



The Macroeconomics  
of Recession, Deficits, and  
Austerity  
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The 'Mink Mile'  
and OCT's New  
Offices  
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# Toronto Teacher

*'Just let me teach...'*

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## ETT Executive Elections



**P. Brickwood**



**J. Brown**



**K. Brown**



**P. Dogra**



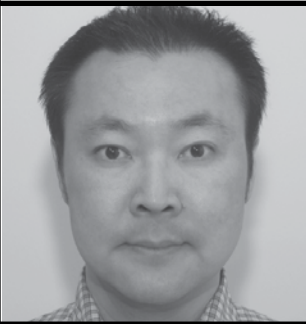
**D. Duni**



**S. Ellis Seguin**



**R. Geridis**



**C. Hang**



**P. Hessian White**



**E. James**



**M. Jeewa**



**M. Leonard**



**A. Lomnicki**



**M. Long**



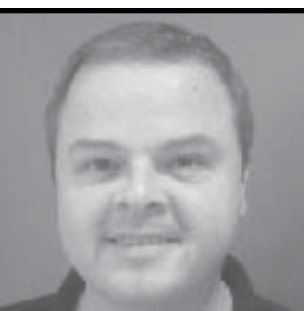
**T.L. Platt**



**F. Samuel**



**J. Smith**



**C. Strange**



**J. Thom**



**H. Victoros**

It's ironic when you think of it. The election in which we have the least at stake commands the highest voter turnout and yet the one that has the greatest impact on our daily lives produces the lowest.

Whether F-35 or CF 18 Hornet fighter jets patrol the Arctic does not have much of an influence on my life. If I were a fisherman or worked in the factory of an American subsidiary, I would be concerned about the changes to Employment Insurance. However one of the stresses of teaching is not job insecurity.

On the other hand how much cash I have in my bank account, if I will be able to take a day off to look after a sick children, whether I can count on the help of a knowledgeable, accessible and persistent executive officer if I am being treated unfairly, are crucial issues.

Federal elections are 'sexy' accompanied as they are by nationally broadcast debates and slick TV ads but the issues they address are remote from my daily life. Our ETT elections, particularly as we enter negotiations with the province and the TDSB, are much more important.

During the previous elections only 8.7% of ETT members voted for Table Officer candidates. The percentage this time around jumped to 17%. This is due in no small part to the fact that previously, Martin Long won the presidency by acclamation.

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### ETT ELECTION RESULTS

#### President

Peter Brickwood ..... 227  
Karen Brown..... 451  
Martin Long..... 1278

#### Vice President

Pam Dogra ..... 649  
Sonia Ellis-Seguin .... 488  
Andy Lomnicki ..... 810

#### Secretary Treasurer

Doris Duni..... 899  
Roz Geridis..... 235  
Eugene James..... 808

#### Executive Member

Peter Brickwood ..... 744  
Jennifer Brown ..... 742  
Karen Brown..... 947  
Pam Dogra ..... 853  
Sonia Ellis-Seguin ..... 750  
Roz Geridis ..... 533  
Chi Hang..... 337  
Phyllis Hession-White .. 920  
Eugene James ..... 898  
Mohammed Jeewa ..... 216  
Michelle Leonard ..... 767  
Terri Lynn Platt ..... 760  
Felicia Samuel ..... 746  
John Smith ..... 1068  
Colin Strange..... 483  
Jamie Thom ..... 526  
Helen Victoros ..... 801

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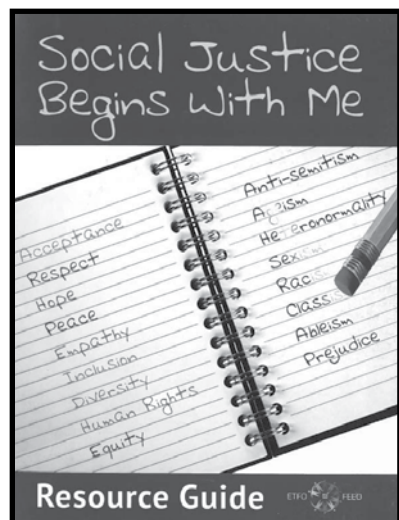
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## New ETFO Resources



### Social Justice Begins With Me

We all need to address issues of equity and social justice in our classrooms on a daily basis. Check out ETFO's new literature-based curriculum resource kit, *Social Justice Begins With Me*, for ideas and materials you can use to introduce and discuss these subjects proactively.

You'll find lesson plans and other resources for classrooms from Early Years to Grade 8, organized around these monthly themes: Self-Esteem, Sharing Our Lives, Peace, Building Supportive Communities, Rights of the Child, Caring Hands, Untie the Knots of Prejudice, Local and Global Citizenship, True Worth and Beauty, and Circles and Cycles.

The complete resource kit consists of 5 books: lesson plans for primary, junior, and intermediate; a teacher resource guide for all grades; and *More Than a Play*, a collection of 9 original short plays for use with junior and intermediate students.

The kit comes in 2 formats: a suitcase (\$65) and a CD (\$45).

Both are available from shopETFO.



### Les racines de l'égalité

Teachers of French are always looking for suitable books addressing equity and social justice issues.

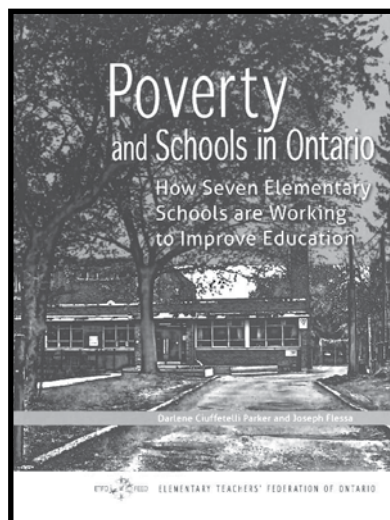
ETFO has published a resource called *Les racines de l'égalité*, with lesson plans for teachers of core French, French Immersion and Extended French, from Early Years to Grade 8.

These lessons focus on fostering students' healthy equal relationships and raising their awareness of violence against women.

Based on *Roots of Equality*, this is not a simple translation of that earlier resource; the writers developed original lessons around many French-language picture books that are readily available.

*Les racines de l'égalité* (315 pp) is available free as a download or in print from ETFO.

Contact Carol Zavitz,  
czavitz@etfo.org



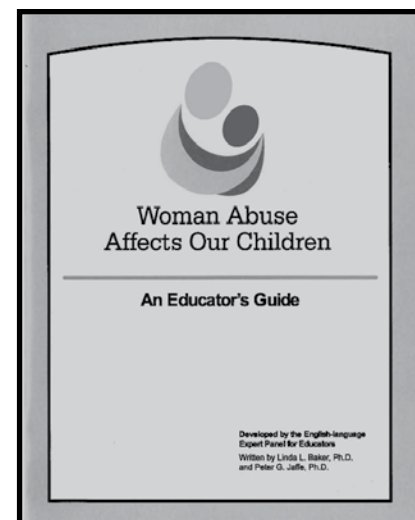
### Poverty & Schools in Ontario: How Seven Elementary Schools are Working to Improve Education

Written by Dr Darlene Ciuffetelli Parker (Brock University) and Dr Joseph Flessa (OISE/UT), with a foreword by Dr Ben Levin (former Ontario Deputy Minister of Education), this book is based on research undertaken as part of ETFO's Poverty and Education Project.

It reveals issues faced in schools by students living in poverty and explores real-life strategies used by 7 Ontario elementary schools to ensure that all students are successful. Cross-school themes identified include teacher inquiry, school leadership, making community connections, school climate and culture, and multiple supports needed for multiple issues.

"The authors...give emphasis, rightly, to the importance (and difficulty) of schools and educators avoiding seeing their students and communities as being defective or lacking." (foreword)

Poverty and Schools in Ontario is available from shopETFO for \$10.




