their education through ten school authorities consisting of three geographically isolated boards, six hospital-based school authorities, and one Protestant school board. School authorities are outside the scope of this report. There are also Provincial and Demonstration Schools and Consortium Centre Jules-Léger that are outside the scope of this report.

School Board Enrolment

In 2021-22, there were approximately 2.0 million children enrolled in Ontario's publicly funded schools. The English Public school system is the largest, with 31 school boards and 1.3 million students enrolled in 2021-22, followed by the English Catholic system, with 29 school boards and 554,739 students, the French Catholic system, with eight school boards and 76,501 students, and the French Public system, with four school boards and 34,588 students.

From 2015-16 to 2021-22, total elementary and secondary school enrolment grew by an average of 0.3% per year. By the school system, the French Public and French Catholic school systems have outpaced the English systems, growing at 3.1% and 0.6% per year, respectively. In contrast, enrolment in English Public schools has increased by 0.4% per year and in English Catholic schools by 0.1% per year, from 2015-16 to 2021-22.

The FAO estimates that one million students (51.3%) of all students lived in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) in 2021, and an additional 154,000 (7.7%) lived in Ottawa.

In 2021, French-system schools in Ontario had 158,309 spaces for 268,250 school-aged children of French-language rights-holders, resulting in a 59.0% coverage rate. Limited availability and distance to French schools may pose challenges for parents seeking French education. Conversely, Catholic schools had 725,416 spaces, exceeding the needs of 570,116 Catholic or Catholic-affiliated students, with 38 census divisions showing Catholic-system coverage rates above 100%. The government adequately funds Catholic spaces but falls short for French-language systems, hindering access for students with French-language rights-holding parents.

Provincial Operating Funding for School Boards

In 2021-22, the government provided about \$26.7 billion in operating funding to school boards. Funding was provided through three primary sources: \$25.4 billion through a collection of grants called the Grants for Student Needs (GSN), \$1.3 billion through the Priorities and Partnership Fund (PPF), and \$23 million through the Ontario Languages Projects (OLP) program. The Official Languages Projects (OLP) program provides funding for French-language education in Ontario. This program is designed and administered by the provincial government but funded by the federal government.

On a per-student basis, school boards received an average of \$13,364 in provincial funding in 2021-22. However, the amount of per-student funding varied significantly by school board, ranging from \$11,729 per student for the Halton Catholic District School Board (DSB) to \$35,192 per student for the Conseil scolaire de district (CSD) catholique des Aurores boréales.

By school system, on a per-student basis, the English Public and English Catholic systems received \$13,027 and \$13,252 in 2021-22, respectively. French-language school systems received higher per student funding at \$18,585 per student for the French Public system and \$17,680 per student for the French Catholic system.

The primary factor that determines provincial funding to school boards is student enrolment, as measured by school boards' Average Daily Enrolment (ADE). However, there are additional key factors that explain the difference in per-student funding between school boards and school systems, including: base funding, distance and dispersion, remoteness, and additional funding for French-language instruction.

Total School Board Revenue

When examining school board revenue, which includes funding from the provincial government, own source revenue, which includes fundraising, investments and international student fees, revenue for infrastructure projects, and federal operating transfers, such as for Government of Canada students, Ontario school boards recorded \$29.0 billion in revenue, which included operating funding and own source revenue (\$27.3 billion), revenue for infrastructure projects funded by the provincial government (\$1.6 billion), and federal operating transfers (\$0.2 billion).

Revenue for infrastructure projects is funded largely through the government's School Board Capital Grants program, as well as through the School Renewal Allocation within the GSN. There are two main sub-programs within the School Board Capital Grants

program: the Capital Priorities program and the School Condition Improvement (SCI) program. The Capital Priorities program funds the building of new schools and the expansion of existing schools to address increasing enrolment and to replace schools in poor condition. The SCI program funds school renewal and rehabilitation, such as repairs to foundations, roofs and windows, plumbing, and heating and cooling systems. The School Renewal Allocation within the GSN similarly funds school renewal, including building maintenance, replacing HVAC systems, and increasing building accessibility.

