

# SPECIAL MESSAGE

## Special Message to Members from Karen Littlewood, President, OSSTF/FEESO

Dear Members,

School board sector bargaining for OSSTF/FEESO for the 2022–2026 collective agreement has finally come to a conclusion—and after two exhausting years of stalled-out bargaining we achieved an arbitrated settlement that successfully delivered a new collective agreement for 2022–2026.

For the majority of OSSTF/FEESO members—from teachers and occasional teachers to most education workers job classes—there were significant wage gains.

In fact, for many, these salary increases were the largest since 2008.

Overall, this agreement is unquestioningly a win for us—and a resounding indictment of the Ford government’s education policy.

In the arbitrator’s awards:

- All teacher and occasional teacher wages will increase by 11.25% over the four-year term (that’s 11.73% when wages are compounded);
- Every education worker will get a boost of \$1/hour for each year of the agreement (making some of them the biggest winners in this award);
- Every member in the sector received an additional 7.41% compounded remedy for the unconstitutional Bill 124 legislation that froze wages between 2019–2022.

However, a setback for us in the decision was the totally unacceptable compensation result for our over 3,000 Professional Student Support Personnel (PSSP) members, and certain other education worker job categories.

Instead, by replicating prior agreements, the arbitration decision utterly failed to recognize the value of PSSP work and arrived at a result that completely disregarded and unfairly penalized PSSP and similar members.

For these members, the flat rate increase resulted in only a nominal annual boost that is all the more galling when cast against the grim backdrop of the student mental health crisis that many of these workers are so qualified to address.

There were other victories in our pathway, such as taking a significant stride towards eliminating the regional disparity in occasional teacher compensation rates, and there were other setbacks too, like the arbitrator's failure to address the need for reasonable class sizes for de-streamed courses. You can read more about the agreement in the news and in our [recent bargaining bulletin](#).

The only viable route to a successful outcome in this round of bargaining was the pathway we chose—in addition to the compensation increases for the 2022–2026 agreement, the pathway allowed us to quickly obtain a significant remedy for members impacted by Bill 124—the Ford government's unconstitutional wage suppression legislation. In fact, over the five-year period beginning September 2021—about when we started to see inflation increase—members' wages will increase by 15%, better than 3% per year when compounded, and even more than that for many of our occasional teacher members and most of our education worker members.

But our work is not done.

As the school year comes to a close, I know OSSTF/FEESO members remain appalled by the misleading claims about supposed “historic” amounts of funding in public education made by Ford and his Ministers. We know that when accounting for inflation and increases in enrollment, over \$2 billion is missing from core education funding for the 2024–2025 school year when compared to the 2017–2018 school year.

Six years of Conservative cuts are hurting students, and they are devastating for public education in Ontario.

I am ready to fight for the system we deserve.

No matter how hard Minister Lecce “spins” his investments, he can't cover up his annual real dollar cuts to education that amount to \$1,500 per student! He cannot ignore the recruitment and retention crisis he has created that is impacting every job category in the sector. He cannot gloss over the student mental health crisis that could be alleviated by hiring more professional student support personnel and attracting them with fair wages. He cannot conceal the epidemic rates of violence that plague our classrooms and the economic causes that fuel them.

Our union approached this round of bargaining with a steadfast conviction to bargain collectively and with unity. We must apply that same conviction as we campaign—together and in solidarity—every day until the next election.

Ontario students deserve better.

Ontarians deserve better.

You deserve better.

That is why we must elect a government that will invest in public education, solve the retention and recruitment crisis, and overhaul the broken *School Board Collective Bargaining Act*.

The past six years have been tough on all of us, but I take heart in the incredible passion, dedication, and conviction of each and every one of you.

Thank you for your support during the bargaining process and for your unwavering commitment to your noble profession.

Together, we can achieve a public education system we can all be proud of.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K Littlewood". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Karen Littlewood