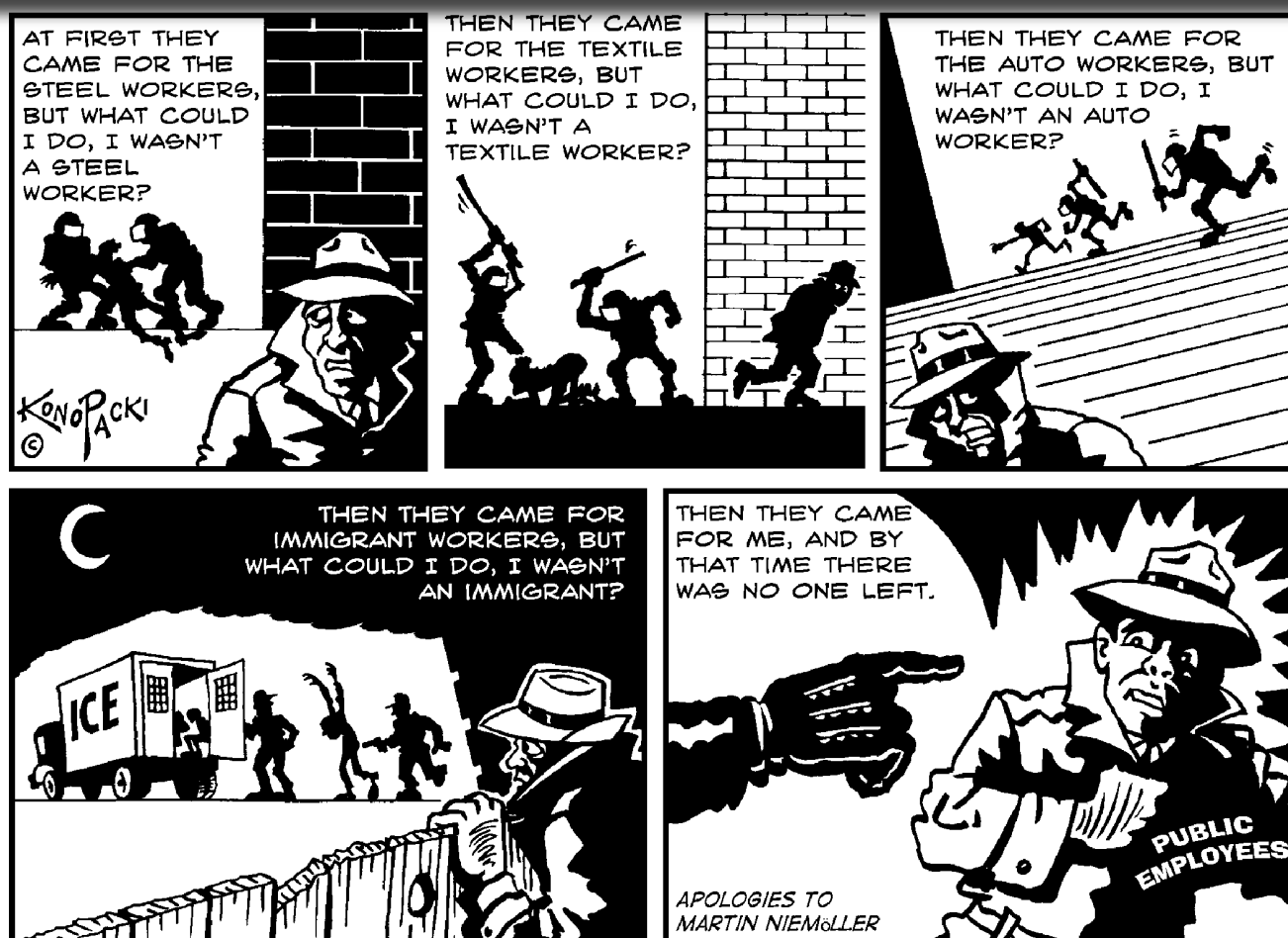
### Woman Abuse Affects Our Children: An Educator's Guide

Many of our students are exposed to violence in their homes. This guide focuses on the effects on elementary school students when violence is perpetrated against their mothers by male partners: what to look for, dealing with disclosures, how to support students, an educator's legal obligations, and where to go for help.

This document was written by Dr Linda L. Baker and Dr Peter G. Jaffe (UWO), for the English-language Expert Panel for Educators (which included ETFO) convened by the Ontario Women's Directorate as part of their Domestic Violence Action Plan.

It is available free: online ([www.curriculum.org/womanabuse](http://www.curriculum.org/womanabuse)) or, in print.

Unlimited copies can be ordered from Service Ontario ([www.publications.serviceontario.ca](http://www.publications.serviceontario.ca); search for publication #012428). 





# The Macroeconomics of Recession, Deficits, and Austerity

“Take a bad recession, add a lousy recovery and what do you get? You get a deficit. This deficit has nothing to do with teachers, their pay, their pensions, their classroom sizes. These were established before the recession hit.” Jim Stanford’s analysis of our current fiscal situation is brief and to the point.

Jim Stanford, the economist for the CAW, stands out as someone who calls into question the assumptions on which the Drummond Report on Ontario’s finances is based and the course we are to pursue. Although Bay Street would like to, Stanford can hardly be dismissed as a crank. He received his Masters in Economics from Cambridge University and his PhD from the prestigious New School for Social Research in New York City.

It is easy to forget that it was not that long ago that we, in Ontario, were paying all of our bills and then some. We had small surpluses for three years in a row until the recession hit in 2008. How would this have been possible if the cause of our current financial difficulties is due to a bloated and unaffordable public service sector? The size of the public sector has not increased. In fact our spending on public services in Ontario is 11% below the national average.

As Stanford points out, the recession was caused by a private financial system that went awry, “A deregulated, globalized casino that in essence was given free rein to try to print money out of thin air and then used that money not to generate jobs and investment but to gamble on pieces of paper.” plunged the world into economic turmoil, not banked teacher’s sick days. And we are still paying the price for the crisis that they caused, not us.

The recession has had a double barreled effect on the provincial budget. Our Gross Domestic Product, GDP, the sum of all the goods and services we produced in the province last year, is 8% to 10% below where it would have been if we had maintained our pre-recession growth track. The slice of the economic pie, the amount the government would have received through taxes, would be \$10 billion higher than it is today if the GDP was where it could and should be.

However the problem is not just the decline in the GDP, the slice of the pie that goes to the government shrinks as well. With higher unemployment, fewer people are paying personal income taxes. Many are



Jim Stanford, economist for the Canadian Auto Workers

underemployed and contribute smaller taxes than they did in the past. Corporate taxes on profits shrink as well. The government’s share of GDP has shrunk about 1%. This may not sound like much but it amounts to around \$5 billion.

So \$10 billion lost because the pie is smaller plus \$5 billion because the government’s share of the pie is smaller equals \$15 billion dollars. And the size of the government’s current deficit? \$15 billion. As Stanford notes, “The deficit today is purely driven by the recession and the decline in revenues that is associated with the recession.” Not by greedy teachers and too many EAs.

When a recession hits, there is some mandatory spending, ‘stabilizers’ that put money into the system. Employment Insurance expenditures rise, although that is a Federal concern. Welfare rates rise as well. Further, discretionary spending by the government can rise as well to take up the slack. This happened in 2009 and 2010 when the Federal government set up its Stimulus Fund and the province increased infrastructure spending as well. However this stimulus

spending has stopped and the deficit is mainly the result of lost government revenue.

Recently Ontarians went into a panic when Moody’s downgraded Ontario’s debt from AA1 to AA2, while DBRS and Standard and Poor’s maintained their ratings. Bond yields did rise slightly in the aftermath. Stanford agrees in general terms that the larger the debt, the larger the interest costs the government has to pay.

However, “There has been a lot of scare mongering, all kinds of horrible forecasts about how the government is going to go broke. This is a lot of nonsense.”

Indeed, noted Mark Chandler, chief of fixed income and currency research at RBC Dominion Securities, “Ontario spreads are largely unchanged in the 10-year area in the wake of this week’s announcements.” Reaction in the bond market was modest.

In fact, the cost of servicing the debt has not increased at all. That is because more expensive bonds that were issued before the recession are being rolled over at lower interest rates.

As Stanford notes, “It’s like refi-

nancing your mortgage, you roll it over at a much lower rate and the provincial government actually saves money at it.” Before the recession, you may have been paying 6%. Now, however, you are only paying 3% and your previous mortgage payments could cover a house that is twice as expensive. Interest rates will rise but that will occur as the economy recovers, people get back to work, start paying taxes and government revenues increase.

If there ever was an oxymoron, “jobless recovery” is it. Technically, we have had an economic recovery for the past three years. Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of Canada, declared the recession was over in 2009. Problem is, if you look around you don’t see any sign that this has happened.

This is because the government calculates the unemployment rate on the number of people who are actively looking for work. If you have given up, you are no longer counted as actively looking for work and are dropped from the government’s statistics. As Stanford explains it, “The greatest reason the unemployment rate has come down is not because people found work, it’s because they gave up looking for jobs that don’t exist.”

Stanford prefers to use the Employment Rate. It measures the proportion of our working age population, those over 15, who had a job. In 2008, the Employment Rate was at 63.5%. In 2009 it plummeted to 61.6%. There was a bit of a recovery in 2010 due to the stimulus money. When that money stopped flowing, the improvement in the Employment Rate stopped.

As Stanford observes, “On Main Street, not Wall Street, it still feels like a recession and it really is a recession. We are hardly better off now than during the worst years of the recession in terms of employment.”

Turning to the Drummond Report to the provincial government on the deficit, Stanford observes that, “He adopted an incredibly pessimistic forecast of economic growth. He accepts that the deficit was caused by the recession but does not think we can count on a recovery, that there is nothing we can do. Consequently he tries to harmonize our fiscal affairs with a miserable economic outlook.”

Drummond then manipulates a number of assumptions. He assumes that government revenues will grow more slowly than the economy.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

## CANADA IN THE WORLD



We’re Number One



We’re Mediocre



## MACROECONOMICS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Historically they have grown more quickly during an upswing. Nonetheless this assumption creates a \$7 billion hole in government finances. He is pessimistic about interest rates. He assumes that future loans to the government will become very expensive very quickly instead of what we have seen.

High interest bonds are now being rolled over for lower interest ones and interest costs falling. As a result he comes up with the doomsday scenario of a \$30 billion deficit. This is the justification for the austerity program he proposes and to a large extent the government has accepted. "We are going to drive off the cliff with a \$30 billion deficit if we do nothing."

During the election, the Liberals forecast that program spending, except those on interest costs, would grow by 1.8%. All three parties accepted that there would be restraint in the growth of spending. However this is different from an austerity program. But even 1.8% is low. If you were to keep programs at a constant level allowing for inflation and population growth, you would need spending to grow at 3% a year, 2% for inflation and 1% for population growth.

However a Drummond budget is forecast to cut the 1.8% almost in half to 1%. In effect you are reducing funds to programs by 2% each year. This would mean a reduction of \$10 billion a year in cuts by the last year of the government's mandate.

It is estimated that for every dollar the government puts into the public service, there is an additional \$1.50 in economic activity. Stanford notes,

"Teachers are excellent teachers, they provide an essential public service, they earn good money and then go out and spend every damn penny of that good money. Sometimes they don't wait for that pay cheque to arrive before spending it. That in turn creates additional spending power that cycles through the economy." If you take \$10 billion in public expenditures from the economy, this will cut \$15 billion in GDP, about 2% over the next four years.

How much a government can borrow is the same as it is for an individual, the Debt Ratio. Stanford observes, "When you go to the bank to get a mortgage. The first thing they ask you is how much do you make? Your ability to take on debt depends

on your income."

The more assets you have, the more you can borrow. The Debt Ratio is your Total Debt divided by your Total Assets. For governments, it is the governments net debt divided by its GDP. In 2011 Greece's Debt to GDP Ratio was 120%, the U.S.'s was 66% and Ontario's was 35%.

If you want to bring down the Debt Ratio you can do it by either reducing the amount you owe or increasing

the amount you make. In the case of Ontario, we can reduce the deficit or increase the revenue. What you want to do is to grow your revenues.

Andrea Horvath, the NDP leader, understood that when she demanded a 2% surtax on those making more than \$500 000 a year.

To return to Greece, the problem was not as much the increase in debt, but the shrinkage in government revenues. Under the dictates of the European Union bureaucrats and the bankers, they took an axe to their public services which in turn com-

pletely knocked the wind out of the sails of the economy. The more they cut, the more the Greek economy shrank. The austerity has made matters worse because the more they cut the bigger the ratio got. The impact on the Greek GDP far outweighed the effect of cut backs to reduce the Greek debt ratio.

If you examine the graph you can see debt ratio expressed as total net debt including capital that has been invested in various capital project and the other is the accumulated deficit. The latter is a more accurate representation as it amortizes the cost of capital projects over several years, an approach business uses in accounting. While both lines

have increased, it doesn't look like the world is going to end, it is what you would expect during a recession. It does not require a retrenchment, a cutting of social services that will have an social consequences for decades to come. This is not to say that the debt doesn't matter, it does. But it needs to be managed and measured appropriately as a share of GDP and our capacity to service the debt and the best way to manage the debt is to put people back to work.

Part of our problem is that the traditional engine of growth has not been kicking into gear. Profit seeking businesses invest money in a new factory, a new project, new equipment and that creates work and the spin off from that investment gets the whole economy going. Business profits have been very strong but we have not seen the sort of investments that we should. What we have seen is an explosion in the amount of assets business has stashed away under their mattresses. In 2002, business in Ontario had approximately \$200 billion tucked away for a rainy day. By 2011 this amount had risen to almost \$600 billion. If the business of business is to invest in the economy and create jobs, it has been shirking its role.

Under the circumstances, someone has to pick up the slack. Recently we have had to rely on consumer debt. However as people max out their credit cards, this is no longer a viable option. This leaves the government. The problem is the belief, to paraphrase Animal Farm, that "private debt good, public debt bad". Nonetheless, we need to avoid spending cuts and instead expand public services. We should look at longer-run capital and infrastructure spending. A further problem is the loss of 600 000 Canadian manufacturing jobs since the turn of the century, a particularly acute problem in Ontario. We could target sectors for development that show promise, for example, green energy, aerospace, communications equipment and services, value added forestry products and primary metals. If our financial institutions are unwilling to act as venture capitalists, perhaps the government could fulfill this function.

Be that as it may, as Canada becomes a petroleum super power, our dollar has risen to toxic levels for our manufacturing base. The high dollar is

the key factor in Ontario's GDP weakness. This helps explain why Ontario has less fiscal capacity than the national average and spends less on programs than other provinces. The gap between the "have" petroleum provinces, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador continue to increase. While Ontario now receives equalization payments, we continue to put much more into the equalization fund than we take out. Ontario's route out of the recession is not austerity which will shrink our GDP and government revenues but a strategy to increase our GDP and government income.

Rather than acknowledge this as the core problem for Ontario's GDP, conservative commentators will attempt to put the blame for the situation on greedy workers, particularly public service ones. We are already seeing a divide and conquer approach in the media as they highlight our bankable sick days and sick day gratuity and the suggestion that all of us need to "share the pain" and accept wage freezes. How exactly a reduction in my income benefits the person who pours a coffee for me at Tim's is not explained. In fact if I have less cash, I might forgo my morning double double putting her job at risk.

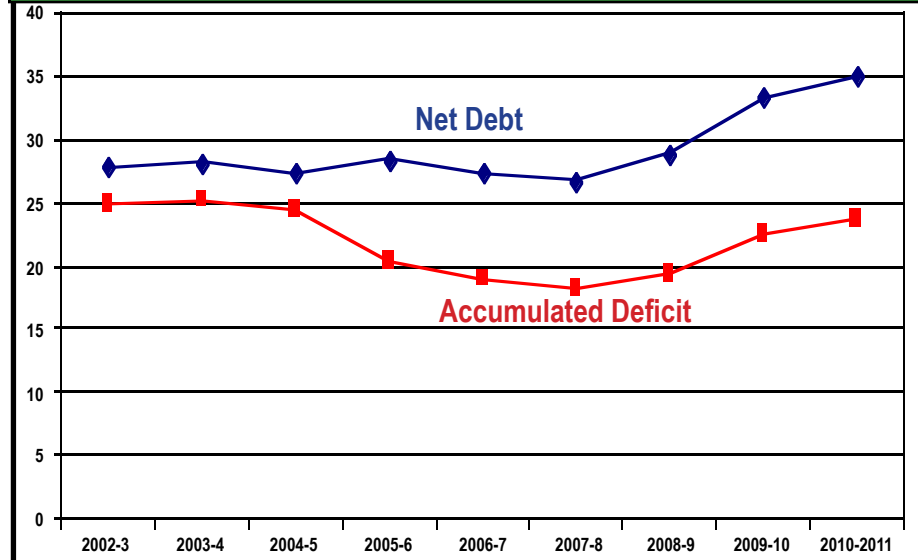
So is Stanford blowing smoke? Is his analysis of the problems we face a matter of left wing rhetoric that has no basis in fact. Recently the leaders of the G8 met at Camp David in the U.S. to discuss, amongst other things, the worsening economic crisis in Europe in general and Greece in particular. Massive cuts to spending on health care, pensions and education has led to a 20% decline in the standard of living and a youth unemployment rate of 50% in that country.

At the conclusion of their meeting, Barak Obama stated that "All the leaders here today agreed growth and jobs must be our top priority.", and that there is an 'emerging consensus' that European countries must now focus on jobs and growth. If there is a 'Drummond' line, introduce austerity to reduce the deficit and a 'Stanford' line, increase revenue by growing the economy through government intervention, it would appear that Stanford has the support of the G8. Perhaps the McGuinty government should have a reassessment as well. **T**

### Our Tasks Now

- Refute the logic of austerity.
- Fight for public services, labour rights.
- Resist divide and rule.

Ontario Debt Ratios



# Employee Assistance Programme

BY ELLEN PETERS

“If I had such a cushy job I wouldn’t leave it,” Sherry’s brother Thomas said as he sat down on the couch beside her. “Cushy!” Sherry exclaimed. “That’s rich coming from someone who just got back from an all expense paid trip to Italy for ‘business.’ The only place I travel to is other schools in Toronto.”

“A life as a world traveling wine agent could be yours,” Thomas patted Sherry’s shoulder. “You made a choice.”

Sherry pushed his hand away. “And so did you. If you think teaching is so ‘cushy,’ why don’t you get your B.Ed. and try it.”

“Okay, kids,” Sherry’s mother came into the room. “That’s enough.”

“You know there’s a place for you when you want it,” her father called from the kitchen.

“Sherry’s not going to give up her three months paid vacation, twenty sick days and short working hours to join the real world and work for us again,” Thomas called back.

“I’d rather work for my hateful principal Bev Grey, then spend my days working with you, Tom,” Sherry got up from the sofa and strode towards the kitchen.

“You aren’t helping,” she heard her mother tell Thomas.

“What?” She heard Thomas reply.

Sherry leaned against the kitchen counter and watched her father chop tomatoes for the salad.

“You know we’d love to have you back,” her father said. “It was always my hope that you and Tommy would stay in the family business and take it over from me when I retired.” Her father lifted the cutting board and slid the tomatoes into the crystal salad bowl. “You’d work for me you know, not for Tom.”

“I know, dad,” Sherry shrugged her shoulders. “Teaching isn’t working out quite the way I hoped. Maybe I will come back, but I want to be certain. I don’t want to spend my life flitting from one career to another.”

“You could come back here and get your degree in marketing,” Her father grabbed a cucumber from the crisper in the fridge. “You have options.”

“You don’t have to work for someone who is trying to sabotage you,” Her mother returned to the kitchen.

“Are you referring to my principal or my brother?” Sherry asked.

“Tom loves you,” Sherry’s mother shook her finger at her. “He’s just teasing.”

“Maybe,” Tom yelled from the living room.

Sherry rolled her eyes. “I can apply for an unpaid leave. I might do that first if they’ll let me. I’m going to decide this month. I have the number of the Employee Assistance Plan. I thought I’d call them for some advice.”

“If you feel that will help,” her mother said.

“I don’t see why you need to talk to strangers when we’re right here,” Her father slid the chopped cucumbers into the salad.

“You get free head shrinking too!” Thomas walked into the kitchen. “Cushy.”

\*\*\*

“Let’s see your old list,” Kay said.

Sherry flipped through her notebook. “Here,” Sherry said as she placed the notepad on the table between her wine and Kay’s “Ha!” she exclaimed “I can cross off the top two pro teaching items.” Sherry drew a pencil line through ‘good secure pension’ and ‘gradual, but steady increase in pay.’

Kay laughed and shook her head. She turned the notepad and wrote ‘maybe’ beside both items. “We don’t know yet. As your union steward, I say let’s see how negotiations go before we get rid of them,” she said as she read through the list. “Your only

con was ‘Bev’?”

“And that’s why I returned in September,” Sherry turned the notepad and wrote ‘bungling puppet master of a principal and phony’ beside Bev’s name. “I’m keeping the list Family rated in case I have to show it to a councillor and then decide I want to remain an elementary school teacher.”

“That is very cautious of you,” Kay said.

Sherry nodded and added ‘negative public perception’, ‘forms’, stupid rules’ and ‘too political’ to her list of cons.

“I like the politics,” Kay said.

“This is my list,” Sherry reminded her. “You can make your own.”

“I’m staying,” Kay said. “What else did the EAP councillor suggest?”

Sherry sighed, “Listen to my heart, don’t be swayed by pressure from Ian, my parents or you.”

“I’m not pressuring you either way,” Kay said. “Whatever you decide we’ll still have wine and shopping.”

“To wine and shopping,” Sherry raised her glass. Kay raised hers. They both drank.

“What else?” Kay asked as she set her glass down.

“She said to keep a journal and to focus on writing about why I went into teaching and what has kept me in it,” Sherry tapped the bag beside her on the bench. “Hence the new notebook and fountain pen.”

Kay nodded. “Pros and cons list for teaching, heart, journal, excuse for shopping and anything else?”

Sherry sipped her wine. “A pros and cons list for returning to the family business and one for returning to

school to study optometry, de-stressing with exercise and baths and an appointment with a career councillor to explore other options.”

“It sounds thorough.”

“I’m not done,” Sherry pointed her pencil at Kay. “I should not isolate myself socially. Hence dinner with you!”

“Glad to help,” Kay giggled.

“Let’s see your list. What are your pros for teaching?”

“You know,” Sherry pushed the notepad towards Kay. “The usual. The kids, purposeful occupation, creative, make a difference, opportunities for problem solving, never a dull moment, outside of marking that is. There is a lot of marking in grade five. And the moments spent marking become dull.”

Kay nodded. “You forgot great colleagues, and beautiful facilities.”

“Hey!” Sherry objected. “Are you being sarcastic? ‘Cause some of my colleagues are great. And Bev’s office is very nice. There are no leaks and it is even air conditioned.”

“Mary Beth doesn’t leak and she can be quite chilly too.”

“And Bev’s office grates on my nerves.”

Kay raised her glass, “To great colleagues and facilities.” They both drank.

Kay set down her glass. “It’s Bev’s fourth year with us. They may move her.”

“I can’t base my decision on that possibility.”

“No,” Kay shook her head. “Have you considered transferring?”

“I have, but Bev will not give me a glowing reference.”

“What about a teacher-requested transfer?”

“Too much of a leap of faith for me,” Sherry shrugged. “I want control.”

“Well, I’ll help any way I can,” Kay said as the waiter set down their plates.

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Sherry held her form tightly between her thumb and forefinger. “Here we go,” she said. “Three years of teaching, months of counseling and soul searching and it comes down to this walk through the hall to the office to hand in this form. Well,” she glanced around her classroom. “Here we go.” **T**



*“You’re not working up to your potential.  
You’re only half dead from exhaustion.”*

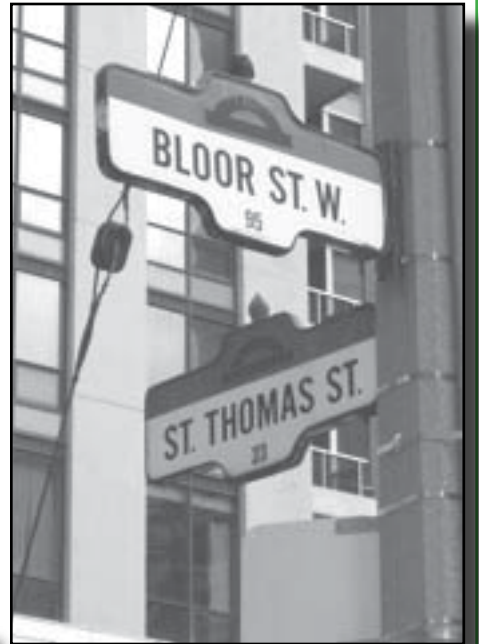




**T**hey call it the ‘Mink Mile’, a holdover from the time when Creed’s and Jean Cortot set up shop to provide furs for Toronto’s equestrian class. Not that the stretch of Bloor Street between Yonge Street and Avenue Road has gone downscale since the departure of the furriers. The closest equivalent of a department store is Holt Renfrew’s. Gucci, Hermes, Tiffany’s, Chanel and the venerable Harry Rosen share pride of place. It is here, just down the street from Prada and Cartier, above Cole Haan that you will find our very own College of Teachers.

It is invigorating to realize that a first year teacher or a refugee seeking recognition of their teaching credentials can pop into the OCT offices and then enjoy the convenience of shopping at some of the carriage trade’s finer stores. Neither are the OCT offices shabby. Rather they are airy, comfortable and well appointed, much like our own staffrooms.

So enjoy the photo montage and take pride in seeing your OCT fees at work.



**Cross streets where OCT can be found.**



**The members’ lounge**



**Computer for members’ use.**

**A library display case**



**The Hearing Room  
Member, union and  
lawyer on one side  
and College lawyers  
on the other.**



**Client services**



**OCT’s neighbour**





The library!

