



EA'sy Talk

President's Message

It is hard to believe that the school year is reaching the half way mark. It has been extremely busy in the District office; there has been an extraordinarily large amount of e-mails, phone calls, meetings and issues to contend with, more than we have had in the past. This is due to many factors such as enhanced membership engagement, members understand and report issues and violations of the collective agreement more often, and there has been a number of new initiatives handed down to school boards from the Ministry of Education which affect our members.

I see this increase of activity as a positive and I am ecstatic that more and more of the membership are involved and engaged even if it is in a small way. It is you, the grassroots member, who are the heart and soul of this Bargaining Unit. You are my eyes and ears to what is happening in the schools.

I am excited that almost 40 of our School and Branch Representatives will be gathering at the Kempenfelt Centre in Innisfil for training on January 30th. This day will be filled with pertinent information and hands on training to give the School and Branch Representatives the tools they require to best represent the membership at the school level.

We had a successful Casual/Supply meeting prior to Christmas. It is essential that these members attend the meetings which take place twice each year. It is at these meetings that I am provided with information and situations which affect our Casual/Supply members. With this information I am better equipped to advocate on behalf of our casual membership. It was determined at this meeting that an ad-hoc committee will be struck to investigate current practices and develop templates for EA's to complete and leave when they are absent and require a supply Educational Assistant.

In closing I would like to encourage members to contact me if you have issues you need assistance with. We have a strong and active Bargaining Unit because of YOU the members.

Respectfully Submitted by;
Patty Coates



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EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM (ELP)

As you may be aware the Provincial Government announced that it will be providing full day Junior and Senior Kindergarten. This is part of the Ministry of Education's plan to build a stronger school system and a well-educated workforce. This new initiative will be phased-in over a five year period, beginning in September 2010, with full implementation completed by the 2015 – 2016 school year.

The Simcoe Muskoka Catholic School Board has been approved to offer the full day program in the following 8 schools

St. Paul's Catholic School in Alliston

St. Mary's Catholic School in Barrie

Marie of the Incarnation Catholic School in Bradford West Gwillimbury

St. Mary's Catholic School in Collingwood

Holy Cross Catholic School in Innisfil

St. Bernard's Catholic School in Orillia

St. Antoine Daniel Catholic School in Victoria Harbour

Saint Mary Catholic School in Huntsville

What does this mean for you?

At this time OSSTF/FEESO are in discussions with the Ministry of Education to ensure that there is a smooth transition into this new initiative as well as to ensure that the school boards are funded accordingly. School Boards are in the beginning stages of developing their processes, policies and procedures.

We will be approaching the school board to make sure that those who take employment as an Early Childhood Educator as part of this program will be a member of our Bargaining Unit. It is our position that it should be a seamless process for our members who have their ECE. When I have concrete information, I will be forwarding it to all EA's and I will hold an information meeting with members who have their ECE.

For those who have their ECE and you think you may be interested in applying for one of the Early Learning Positions, you **MUST** be registered with the College of ECE. You will find the information on their website or via the link from our District website www.d17.osstf.ca

Did You Know.....

I want everyone to listen to my tale of woe. When I was first hired to our Board, I decided that getting the Long Term Disability was way to expensive and I didn't need it, I had even talked with a few other members and we all agreed that it was expensive and unnecessary, so I opted out. Well, a few years later I was struck over the head with a little common sense but it was to late. I had a pre-existing illness and was denied the opportunity to sign up. Well that's okay I thought, after all, I am invincible and I don't need that LTD.

In October 2009, I was diagnosed with breast cancer and had a mastectomy. I have run out of sick days and of course I don't have LTD. I can not express strong enough the importance of signing up for LTD, yes it's expensive, but well worth every cent. Now, not only do I worry about my cancer, I have to consider my situation with no sick days left to use.

Lucy Shepherd, Vice President EABU

Health and Safety Report submitted by Richard Anderson,

E.A. H & S Representative

I hope that everyone had a great Christmas break and a Happy New Year. The board will be moving forward with the placement of defibrillators in the elementary schools, they are currently in all secondary schools. The goal is to have one defibrillator in all schools by next year.

