



The Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation Fighting Against Forced Labour and Child Labour in Supply Chains Act Statement 2023

This document constitutes The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) Fighting Against Forced Labour and Child Labour in Supply Chains Act statement, covering our fiscal year from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023. As requested by the Act, it sets out the steps taken by OSSTF/FEESO to prevent modern slavery and human trafficking in our own operations and supply chains.

Introduction

The United Nations defines modern slavery as an umbrella term to include practices such as “forced labour, debt bondage, forced marriage, and human trafficking. Essentially, it refers to situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, and/or abuse of power”¹. In recent times, the number of people experiencing modern slavery has been increasing.²

At OSSTF/FEESO we are committed to protecting and enhancing publicly-funded education in Ontario. Guided by our actions to champion for better working conditions for our members and to enhance and protect public education in Ontario, we do not tolerate modern slavery in our organization or in those of our suppliers and subcontractors. We are dedicated to acting ethically and with integrity in all of our business relationships and implementing and enforcing effective systems and controls to combat modern slavery.

Organizational Structure

Founded in 1919, OSSTF/FEESO represents almost 60,000 teachers and education workers across the province of Ontario. OSSTF/FEESO is a strong, independent, socially active union that promotes and advances the cause of public education and the rights of students, educators and educational workers. While establishing working conditions for its members, OSSTF/FEESO also works to build strong public services, preserve academic freedom, prevent the privatization and commercialization of our educational institutions, ensure that students receive an education free of bias and discrimination and provide an equitable opportunity for all students to succeed in a strong, well-funded public education system.

Strong local autonomy is our foundation, and that is reflected in our Bargaining Units. Bargaining Unit officers are elected by all members of the unit.

¹ United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/observances/slavery-abolition-day>

² International Labour Organization. (2022). <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/50-million-people-worldwide-modern-slavery-0>

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Our bargaining units are organized into 37 districts representing different areas of the province of Ontario and, in some cases, different job classes or languages. All bargaining units and districts have their own constitution and elected executive.

The Provincial Council is the legislative body that acts in the name of the Federation between annual meetings. Since Councillors represent individual districts, sectors and bargaining units, Provincial Council reinforces our democratic tradition and local representation.

The Provincial Executive is elected for a two-year term at the Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (AMPA). The Provincial Executive is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Federation and oversees the Provincial Office. The Provincial Executive answers to the members through the Provincial Council.

The Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (AMPA) is the supreme decision-making body for the Federation. AMPA elects the Federation's seven-member Provincial Executive every two years as well as representatives to the Board of Governors of the Ontario Teachers' Federation.

The Federation's success is supported not only by local leaders and Provincial Executives, but by the 110 provincial office employees as well. Our provincial office staff are part of two unions: Canadian Office and Professional Employees Union (COPE) Local 343 and Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation Staff Association. OSSTF/FEESO is committed to its mission to protect not only the members, but the working conditions of staff as well. Through negotiation of staff terms and conditions of employment and enforcing those bargaining terms, OSSTF/FEESO embodies the collective action and solidarity that is at the heart of labour unionism and against any form of modern slavery.

Supply Chain and Risk Assessment

According to the U.S. State Department 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report³, Canada is ranked as a Tier 1 country, making efforts to address issues of modern slavery. Additionally, unionized employees may be at a lower risk for modern slavery due to the nature of unions operations, which include the recognition of worker rights through collective bargaining and grievance processes.^{4,5} OSSTF/FEESO employees are protected by the Federation's hiring practices and collective agreements. Thus, we assess the risk of modern slavery within our Federation to be low. However, OSSTF/FEESO is committed to actively combatting modern slavery through our supply chain.

OSSTF/FEESO supply chain includes suppliers of technology and other office equipment, software, publishing and printing services, property and facility management services, financial and legal services, Federation's travel activities, conference and venue suppliers, training providers and consultants, and recruitment agencies.

³ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/>

⁴ Freedom Network USA. <https://freedomnetworkusa.org/2022/10/25/unions-as-trafficking-prevention/>

⁵ Ethical Trading Initiative. <https://www.ethicaltrade.org/insights/issues/modern-slavery>

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In addition to the above, OSSTF/FEESO also purchases merchandise and swag to promote, educate and address our members and the public on a wide range of social issues.

OSSTF/FEESO recognizes, that it may indirectly be linked to the risk of modern slavery through its suppliers. We are continuing to engage in risk mapping of our supply chain, a process that is ongoing.

Policies and Procedures

OSSTF/FEESO manages the risk of modern slavery through a variety of policies, processes and practices, which are outlined in this Statement. The Federation regularly reviews and updates its policies.

Procurement Policy (FNP.18.01)

This policy was established on October 17, 2018 and the last updated on January 10, 2022. The procurement policy outlines the Federation's commitment to operating with the highest ethical standards and to work with suppliers who are committed to the same standards. The Policy indicates the preference to acquire goods and services that are Canadian and/or union-made. Among other identified risks and practices, the Policy has a section on purchases of apparel from responsible manufacturers. All Commission Bid Requests for apparel shall include a provision to ensure that apparel are purchased from responsible apparel manufacturers. Every reasonable effort shall be made to ensure the validity of labels which claim to be Canadian and/or Union made. Where evidence exists that products have been inappropriately labelled, such vendor shall be forbidden from future Federation business. The Procurement Policy outlines that OSSTF/FEESO employees, consultants and contractors have a responsibility to act ethically and honestly and in accordance with established standards, principles and policies.