Items may be borrowed in person or on line.  
If you borrow on line, you may mail it back.



The librarian in action.



You may return borrowed items here, beside the Windsor Arms hotel



OCT has a lending library available to all members on line or on site. This is the drop-off box for borrowed items.

## ETT EXECUTIVE ELECTIONS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

This time around former Vice President Karen Brown challenged Martin Long for this position.

There were no formal slates as such. Still, it was not difficult to perceive slates of candidates who were running as a ticket for election particularly when envelopes of election materials arrived at the schools. Martin Long and former Secretary Treasurer Eugene James were joined by Sonia Ellis-Seguin, the Vice Presidential candidate on one ticket. Karen Brown collaborated with Andy Lomnicki to run for Vice President and Doris Duni for Secretary Treasurer.

Although it was difficult to determine the degree of cooperation amongst the remaining three candidates, Peter Brickwood for President, Pam Dogra for Vice President and Roz Geridis for Secretary Treasurer, they may well have been a slate as well.

However these arrangements, formal or not, were not reflected in the results. While Martin Long won a comfortable victory for President, his running mates, Sonia Ellis-Seguin and Eugene James were defeated by Andy Lomnicki and Doris Duni.

Even in these races there were some interesting twists. The race for Secretary Treasurer came down to a battle between Doris Duni and Eugene James. However the second place finisher for the Vice Presidency was not

Sonia Ellis-Seguin but Pam Dogra. What this seems to suggest is that running as a slate is no guarantee that all of its members will be elected or defeated.

You would think that the mechanism to resolve instances where the vote for the final position for Executive Member was a tie would be purely academic. Yet once again we had a cliff hanger.

In the previous election Diana Andrews defeated Felicia Samuel by only one vote. This time it wasn't as much of a nail biter. The election was decided by two votes.

In other words, if you and two of your friends were hanging out in the computer lab, realized that you hadn't voted and went on line to vote for Jennifer Brown, you would have decided the results of the election.

As it was Jennifer Brown took 742 votes to Peter Brickwood's 744. Moreover, Felicia Samuel had 746 votes and Sonia Ellis-Seguin 750. In other words, only eight votes separated the ninth and the

twelfth place finishers.

Once again, the election showed the power of incumbency. All members of the previous Executive were returned to office. In many respects this is an unsurprising result. The Executive Member to garner the most votes was John Smith, our Chief Negotiator with 1 068 and Karen Brown, our former Vice President, was next with 947.

Leaving aside for the moment the contributions they have made to the union, both of these candidates have high profiles in ETT through their work and have been called upon to make frequent addresses to the membership at General Meetings and Steward training sessions.

Both would rank high in terms of name recognition. This is an advantage that current Executive Members enjoy, although to a lesser extent. As Executive Officers for Families of Schools, they have a built-in constituency in the

schools and teachers they serve. They have a face these members can put a name to. Interestingly enough, the twelfth place finisher, Jennifer Brown,

“...In other words, if you and two of your friends were hanging out in the computer lab, realized that you hadn't voted and went on line to vote ... you would have decided the results of the election.”

is a former Executive Member herself.

This is not to suggest that incumbency alone is sufficient for election to the Executive. Obviously if an Executive Officer did not return phone calls, support members in need, and avoided school visits, they would alienate what should be their core constituency and would go down to defeat.

However name recognition is an advantage current Executive Officers did hold over those candidates running from the classroom. It is a comment on the courage and commitment of those who did run without this benefit. It is also a comfort to know that we have a wealth of talented candidates who, while unsuccessful in this election, may have a chance to serve us in years to come. Our thanks to them.

As we enter negotiations, we can take confidence from the abilities of the people we have elected to sit on the Executive. They are a reflection of the diversity that makes up our membership in Toronto in terms of background, age and experience. Each brings a set of skills crucial to ETT and our members. The upcoming round of bargaining is going to be a difficult one, a time for cool heads, clear communications and determination. The team we have chosen to represent us possess these qualities and we are fortunate to have them representing us at the bargaining table and standing by our side in our schools. 🗳️

# What Could Be

## Last Weeks of School: Beyond the Classroom

BY MARGARET BERRY WILSON

As teachers of young children, we do not always get to see our hopes for our students fulfilled. We have to trust that we and their future teachers will make a difference, even if the rate of change is slow, and we don't see much progress before he or she leaves our direct influence. This can be challenging: it's easy to slip into believing that the kindergartner who rolls all over the carpet will never have self-control, that the defiance shown by a second grader predicts a troubled future or that a third grader's frequent meltdowns forebode a life of sadness.

But we can't do that. Elementary educators stand perched between what is and what could be for the students we teach. We have to remember to keep looking forward to what could be for each of them.

Occasionally, a former student reappears later in life to show us that all the effort we and other teachers exerted on his or her behalf mattered—that we made a difference. Recently, I was lucky enough to have one of those experiences.

I just read a high school commencement address by one of my former students. His classmates chose him as their speaker. As he explained in his speech, this selection was not a foregone conclusion, at least not in his elementary school years.

In his speech he talked about one troubling incident from that time. In fourth grade, he had a dispute with a girl in his class about gender and

football. As he recalls it, he started to walk away from the argument, and she, knowing he loved bugs, provoked him by squashing an ant. He responded by punching her in the face.

At the time, his teachers and the school dealt first with the immediate situation. Harming another child was a serious breach of our school rules. The boy was suspended and presented with the challenge of trying to make reparation for his mistake.

There's nothing particularly remarkable about that part of the story. However, it's in the midst of dealing with situations like this, and in their aftermath, that teachers must be especially vigilant about holding on to their vision of what could be for children. In this case, I remember this boy's teachers recognizing that although he was struggling to figure out what was just and unjust, and sometimes making mistakes as he did so, he had incredible potential.

We believed that with his passionate convictions, constant willingness to question, and amazing talent as a writer (on full display years later in his graduation speech!), he could become a thoughtful, caring, and talented citizen.

And so he has. Much of the credit for his success in life so far goes to him and his family, of course. But his teachers also played a role. Throughout his years of school, they chose the more difficult path. Rather than giving up on him, they kept believing.

I know so many of you do the same on behalf of your students. You keep holding onto the possibility of a different, brighter future even when they make mistakes, struggle, and challenge you. As this school year ends, I hope you will take a few minutes to think about the difference you are making by doing just that. **T**

*Responsive Classroom Newsletter: Summer 2012*

# Robo Calls Hit TDSB

The principal of Stoneway Junior School in Toronto says he has no idea who made the misleading kindergarten registration robo calls.

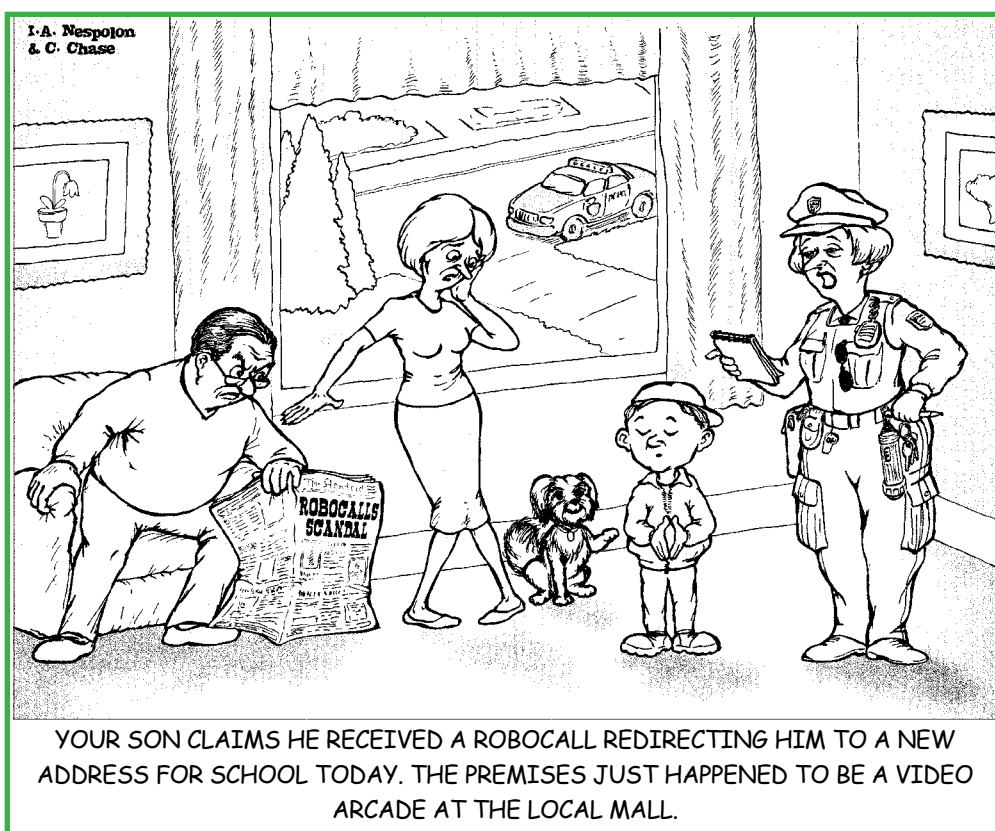
"I find it hard to believe that any member of my staff was behind those calls," Mr. Pierre told the Toronto Teacher reporter.