In addition to the government's capital programs, in 2021-22, the federal government jointly funded a time-limited Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP), which primarily supported projects to improve air quality in schools.

Finally, federal operating transfer revenue reflects payments made by the federal government to support Indigenous students and various other programs. For some district school boards, this amount can be quite substantial.

Total School Board Spending

In the 2021-22 school year, school boards spent \$28.8 billion. The largest category of school board spending was teacher compensation, which totalled \$13.8 billion. The next largest category was nonteacher instruction, which totalled \$7.6 billion, followed by spending on pupil accommodation (\$2.9 billion), infrastructure (\$1.6 billion), transportation (\$1.2 billion), administration (\$0.7 billion), and other spending (\$0.9 billion).

On a per-student basis, school boards spent an average of \$14,426 per student in the 2021-22 school year. In the six years from 2015-16 to 2021-22, total school board per-student spending grew at an average annual rate of 2.3%, compared to an average annual inflation rate of 2.5% over this period.

In the 2021-22 school year, school boards spent an average of \$14,426 per student, with a 2.3% annual growth over the six years from 2015-16 to 2021-22, slightly below the 2.5% average annual inflation rate during that period. Infrastructure spending led with a 6.3% annual growth, followed by transportation (4.5%), other spending (3.1%), non-teacher instruction (2.6%), administration (1.9%), teacher compensation (1.8%), and pupil accommodation (0.9%).

English Public and Catholic systems spent \$14,059 and \$14,376 per student in 2021-22, while French-language systems had higher expenditures, with \$19,969 for the French Public system and \$18,675 for the French Catholic system. Generally, smaller school boards showed higher per-student spending compared to larger boards, reflecting the latter's ability to spread fixed costs over a larger student population.

The government funds teachers' salaries primarily through two grants within the GSNs: the Pupil Foundation Grant, which provides equal base funding per teacher, and the Cost Adjustment and Teacher Qualifications and Experience Grant, which varies based on the educational qualifications and teaching experience of the teachers in each school board. In 2021-22, the average funded teacher salary was \$94,912.

The English Catholic and English Public school systems had the highest average funded teacher salaries, at \$95,536 and \$94,951, respectively. The French Catholic and French Public school systems had lower average funded salaries, at \$92,529 and \$90,193, respectively. The differences in average funded salaries suggest that, on average,

teachers in the English school systems had higher qualifications or more seniority relative to the teachers in the French school systems.

Actual average teacher salaries are different from the funded average because each school board has its own salary grid that reflects regional differences in cost of living and the supply of teachers, in addition to differences in teacher qualifications and experience. In the 2021-22 school year, the average actual teacher salary was \$91,755.

The English Catholic school system had the highest average actual teacher salary at \$92,670, followed by the English Public system (\$91,558), French Catholic system (\$90,951), and French Public system (\$87,385). This indicates that, on average, school boards are using a portion of funds notionally provided by the government to support teacher salaries for other purposes.

Across all school systems, small school boards, which are typically more remote, had the highest average actual salaries, while medium-sized and large school boards had the lowest average actual salaries. Overall, small school boards had an average actual salary of \$93,260, compared to \$91,663 and \$91,668 for medium-sized and large school boards, respectively.

Across every spending category, small school boards spent more per student than medium-sized school boards, and medium-sized school boards spent more than large school boards.

In 2021-22, the largest variance was for spending on non-teacher instruction. Small school boards spent an average of \$5,756 per student on non-teacher instruction compared to \$4,041 per student for medium-sized school boards and \$3,646 per student for large school boards.

Per-student spending on teacher compensation had the second-largest variance.

Overall, the higher per-student spending of smaller school boards compared to larger school boards reflects the ability of school boards with higher enrolment levels to spread fixed costs over a larger student population and therefore spend less per student overall. It also reflects that many of the smaller school boards are in locations that are remote and rural, and may face higher costs for providing student transportation, as well as supplies, equipment, and services. Smaller school boards also have smaller average class sizes, which results in higher spending per student on teacher compensation.