PPE (personal protective equipment) When a student's violent behaviour results in the use of PPE, a meeting must take place with the principal, teacher, resource teacher, E.A. and appropriate board staff to develop a safe work place plan. If PPE is required all staff that could be using it must be consulted to determine the correct size and comfort of the equipment. Once it has been decided that staff is to use PPE, they are obligated to comply. A mechanism must be in place to review the safe workplace plan and the PPE's on a regular basis with the principal.

Supply Educational Assistants All supplies must be informed *before* starting the workday if they will be working with a student who has any violent behaviours. If the student does, there should be a work safe program in place and you will need time to read through it before working with the student. If you are placed in a situation with a potential for violence and you have not seen a safe workplace plan please contact :

Richard Anderson (705)321-2661

Union Office (705)726-1722

Patty Coates (705)321-1441 or

Lucy Shepherd (705)321-3941

SOLIDARITY

Fifteen years ago, a group of frustrated Educational Assistants decided it was time to become unionized. A search began for an organization, which would best represent us as Education Workers. This search resulted in organizing as a Bargaining Unit in the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) in June 1995.

One can imagine the difficulties the small group of Educational Assistants experienced before becoming organized with OSSTF. With a membership of just under 100 persons 15 years ago who were scattered across Simcoe County, it was certainly a challenge. After joining OSSTF the very first elected executive worked together towards a common goal, which was to achieve a Collective Agreement (It took five years) and to build a strong, knowledgeable, professional Bargaining Unit.

WOW! Have we ever come a long way since then, no longer are we a small Bargaining Unit, we now have a membership of more than 700 members. We have developed a clear job description, negotiated a collective agreement, which outlines your rights as an employee, improved the conditions of the workplace, ensured protection from discrimination or harassment in the work place, ensured that none of the civil, human and legal rights enjoyed by others are not violated, promoted a high standard of professional ethics and a high standard of professional competence.

Although your Executive and School Representatives will continue to work tirelessly on your behalf **IT IS UP TO YOU TO KEEP IT WORKING**. Please remember that **YOU** must follow our collective agreement and notify me when there has been a violation of our collective agreement. *Patty Coates President EABU*



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- Your Executive 2009-2010**
- President
 - Patty Coates**
 - Vice-President
 - Lucy Shepherd**
 - Treasurer
 - Jennifer McQuirter**
 - Recording Secretary
 - Julie Lapierre**
 - Health & Safety Officer
 - Richard Anderson**
 - Executive Officers
 - Roberta Gamache**
 - Jenna McGinty**
 - Vacant position
 - Casual/Supply Rep
 - Darlene Morrin**
 - Youth Rep
 - Antoinette Dunmore**
 - New Member Rep
 - Margaret Swinnerton**



Proud Grandmother JoAnn Emons, E.A. Patrick Fogarty, submitted this picture of her grandchildren Rebecca and Zachary. Rebecca and Zachary celebrated their first birthday on November 23, 2009. The twins were born prematurely last November with Rebecca weighing 1lb 4 oz and Zachary weighing 2lbs 5 oz. JoAnn said that although it has been a long hard struggle for them, the twins are happy and beautiful one year olds, she also said, "Twice the fun, twice the love". Congratulations JoAnn!!

**EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
(EAP)**

The EAP is a part of our benefits package that provides assistance to you and your immediate family. The EAP can assist you with: personal well-being, relationship issues, family issues, addictions, and workplace challenges. This service is confidential and there is no cost to you for short-term assistance. Most of the members who have used the SMCDSB's EAP have found the service to be helpful. The EAP provider is Warren Shepell and the phone number is 1-800-387-4765. You can also go to www.warrenshepell.com

**EXECUTIVE MEETING
DATES(63 Collier St. Barrie)**

January 29, 2010 6:00-10:00 p.m.
February 16, 2010 1:00-4:00 p.m.
March 23, 2010 4:45-8:00 p.m.

**District Committee Meeting Dates
(63 Collier St Barrie)**

District Political Action Committee February 8, 2010 5:00 pm
 District Human Rights February 22, 2010 5:00 pm
 District Status of Women March 24, 2010 5:00 pm