The automated calls misdirected parents from the neighbouring Boulderwood Public School's cache-ment area to Stoneway's kindergarten registration. Stoneway's projected numbers have been decreasing over recent years and Boulderwood's principal Roberta Ray says that concern over shrinking staff allotment was probably behind the desperate move. "No one likes to lose staff," she said. "Well," she continued. "Most principals don't like losing the staff they

have been able to mold to their vision anyhow."

TDSB has received over 27 complaints from parents in the effected Toronto neighbourhood. "Enough for a full class," Ms. Ray pointed out. "Right? We don't need 30 yet. Do we?"

"I got this call," stated a parent, who has asked to remain anonymous for fear of repercussions. "It was one of those taped message calls. It said that kindergarten registration had been moved to Stoneway Junior School so that Boulderwood could hold its first annual poutine festival. I thought it was odd. I thought the school board had a policy about healthy foods. But my daughter said poutine was as Canadian as negative political advertising so I figured it was okay and I went to Stoneway. Now I guess I'll drive one



kid to one school and my wife will have to drive the other one."

TDSB will be hiring three extra staff members at 5050 Yonge so that

calls from concerned parents can be returned before school restarts in September. **T**

# Wrapping Up the School Year

## Ideas from Responsive Classroom consultants

Lynn Majewski:

You can do this one in conjunction with packing up the classroom library: each child chooses a favorite book and tries to convince classmates to read it over the summer.

There are a variety of ways to make these 'sales pitches,' designing book jackets complete with blurbs and inside flap summaries, making oral presentations, writing reviews, and so on.

To keep it fun, choose assignments that draw on skills students have mastered, and let them focus on making a persuasive argument.

**Babs Freeman-Loftis:**

When I was an administrator, I used to visit each kindergarten class every other week.

At our last meeting of the year, I shared a beautiful picture book called *All the Places to Love*, written by Patricia MacLachlan and illustrated by

Mike Wimmer, and then talked with the children about all the places and things they had loved about kindergarten.

They would draw and write about the tire swing and dancing the 'Turkey Trot' at Grandparents' Day, reading books in the library, singing in the Morning Meeting circle, and playing with new friends on the playground.

We turned their work into books that I'd read to the next year's kindergartners when I met them for the first time.

**Tina Valentine:**

Another classic is having students write letters introducing themselves

to their next year's teacher.

Provide guidelines for what to write about, and make this a chance for students to reflect on their strengths, think about what they're looking forward to, and let you know about worries you might be able to address before the year ends.

Have students write these letters while reviewing their portfolios to create a powerful opportunity for reflecting on what they've learned. **T**

*Responsive Classroom Newsletter: Summer 2012*



# THE STREETER

*Our members speak*

## Q: What is the most important issue in our discussions with the province?

“I think collective bargaining rights is the most important issue in this dispute right now because if we lose our right to bargain collectively and to maintain our unions and our rights to negotiate our contracts and our benefits, then we lose our right to a free society.

When you use social media to woo the public, I find it frightening. Social media networks found out about what was happening to my contract before I did. We used to consider that unfair bargaining practices.”

*Heather Garrett*

“The 99% are being blamed for the financial crisis the 1% created. They are asking us to bear the burden of their mistakes.”

*Vana Pistiolis*

“There are so many different issues that you have to work on, you just can’t choose one over the other they are all intermingled.”

*Georgia Alexopoulos*

“The most important thing that hit me about this is the realization of the 1% and the 99%. We are the people. For me, that’s the most important thing, that realization. Everyone is starting to own that problem. This is the start of a movement to fight back. That’s the most important issue.”

*John Smith*

“The issues we’re experiencing now aren’t issues that we created. Yet we’re being asked to pay for these issues.

I think the government is attacking teachers specifically. Their approach should be broader based rather than picking on certain public sector workers to help deal with the issue.”

*Craig Barton*

“One of the main issues for me is that they want to freeze young teachers on the salary grid. Teachers in Toronto who are having to contend with the increasing cost of living are going to be frozen on forty-five, fifty thousand dollars a year. It is going to be really tough for them especially with the 0% salary increase. That is certainly the issue I’m hearing about a lot at my school.”

*Jamie Thom*

“It’s a matter of honesty. Tell the people of Ontario that the fact is that what they are presenting in the media is not the truth. We are not even in negotiations yet. They are going outside the law and discrediting us and making us look bad to the province in order to better their position on the problems that they have.

The bottom line is that they are not being honest with the people of Ontario. It pisses me off. I’m tired of the teacher bashing in the media every day. Start with a little bit of honesty and we’ll see where we can go from there.

*Kevin Couch*

“The major issue is the lack of respect for the collective bargaining process.

This fiction that we are walking

away from a bargaining table when it is not a bargaining table. The idea that they come to us and say here are the terms and they are not negotiable, why are they chastising us for not negotiating if they are telling us that they are not willing to negotiate? That to me is the big issue right now.”

*Tom Veenstra*

“The government is trying to talk to us in a way that is not really negotiating. That’s our biggest issue.

That’s why I came to Queen’s Park today.”

*Catherine Inglis*

“The most important issue is going to be protecting public education from being savaged by the provincial government austerity cuts. Second is our working conditions and our wages. They are busy telling us that we need to make a sacrifice. It seems to me that we gave them a quarter of a billion dollars in the last contract.\* I think that’s a pretty good sacrifice. I don’t think anybody else has given as much.

Fundamentally, you can’t have a first class educational system that’s going to take care of everyone without a system that protects the working conditions and the wages of teachers.

*\*Elementary teachers in Ontario received 2% less in salary increase than secondary and Catholic teachers. This saved the provincial government about \$250 million.*

*Mike Phillips*

“I would consider the freezing on the grid and the sick day proposal to be long term problems. With the disintegration of the gains we have made for supporting every day citizens, we are looking at real difficulties for unions.”

*Dean Pattison*

“It would have to be the attack on teacher salaries and pensions. I’ve worked hard to move up the grid. had to work long enough to reach our full potential as teachers as far as salary is concerned. They deferred it for ten years, now they want to defer it for twelve. We already lost over \$26 thousand because of the last contract. It is time the government plays fair.”

*Michael Martin*

“The most important issues for me are the sick days and the 2% the government took away from us during the last negotiations. I would like to get the 2% back. We get sick more than other people because we are exposed to all the germs that small children bring to school with them. You need to use sick days for maternity leave.

I know a teacher on maternity leave who was getting \$1 600 a month. Who can live on that? If we can’t use our banked sick days, who can afford to go on maternity leave? I think it is important to leave our sick days alone and give us back our 2%.”

*Fatma Mawhinney*

“Sick days are an equity issue for a lot of Jewish teachers at our school. There are five or six Jewish holidays before the end of October and before the school year has really begun, they would have used up most of their sick days.

I think one of the biggest issues that people don’t necessarily talk about is what are the rules for bargaining now? As teachers, we feel completely powerless. Our own local has very limited power in the negotiating process and even at the provincial level, we don’t know what the rules are for bargaining.

It seems as though we are always on the losing end, we are always trying to catch up to the government. There is this whole game that’s being played in the media. We feel like little pawns in this master chess game. It’s this powerless feeling that teachers have right now. When I talk about the apathy in ETT, a lot of that is because teachers feel powerless. To me, that is a huge issue.

Limiting the number of sick days to six will impact badly on our younger members who use their sick days to top up their mat leave so they can stay longer with their babies. Parents with young children will not only need these days for themselves when they get sick but they also need them so they can take care of their children when they get sick or just need to see the doctor for regular appointments like immunizations. Limiting the number of sick days will also impact occasional teachers who will get less work now that teachers can’t take the time off.”