School Board Budget Balance and Accumulated Surplus

In the 2021-22 school year, only one of the ten school boards with deficits had a total accumulated deficit—Toronto DSB, which posted an \$88 million deficit and had a total accumulated deficit of \$19 million. Several school boards displayed substantial accumulated surpluses, with CSD catholique des Aurores boréales holding the largest at 83.4% of annual revenue.

As of August 31, 2022, all school boards combined had a \$6.6 billion accumulated surplus, representing 22.6% of 2021-22 revenue. This suggests potential inadequacies in the funding formula for certain school boards, as some effortlessly meet budgetary needs while others face challenges.

The French Public system led in accumulated surplus as a share of 2021-22 revenue (43.1%), followed by the French Catholic system (36.2%), English Catholic system (25.3%), and English Public system (19.7%).

Section 231 of the Education Act mandates school boards to plan for balanced budgets, but definitions differ from public sector accounting standards. Under the Education Act, the accumulated surplus was \$2.6 billion in 2021-22, compared to \$6.6 billion under PSAS rules. Despite the Act's requirement for balanced budgets, unexpected factors may lead to an Education Act-compliant budget deficit, requiring accounting adjustments for the subsequent fiscal year.

Student Outcomes by School Board and System

In 2021-22, 53.1% of administered tests across grades 3, 6, and 9 were assessed as meeting or exceeding the EQAO standard for math, 80.0% of tests met or exceeded the standard for reading, and 74.9% of tests met or exceeded the standard for writing. Across all disciplines and grades, the FAO estimates that the province-wide average pass rate (the share of tests administered that were assessed as meeting or exceeding the provincial standard) was 67.7%.

French Public school boards had the best performance overall, with an average EQAO pass rate of 74.2% across all tested grades and disciplines, followed by French Catholic school boards, with a pass rate of 70.7%. The pass rates for the English Catholic and English Public school systems were 69.0% and 66.8%, respectively.

Across all four school systems, on average, school boards that were more rural, more remote, more disperse, and smaller had lower average EQAO pass rates. For example, across all school systems, the average EQAO pass rates in urban and 'leans urban' school boards were 68.5% and 70.7%, respectively. In contrast, the average EQAO pass rates in rural and 'leans rural' school boards were 60.2% and 63.6%, respectively.

The FAO found that higher per-student funding did not result in higher average EQAO pass rates. Despite receiving higher per-student funding, schools in rural areas typically have fewer educational supports. For instance, rural schools are less likely to have a full-time vice-principal, special education teacher, librarian, psychologist, and social worker. Additionally, socio-economic differences between rural and urban/suburban students may impact educational achievement. However, though the FAO expressly did not link funding to EQAO pass rates, it is easy to link the availability of educational supports to the need for more funding for schools and systems where there are fewer supports available.

16. Canadian Teachers' Federation National Staff Conference

From November 22-24, 2023, the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF-FCE) held its annual national staff conference in Ottawa. Staff from Educational Services, Communications and Political Action, and Negotiations and Contract Maintenance attended on OSSTF/FEESO's behalf. The meeting was well attended, with representatives from nearly all CTF-FCE Member Organizations (MOs) present.

The conference featured several keynotes and panels, all of which were well received. These sessions included:

- Dr. James Makokis and Anthony Johnson. Two-Spirit couple and winners of Amazing Race Canada. Key takeaways from their talk include the importance of creating opportunities for organic relationships and "organic collisions" (interact

within intersecting identities, where they are, to reduce feelings of isolation resulting from focusing on only one aspect of a person's identity); the value of leaders viewing themselves as 'gardeners' responsible for creating cultures of and pathways for growth; organizational imperative to develop principled, courageous collective consciousness; organizational imperative to maintain hope. Quote: "Awareness is the access point for action and the gateway for allyship."