Employment Equity Policy (HRP.18.01)

This policy was established on March 27, 2018. The policy statement applies to all full-time and part-time employees of OSSTF/FEESO. The Federation supports equity, diversity, and social justice within the union, the workplace, and the broader society. The Policy aims to identify, challenge and address not just overt forms of discrimination but also inadvertent, hidden, and systemic discrimination.

Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy (HRP.17.01)

This policy was established on October 24, 2017 and is updated annually in January. This policy ensures that OSSTF/FEESO is committed to providing a work environment in which all workers are treated with respect and dignity. Workplace harassment and workplace violence will not be tolerated from any person in the workplace (including members, contractors, clients, other employers, supervisors, workers and members, as applicable). Workers are encouraged to report any incidents of workplace harassment or workplace violence to the appropriate person. Management will investigate and deal with all complaints or incidents of workplace harassment in a fair, respectful and timely manner.

Due Diligence Process

OSSTF/FEESO due diligence processes involve various aspects of the Federation's operations.

Our hiring practices ensure that all employees hired to work for the Federation are subjected to robust onboarding checks which include but are not limited to request for social insurance number (SIN), allowing us to verify eligibility of the candidate to work in Canada, preventing labour trafficking from other countries. Additionally, our Human Resources department perform reference checks, identity checks and education and professional qualification checks.

As well, we have developed an anonymous office survey to assess any form of staff stress in collaboration with Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc⁶. This survey helps to identify and address stress related to working conditions, work-life balance and other factors affecting the well-being of OSSTF/FEESO employees. Our Human Resources department has gathered survey information for analysis to address any possible complaints related to the above.

Further, in relation to our suppliers we are following our procurement policy by awarding contracts to Canadian and/or Unionized organizations. Our dedication to Canadian and/or Union made products is at the heart of labour unionism and is actively against any form of forced labour and child labour. We assess supplier risk by reviewing their public and social statements as well as their political positions on various labour related issues.

In addition, our supplier payment approval process includes segregation of duties among various signing authorities. The Federation's budget is approved annually at the Annual Meeting of Provincial Assembly. Each budget line is assigned to a particular signing authority. The signing authority is responsible for the approval of payments to suppliers based on their knowledge of the budget line activities. This process prevents not only unauthorized spending, but it allows to identify activities with unauthorized suppliers, if any.

Collective Agreements

As mentioned in introductory part of the statement, our provincial office employees are part of two different labour union groups COPE Local 343⁷ and Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation Staff Association. The collective agreements are bargained in good faith between OSSTF/FEESO and union members. The Collective Agreement outlines working conditions, rights and obligations, compensation, seniority, discharge and termination, work-reorganization, severance pay, grievance procedures, equal pay for work of equal value, etc. All of the above plays a vital role in combatting modern slavery.

⁶ <https://www.ohcow.on.ca/resources/apps-tools-calculators/stressassess/>

⁷ <https://www.copeontario.ca/collective-agreements.html>

Remediation Process

Our employees are part of the Ontario Insurance Teachers Plan that offers an Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) through Morneau Shepell⁸. The program offers various counselling services including but not limited to emotional well-being, mental health, family and relationships, diversity and inclusion, financial guidance. As well, the service provides a confidential hotline where an employee may share their concerns.

Further, our Procurement Policy (FNP.18.01), Employment Equity Policy (HRP.18.01), Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy (HRP.17.01) requires all employees and contract workers to report actual or possible misconduct. Our policies and procedures encourage and provide various channels for our staff to speak up about any related issues either on their own or through their union representatives. Our employees are encouraged to speak to OSSTF/FEESO management team, Human Resources and Equity Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator to address any inequality or labour abuse within the OSSTF/FEESO environment as well as its broader society. Moreover, the Federation also has a Health and Safety Committee as well as an In-House Equity Work Group where employees can bring up their concerns regarding their working conditions.

In addition, OSSTF/FEESO has a Pay Equity Program that allows employees to submit or apply for change in circumstances or job evaluation procedure where they believe their duties have changed and the job performed requires adjustment to their compensation.

Assessing Ourselves

We develop strong relationship with our suppliers by following our values and Procurement Policy (FNP.18.01) to purchase from Canadian and/or Union organizations.

Taking in consideration the above-stated employee communication channels and tools, policies and procedures related to supply chain and internal conduct, no evidence of modern slavery, including forced labour or child labour, or human trafficking incidents, or loss of income as a result of steps taken to eliminate modern slavery or human trafficking have been identified in the 2022-2023 fiscal year and thus there has not been a basis to take remedial steps regarding such matters.

Our Next Steps

In order to address modern slavery, OSSTF/FEESO is committed to develop and implement the following:

- Awareness training for staff and management.
- Development of supplier code of conduct.
- Regular review of policies and procedures.

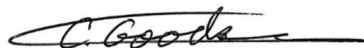
⁸ <https://www.workhealthlife.com/>

Conclusion

OSSTF/FEESO is committed protecting and enhancing public education as well as conducting its operations with high ethical standards and social responsibility. We continue to have a great impact for the work we do to promote equity, diversity and inclusion. We stand strong behind our commitment to offer a workplace free of discrimination, violence and harassment. OSSTF/FEESO is committed to preventing modern slavery taking place in the Federation's operations and its supply chain. We shall continue to review our policies, procedures and practices periodically to identify any required updates to help prevent modern slavery.

Approval

In accordance with the requirements of the Canadian Act, and in particular section 11 thereof, I attest that I have reviewed the information contained in the report for the entity or entities listed above. Based on my knowledge, and having exercised reasonable diligence, I attest that the information in the report is true, accurate and complete in all material respects for the purposes of the Act, for the reporting year listed above.



Chris Goodsir, General Secretary, The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
(OSSTF/FEESO)

May 29, 2024

I have the authority to bind The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation