

ERFP and OPSEU News and Views Summer 2019



Update from your Executive

Hi everyone,

Happy summer! It's been a busy last few months and we'd like to recap some of the things that have been going on.

Thanks to everyone who came out to our recent rounds of OPSEU workshops/educationals, information sessions, as well as the stewards summer social! It was great to meet so many new and existing members and to hear your feedback about the recent affiliation with OPSEU. There were a number of exceptionally thoughtful and important questions asked

and it was heartening to see that members are on the same page about wanting to move forward in a positive way with OPSEU's support and resources behind us.

We wish those of you still off a safe and happy summer vacation with your family and friends, and welcome back to everyone at our year round calendar schools!

We want to thank you for your ongoing support and participation over the last several months.

In solidarity,

Your ERFP Executive



ERFP and OPSEU: Together to Win.

Dear ERFP members,

It's hard to believe, but the end of summer is already in sight and the 2019/2020 school year is upon us. Balanced Calendar schools have already entered the new school year, with the rest to follow on September 4. We know that the front line work that you carry out on a daily basis is often a thankless job; however you make a difference in students' lives, you are their advocate, their support system, and often you're the reason that students attend school and leave at the end of the day with celebrated accomplishments- no matter how big or small.

While you've been enjoying your much-deserved break, the elected members and professional staff at ERFP and OPSEU have been preparing for what is going to be the fight of our lives this fall.

The Ford government has been reeling over the last couple of months. Ford has been openly booed at a number of large public events. His chief of staff was forced to resign in disgrace after appointing a scandalous number of friends and family members to six-figure patronage jobs. And Ford is desperately trying to put a fresh face on his disastrous autism policies.

But make no mistake: Ford still controls Queen's Park, which means he controls the law of the land. And one of the first laws he's likely to push through this fall is a law to keep your wage increases below inflation. In other words, a law to cut the amount of money you have to support yourself and your family.

We're going to fight that law with everything we've got. We'll fight it in the courts. We'll fight it in the public arena. And we'll fight it at Tory MPP's doorsteps.

We urge you to join us in the fight. Talk to your friends, family, and neighbours about the important work you do with Ontario's most vulnerable students. We are asking that you check your email on a regular basis for actions and events we'll be holding to let the public know that our work and our students matter.

Working together, OPSEU and ERFP will defend your jobs and our schools to make them stronger than they've ever been.

Together To Win!

In solidarity,



Warren (Smokey) Thomas
OPSEU President



Hilary Campbell
ERFP President



An introduction to the Ontario Public Service Employees Union

For over a decade, OPSEU has been a strong and trustworthy partner at provincial consultation tables and the Ontario Council of Educational Workers (OCEW) central bargaining table. Affiliating with OPSEU strengthens our long standing partnership and provides us with the best of both worlds:

Affiliation Agreement highlights:

- Our dues and benefits stay the same: Because we remain a fully independent union, the affiliation agreement has NO IMPACT on our dues or our benefits. Nothing about ERF or the way it's run changes. WE vote for our leaders. WE set our own dues. WE decide on our own bargaining priorities.
- Our strike fund is significantly strengthened: If we end up on strike or locked out, every one of us will receive OPSEU strike pay and benefits. This will ease a huge amount of financial pressure on our own \$10 million strike fund.

The affiliation agreement is a great deal, we get access to the incredible range of services that OPSEU provides, including:

- A full-time professional staff representative assigned to us, John McHenry, who spent more than 15 years in the classroom, before being hired by OPSEU, giving him insight to the struggles we face on a daily basis.
- Frequent education and training opportunities. OPSEU provides dozens of courses on multiple subjects from health and safety, steward training, grievance handling, and public speaking.
- The expertise and support of a large, professional staff. OPSEU employs more than 300 professionals in the fields of contract negotiations, pensions and benefits, health and safety, government relations, communications, campaigns, and legal services.
- Professional and financial bargaining support. We maintain our full independence in bargaining; however, we now have access to OPSEU's experienced and effective bargaining and research team. OPSEU will also cover all of our bargaining expenses.
- The strength and solidarity of the broader labour movement: OPSEU members are known for supporting their fellow members on the strike line. Should we end up on strike or lockout, we can count on a number of OPSEU members to support us on our lines.
- Membership in the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL), National Union of General Employees (NUPGE), and the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), opening the door to even more alliances and partnerships with workers like us.

For all these reasons and more, we think this is a great deal for each and every ERF member. We lose nothing and we gain a lot.



Spotlight on your OPSEU Staff

John McHenry was a Child and Youth Worker at the George Hull Centre for Children and Families for 15 years, working in a classroom alongside teachers and various support staff. John was elected and served as Local president for over 10 years. He is currently the OPSEU staff representative for the Peel District School Board and also represents ESL and adult education instructors at both the Peel District School Board and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board.

Kathy Whipple was an Educational Assistant at the Rainbow District School Board in Northern Ontario for 18 years until she began her second career as an OPSEU staff. Over her 18 years as an EA Kathy was elected by the membership as the highest ranking OPSEU member in OPSEU's Education Sector, OCEW executive member, and held numerous local executive positions including Local President. Kathy has been working in OPSEU's Communications Department for the past four years and is assigned specifically to the Education Sector as a Campaigns Officer.



OPSEU Workshops

Thanks to all who participated in the OPSEU led Educationals on June 10, June 11, and June 18, 2019. Both evening workshops: Union Strategies to Take Action on Workplace Stress and Communication and Conflict Skills were well attended and received amazing feedback from ERF members.

Additional workshops and training will be offered this fall, please watch your email for upcoming opportunities!



Authorized for distribution

Warren (Smokey) Thomas
OPSEU President