- Céline Castets-Renard, Stacey Pelika, Hannah Johnston, Sava Saheli Sing. Panel discussion on artificial intelligence. Key takeaways: more research is needed on actual effectiveness of AI claims (i.e., reducing administrative burden); there is a lack of training for education workers and teachers on how to maximize/minimize use of AI tools; risks of increased surveillance and student lack of preparation for the critical thinking needed to navigate AI-inflected landscape; opportunity to find ways to make AI/education technology work for schools; need for further public-oriented research on current context.
- Gabrielle Brassard-Lecours. Interactive session on combatting online hate. Key takeaway: provide opportunities for staff to share experiences; importance of providing training to staff on protective cyber practices such as adding protective filters to online profiles, and on navigating and responding to hate (including how to know when to not respond).

In addition to the keynotes and panels, there were meetings of CTF-FCE networks.

National Teachers' Research Network (NTRN)

- Overview of the Cross-Canada Survey of Member Organizations, with particular attention to recruitment and retention and to artificial intelligence.
- Discussion of newly revised Infosource portion of CTF-FCE members' website.

Teacher Bargaining Network (TBN)

- Updates on bargaining from Member Organizations. New Brunswick recently achieved a collective agreement via arbitration, which is expected to inform Saskatchewan's upcoming conciliation processes. Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association (NLTA) is currently in the process of ratifying a four-year tentative agreement with salary increases ranging from 10.9% to 14.2%, depending on grid placement.
- Teacher Recruitment and Retention. Member organizations report this is a concern across the country, particularly due to violence, workload, working conditions, and salary.

On the final day of the meeting, attendees were welcome to the CTF-FCE headquarters for breakout discussions, organized by department.

OSSTF/FEESO participants noted that a key benefit of attending the conference was the structured opportunity to hear from, and network with, colleagues from across the country. This allowed in-the-moment sharing of information and resources as well as post-conference collaborations. For example, a discussion of equity practices among Member Organizations led to a planned meeting between OSSTF/FEESO Educational Services

staff and Nova Scotia Teachers' Union staff to discuss OSSTF/FEESO's Equity Mentorship Program. This type of networking allows OSSTF/FEESO to benefit from other MO's success and to demonstrate leadership by sharing our own programs and practices.

17. OMERS Sponsor Corporation (SC) and Administration Corporation (AC) Update

OMERS Road Show

On November 22, 2023 OMERS and OSSTF/FEESO collaborated on an OMERS "Road Show". During this road show, OMERS CEO Blake Hutcheson and other Senior OMERS leaders met directly with groups of OSSTF/FEESO and OMERS members at their worksites in District 25. This direct engagement provided front line OSSTF/FEESO members with the opportunity to ask questions and engage in meaningful discussions with key decision makers within their pension plan and was very well received.

Investment Transaction News

Teams across OMERS and Oxford continued to invest in companies and projects that create exceptional experiences and value, including many that enable the transition to a lower carbon economy:

- OMERS looks for opportunities to grow their portfolio with businesses built for the future. They recently [announced an investment in Redwood Materials](#), a company working to build a circular battery materials supply chain to power a sustainable world and reduce consumption of fossil fuels. This is their first investment in the battery recycling space and builds on a strong track record of partnering with companies that are focused on fostering the sustainable electrification of our society.
- In September, Oxford Properties [announced](#) North America's first new Zero Carbon office tower, The Stack. The building plays an important role in the City of Vancouver and Province of British Columbia's 2030 zero-carbon goals.
- In October, construction work began on the [West Midlands Interchange](#) project – the U.K.'s largest logistics development site. Oxford Properties and LCP first acquired the site in a joint venture in 2021. The project will deliver significant economic benefit to the region through the creation of 8,500 jobs and is expected to generate £430 million in local economic activity.
- In November, OMERS acquired a [5% indirect stake in Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment](#) ("MLSE") through a 20% direct stake in Kilmer Sports Inc. ("KSI"), owned by MLSE Chair Larry Tanenbaum. MLSE is the pre-eminent leader in delivering top quality sports and entertainment experiences. It is the parent company of sports teams including the National Hockey League's Toronto Maple Leafs, the National Basketball Association's Toronto Raptors, Major League Soccer's Toronto FC, the Canadian Football League's Toronto Argonauts and a number of development teams. This Canadian investment fits well within OMERS investment strategy while also providing an opportunity for members across Ontario to be connected to these iconic sports teams.
OMERS agreed to [sell its 50% stake in Net4Gas](#) to CEPS, the Czech transmission system operator for the electricity network, which is 100% owned by the Czech Government. Net4Gas operates nearly 4,000 kilometers of pipelines shipping gas to and from Germany and Slovakia and for domestic consumption. OMERS has been invested in Net4Gas since 2013.
- OMERS participated in the [Series A financing of DeepSky](#), an early-stage startup that is building infrastructure to remove millions of tons of CO₂ from the atmosphere, and

permanently storing it underground. This brings the total fundraising for Deep Sky to \$75.2M CAD, over its two financing rounds.

- OMERS acquired Knight Commercial, [a leading provider of commercial restoration services](#). With extreme weather events increasing every year, the property restoration sector is responding to a critical and growing market need. This, paired with OMERS track record of supporting businesses across the commercial services sector, makes for a strong partnership that they believe will drive continued growth in the business.

Government Relations Update

In recent weeks, both the Ontario and Canadian governments published their fall economic and fiscal updates. Both governments used their documents to speak to the importance of Canada's large pension funds and set the stage for more discussions between pension funds and government about potential investment opportunities for us in Canada.

The Ontario government has launched a new Ontario Infrastructure Bank, which is designed to attract private capital alongside government funding into sectors like rental housing, long-term care facilities, and municipal and transportation infrastructure.

Meanwhile, the federal government used its fall economic update to signal its desire to collaborate with pension funds over the coming months to identify more opportunities for investment in Canada.

OMERS was engaged with both governments on their policy direction prior to the documents being released.

The details of government policy will matter greatly on this topic. As OMERS works with governments over the coming months, they will remind them that OMERS has a very strong investment footprint in Canada and that their investment program exists to generate returns to pay pensions.

Sponsors Corporation Update

Board Appointments

John Armstrong (City of Toronto nominee) and Kevin Skerrett (CUPE Ontario nominee) have been re-appointed to the AC Board for the three-year term commencing January 1, 2025.

Following the retirement of Sandra Sahli, OSSTF/FEESO has appointed Pierre Côté to the SC Board for the remainder of Sandra's current term plus the three-year term commencing January 1, 2025 and ending December 31, 2027.

OMERS will say goodbye to the following directors who are retiring from their respective Boards at the end of 2023:

- Monty Baker, a nominee to the AC Board by the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards (OAPSB), has served as Chair of the Audit & Actuarial Committee and Chair of the Human Resources Committee.
- Marianne Love, an appointee to the SC Board by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), having served several years as SC Board Co-Chair.

- Frank Ramagnano, an appointee to the SC Board by the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association (OPFFA), having served several years as SC Board Co-Chair and Chair.
- Sandra Sahli, an appointee to the SC Board by the OSSTF/FEESO, having served as Chair of the Corporate Governance Committee.

These directors brought knowledge, insight, commitment, and leadership throughout their respective terms, and OMERS extends a sincere thank you for their significant contributions to OMERS and wish them well for the future.

Plan Risk Assessment

On October 10, 2023 the SC Board announced its decision that this sustainability review will not result in changes to benefits or contribution rates at this time. Specifically, the SC Board has determined through this review that the current level of contributions, together with the expected future level of investment earnings, positions the Plan to build the resiliency it needs for the current level of benefits as the Plan matures. The SC Board will continue to monitor the long-term health of the Plan and the progress on the path to building resiliency as part of its ongoing responsibilities. You can read more about the factors that the SC Board considered in making its decision [here](#).

Proposals to Update Plan Terms During Leaves of Absence

The SC Board has approved two narrow amendments that address feedback on the administration of the OMERS Plans related to certain leaves of absence. These Plan amendments clarify the administration of the disability waiver benefit for new members and preserve the Plan membership for existing members in certain cases when temporarily joining another employer. Both amendments have an effective date of December 6, 2023. A summary of these amendments has been posted on the [OMERS website](#).

SC Governance

The SC continues to look for ways to strengthen its governance and work more efficiently. Effective January 1, 2024, a new SC Audit & Human Resources Committee will merge the SC Audit Committee and the SC Human Resources & Compensation Committee into a single committee. The Charter for this new committee will be posted to the SC Governance Manual on the OMERS website in early January.