*Ken Annis*

“Sick days are really a Human Rights issue. Anyone who is not a Judeo-Christian or for that matter anyone who is an Eastern Orthodox Christian uses those five discretionary days. So you are saying that for those of us who are Roman Catholic or Protestant our sick days are fine. I have friends who are Jewish or Greek Orthodox and they have to use their discretionary days. It means you either get to practice your religion or you get sick but you can’t do both.”

*Wambui Gaitho*





# EDITORIAL

## Incoming Myths

**N**egotiations are a messy business, regardless of the sector involved. However they are particularly confusing when it comes to education for a number of reasons.

First is the structure of the talks. Our provincial union, Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario, ETFO, negotiates with the provincial government over what can be construed as money issues, wages, benefits and prep time. At the same time our Toronto based local, Elementary Teachers of Toronto, ETT, bargains with the Toronto District School Board over matters concerning working conditions, supervision time and staffing. Keeping track of which union organization is responsible for what bargaining goal can get confusing.

The second area of confusion involves the negotiators for the other side. Although we have developed a fairly good working relationship with our counterparts at the TDSB, we have in the past had to conduct an education initiative to bring the other side up to speed on issues such as what supervision time is and why it is important to us. Our hearts go out to the ETFO negotiators who are dealing with the provincial government's team led by James Farley, a bankruptcy expert from the Bay Street law firm McCarthy Tetrault. How presiding over the bankruptcy proceedings of Stelco and Air Canada has given Mr. Farley any insight into the importance of prep time for Kindergarten teachers is beyond us.

Still, some things are pretty clear. We will continue to be lambasted for walking away from negotiations with the province. Problem is, there were no negotiations to speak of. A 'Provincial Discussion Table' where the government unrolls a list of demands is not a negotiation.

Among the demands were for a pay freeze, in essence a pay cut given the rate of inflation. However as we elementary teachers received 2% less in salary increases than our secondary and Catholic teacher counterparts, we have already given up \$255 million to the province. It's been estimated that the government's proposal to freeze new teachers on the pay grid could cost our most economically vulner-

able members \$62 000, enough to pay off their student loans.

Get ready to hear the term "Sick Leave Gratuity" used as a club. If ever a benefit had a misnomer it is this one. A "gratuity" is the tip you leave under your plate for the waiter, something you dispense at your pleasure. Although it is based in part on the number of sick days you have accumulated, it is really a retirement package, something CEO's know all too well. Recently William Welch left General Electric with a retirement package of \$417 million and Robert Nardelli of Home Depot received one of \$223 million after only seven years on the job. By comparison, our \$45 000 makes us look like pikers.

What is overlooked when people talk about the Sick Leave Gratuity is that is something we had to fight for. Lambton Kent thought it was so important that it was among their goals in a bitter six week strike. By contrast Thames Valley (London) does not have a retirement package but pursued other benefits instead. Toronto has one of the better retirement packages in the province but that is because it bargained for one, traded off other potential benefits and saved the Board money to ensure their members had a nest egg when they left the profession.

Currently teachers are allowed 20 sick days a year, days that can be banked and used in the case of catastrophic illness. The province proposes to limit sick days to six a year at full salary and 39 days at 66% pay. Assuming the treatment for breast cancer requires 45 days, a teacher would be penalized \$6 200 for being so thoughtless as to contract cancer. It could be discriminatory as some persons with disabilities have to take of more time for illness. As taking days off for religious observances are deducted from sick days, an observant Jew could find themselves without any sick days left by the end of September.

But it is our "gold plated" pension plan that really sticks in the public's craw. A little reality check may be in order.

When a pension plan for teachers was established in 1917, it was oper-

ated solely by the government and was limited to investing in government debentures to build municipal infrastructure. By 1990 there was a \$7.8 billion unfunded liability. I suspect the government was relieved when we gained control of the fund through the Ontario Teacher's Pension Plan (OTTP). In the past 22 years, OTTP has added \$55 billion in assets. Who knows where it would be if we had control of the plan decades earlier and could have invested in BCE, Cadillac Fairview and CN instead of water mains for North Bay.


U of T faculty contribute 35 cents and the province 65 cents of each dollar that goes into their pension fund. Nurses contribute 45 cents to the nurses' pension plan. With teachers it is a fifty-fifty split. True we do have an unfunded liability of \$9.4 billion and only 94% of the funds we need to pay future retirees. However, that is for seventy years, a very long time frame. No currently employed teacher is looking at a future as a Wal-Mart greeter. A lot can happen in seventy years, after all we were in much more dire straits in 1990. As interest rates rise, the amount of money that needs to be set aside to pay for a pension drops as well, reducing the liability. We could raise contributions as well.

However the last thing the province wants to do is match them and increase its contribution rate as well. Be that as it may, the province's attempt to panic us into believing OTTP is about to go broke is laughable.

Still you can't blame people for being spooked. Collective bargaining is a stressful time, not only for the people at the negotiating table but also

for the members they represent. Rumours abound. Three bargaining sessions ago I was assured by a parent that I would be walking a picket line come September. Needless to say I was taken aback. As it turned out the parent had a friend who had a daughter who was an E.A., and had incontrovertible proof that the teachers would be on strike come fall. The source of this information was not disclosed but I suggested that there was a possibility she was mistaken.

Nonetheless there is a hunger for information and so far the union has been pretty good at keeping us up to speed. However as negotiations heat up, the stress level rises and the amount of information our negotiators can divulge, of necessity, decreases. After all, they can't be giving daily updates as to proposals and counterproposals without tipping our hand. We can take comfort in the knowledge that we have experienced, skilled and determined negotiators on our side.

So enjoy your summer. Have some adventures and come back to school refreshed. Just do go on believing everything you read in the papers. Except, of course, this. 



“...We will continue to be lambasted for walking away from negotiations . . . A 'Provincial Discussion Table' where the government unrolls a list of demands is not a negotiation.”



# EDUCATION UPDATE

## AFGHAN TALIBAN 'END' OPPOSITION TO EDUCATING GIRLS

Under the Taliban regime women were not allowed to be educated and were forced to wear the burka.

The Taliban are ready to drop their ban on schooling girls in Afghanistan, the country's education minister has said. Farooq Wardak told the UK's *Times Educational Supplement* a 'cultural change' meant the Taliban were "no more opposing girls' education."

The Taliban—who are fighting the Kabul government—have made no public comment on the issue.

Afghan women were not allowed to work or get an education under the Taliban regime overthrown in 2001.

Mr Wardak made his comments during the Education World Forum in London.

He told the *TES*: "What I am hearing at the very upper policy level of the Taliban is that they are no more opposing education and also girls' education."

"I hope, Inshallah (God willing), soon there will be a peaceful negotiation, a meaningful negotiation with our own opposition and that will not compromise at all the basic human rights and basic principles which have been guiding us to provide quality and balanced education to our people," the minister added.

## MOST UTAHNS SUPPORT GOVERNOR'S VETO OF SEX ED BILL

Most Utah voters agree that Gov. Gary Herbert did the right thing by vetoing a bill that would have scaled back sex education, according to a new Salt Lake Tribune poll.

Statewide, 69 percent of registered voters polled said they supported Herbert's recent veto of "legislation that would have allowed school districts to drop sex education and would have required those that kept it to offer abstinence-only instruction."

The support crossed religious, party and gender lines. About 64 percent of Republicans supported the veto, as did 63 percent of Mormons. Men and women were equally supportive at 69 percent.

"The bill interfered with parental rights," said Paul Krueger, a Murray school bus driver who started an online petition urging the governor to veto the bill, which attracted tens of thousands of signatures. "Our current law is a very conservative approach to sex education in the schools, and there was just no reason to try and change that."

Krueger said, if anything, he's surprised support for the veto wasn't higher.

Herbert said he appreciates that the poll results line up "with my own thinking in wanting to veto it, but that's not the reason that I vetoed it."

"I just made a determination that it was not good policy for us, and that HB363 actually went too far in taking away parental choice," Herbert told The Tribune.

Current Utah law already allows parents to pull their kids out of sex education classes and allows school districts to teach abstinence-only. All districts already must stress the importance of abstinence, though they're allowed to teach kids about contraception as long as they don't advocate its use.

HB363 would have allowed districts to drop sex education altogether and would have prohibited instruction in contraception in those that kept it.

## KINDERGARTEN PREPARATION FOR EACH DETROIT TOT MEANS \$100,000 SAVINGS FOR MICHIGAN, STUDY FINDS

For every Detroit child who enters kindergarten ready to learn, Michigan taxpayers save \$100,000, according to a study that calculates the economic value of preparing children for long-term educational success starting at birth.