The SC Board has also approved the 2024 composition for each of its committees. A complete listing will be published on the [OMERS website](#) in early January.

Pension Services

Member Satisfaction

The Pensions team delivered a 97% quarterly member service satisfaction rating for the first time in Q3, while continuously focusing on modernization, improving member engagement and nurturing connections with OMERS employers, sponsors and stakeholders.

Members also now have more flexibility for purchasing previous services from a former or current employer. In addition to the 12-month, 24-month and 36-month payment plan options, OMERS now offers 48-month, and 60-month payment plans to give members more flexibility to invest in their retirement and grow their pension.

In addition, OMERS has enhanced the protection of members' data by introducing Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) for the member portal myOMERS. MFA adds an extra layer of security by requiring users to provide multiple forms of verification before gaining access to their accounts.

Non-Full-Time Members

OMERS welcomed 4,800 non-full-time (NFT) members to the Plan in Q3, adding to a total of 39,000 NFT members who have elected to join the plan since the Plan change took effect on January 1, 2023.

Benefits and Pensions Monitor Article

In October, *The Benefits and Pensions Monitor* published an [article](#) by Celine Chiovitti about the National Institute of Ageing's [Healthy Outcomes](#) report, sponsored by OMERS, which found that a secure and stable income in retirement has many benefits, including a positive impact on health and well-being. The article highlights the role of pensions in society and, more specifically, the value that a defined benefit pension plan brings to both its members and the broader community.

Podcast Launch

In early October, Pensions launched [The Pension Blueprint](#), our first podcast series of 12 episodes to connect with members through a new medium, helping them learn about the OMERS Plan and kick-start their retirement planning.

The podcast features in-depth conversations hosted by members of the Pensions team. The episodes contain educational content about the OMERS Plan including factors to consider when choosing the best time to retire to ways to maximize monthly retirement income. Some episodes take a deeper dive into the latest topics around pensions and retirement.

The podcast launched in the top 20 podcasts in Canada and so far, has received nearly 20,000 plays on Spotify and Apple Podcasts, as well as nearly 6,000 visits to the podcast landing page on omers.com. Feedback across various channels has been overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the value and impact of adding a new communications channel to reach our multi-generational membership.

If you haven't had a chance to tune in yet, you can catch up on season one on [Spotify](#) or [Apple Podcasts](#).

Changes to Digital Platforms

As part of efforts to modernize OMERS systems and enhance the digital experience for members, Pensions began Phase 1 of a project this year to refresh the member and employer pages on omers.com, the member platform, myOMERS, and the employer platform, e-access.

In addition to a more engaging design and simpler navigation, most content targeted at members that was previously on omers.com has moved to a new member site so that all pension information for members is one place. Members will be able to easily navigate between learning about different pension topics and logging in to myOMERS to take various

self-serve actions such as updating contact information or designating a beneficiary. Members will still be able to access general information about the OMERS Plan without having to log in to their myOMERS account.

Similarly, most of the employer content on omers.com has been migrated to e-access, providing a more seamless experience for employers.

Phase 2 of this project will launch in 2024 and will involve reviewing the navigation and content on the member and employer sites to make it more engaging and user-friendly, while continuously seeking feedback from our CoCreate member forum and a new CoCreate employer forum.

18. DBU Memos Issued

- 86 2024 OTIP Teaching Awards
- 87 Strategic Action Plan (SAP) and Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Training
- 88 Application for Educational Services Workshop Presenter Training
- 89 2024 Canadian Teachers Federation Awards
- 90 2024 Student Achievement Award Winners Announced
- 91 Actions by OSSTF/FEESO on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Issues
- 92 Ontario Federation of Labour Rally in Niagara Falls at the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party Convention – Saturday, February 3, 2024
- 93 Assistance and Support for ETFO President Karen Brown
- 94 OSSTF/FEESO Organizing Institute – March 22-23, 2024
- 95 CTF Podcast on Issues Facing Public Education
- 96 ELHT Advisory Work Group Vacancy