Detroit's One-Child School Readiness Dividend study, to be released at a news conference today, was commissioned by the Max M. & Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation in partnership with more than 20 organizations.

The conclusions support prior research which showed evidence that children—particularly low-income children—who attend early education programs that prepare them are less likely to depend on taxpayer-funded services.

"We need to think through these prevention methods rather than suffer the consequences," said Phillip Fisher, vice chairman of the Fisher foundation board. "With any social program we all advocate for a better world. We're hoping that advocacy will translate into policy change and will trigger more investments in early childhood education."

The findings are directed at helping policymakers, the nonprofit community and others measure the impact of increasing early childhood education programs. The state will save about \$39,000 for every child outside of Detroit who enters kindergarten prepared to learn, the study found.

The study—conducted by Wilder Research—estimates costs and benefits for state government systems such as K-12 education, criminal

justice, welfare/public assistance, Medicaid, unemployment, child welfare, health care and child care.

It also takes into account high school graduation rates, poverty rates, crime rates and other factors to calculate the lifetime value of investing in school readiness.

## THE 3RD-GRADE HURDLE

Several states have recently adopted new reading policies that—with limited exceptions—call for 3rd graders to be held back if they fail a state standardized test.

All plans take a page from the playbook in Florida, where a policy to end the social promotion of 3rd graders was enacted under then-Gov. Jeb Bush. Supporters say retention is a last resort, and that a key goal of these policies is exerting pressure on schools to intervene early with struggling readers.

Without the ability to read, children are ill-equipped to learn across disciplines and may never catch up. But critics say it's misguided to base a promotion decision on a standardized-test score, and that holding a child back may do more harm than good.

They also express concern over whether states will provide money to help districts with students deficient in reading, especially in a time of tight budgets. "After 10 years, I don't like [the policy]. I don't think it's good for kids," said Doug Whittaker, the superintendent of the 16,200-student Charlotte County district in southwest Florida. "I don't care how the adults frame it: The people making those decisions forget what it's like to be eight years old." Mr. Whittaker is not opposed to holding students back, but such action should not be driven by a test score. "It really should be a team of people that make the decision, including the parents," he said.

## ALL IN TOGETHER

Writing on the Answer Sheet blog in *The Washington Post*, Mark Naison contemplates why so many parents, and the public in general, buy into the negativity surrounding teachers.

He attributes it to the way the country's "shrinking middle class and battered working class" regard the teachers in their midst. Large numbers of people are losing their jobs and homes, earning sub-standard wages, and taking in their children who can't find jobs. All the while, they see teachers, 80 percent of them women, who make better salaries than they do, have better health plans and pensions, and get two or three


months off in the summer. A similar negativity faced America's unionized blue-collar workers in the '70s, '80s, and '90s, when big corporations started closing factories and slashing wages and benefits, Naison says. But this line of thinking is ruinous.

Every time you undermine job security, working conditions, and wages for one group of workers, it's easier for employers to undermine them for all workers. This is why, during the Depression, many unemployed organized in support of workers on strike, though anybody with a job at the time was privileged. People believed in the concept of solidarity, that working people could only progress if they did so together, and if one group of workers improved their conditions, it would ultimately improve conditions for all.

## BREAKING BAD

In an op-ed in *The New York Times*, special education teacher William Johnson writes that his workload has increased drastically over the past 18 months, the result of budget cuts and changes in policy. Class sizes have grown, support staff have been laid off, and students with increasingly severe disabilities have been pushed into more mainstream classrooms like his, where they get less individual attention and struggle to adapt to a curriculum driven by state-designed high-stakes tests.

On top of all this, his last evaluation designated him a bad teacher. An assistant principal observed his class and faulted him for not following the school's 'guided discipline' procedure. Earlier that year, the same administrator had instructed him to prioritize improving his 'assertive voice' in the classroom. But his principal observed him and told him to focus entirely on lesson planning, since she had no concerns about his classroom management. She had nominated him for a citywide award for 'classroom excellence' only a few weeks earlier.

The bottom line is that teachers already know when they're struggling—"few things are more excruciating than leading a class that's not learning," Johnson says—but they don't need this kind of oversight: "Good administrators use the evaluation processes to support teachers and help them avoid those painful classroom moments—not to weed out the teachers who don't produce good test scores or adhere to their pedagogical beliefs. Worst of all, the more intense the pressure gets, the worse we teach." 

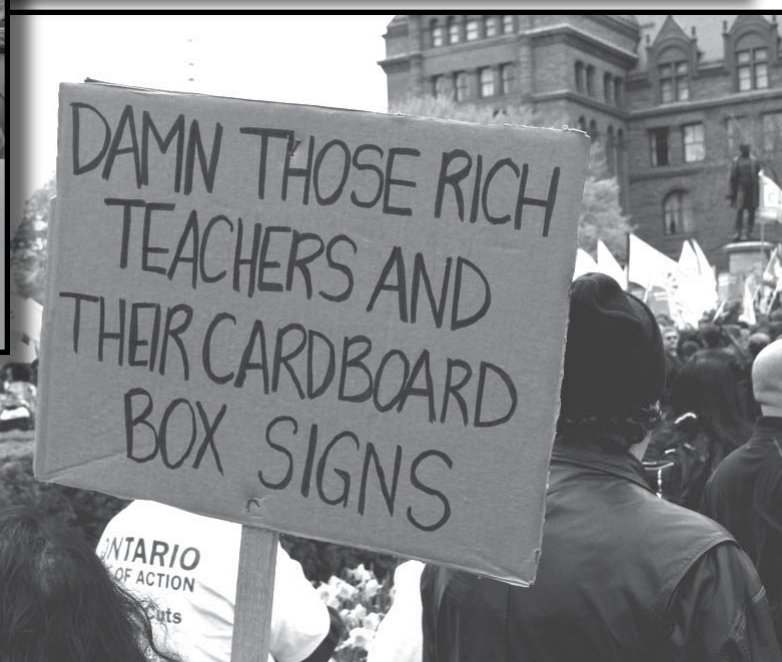
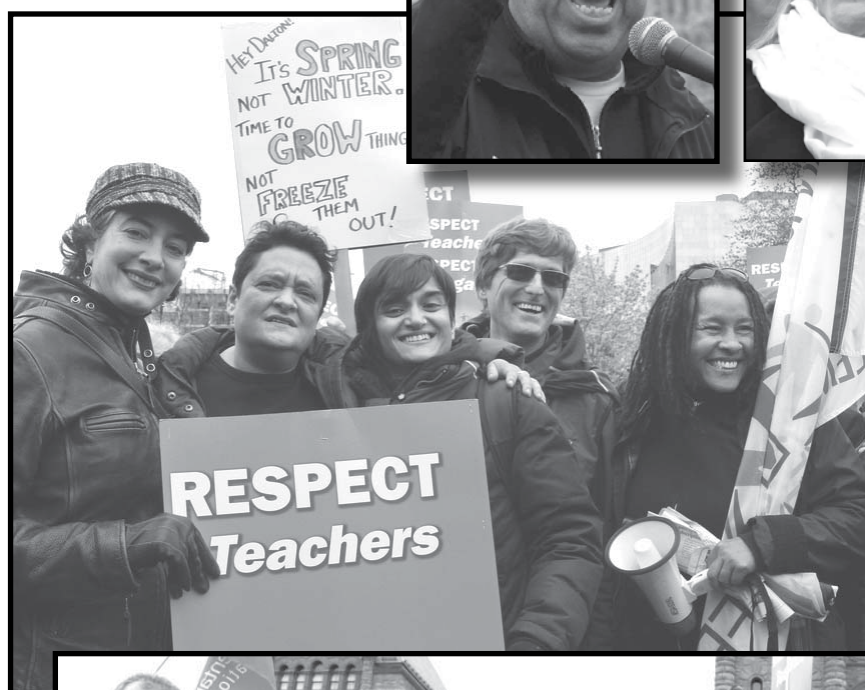
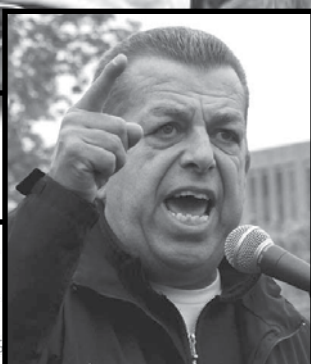


# OFL DAY OF ACTION AGAINST CUTS



**QUEEN'S PARK**  
**April 21, 2012**

PHOTOS: Stephen Michalowicz, Communications  
Manager, ETT (smichalowicz@ett.on.ca).



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