



ETFO VOICE

Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario

SPECIAL ELECTION EDITION



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ETFO Political Action

Keep up-to-date with the election by adding ETFO's web page to your list of favourites. Visit www.etfo.on.ca and Take Action!



Colleagues:

Ontario is now just days away from a provincial election. Soon, we will be going to the polls to elect a government to take us into the next millenium.

This election is critical for Ontarians. Its outcome will determine the shape of our health, education and social services for years to come. For this reason, it is vitally important that everyone who cares about these issues votes.

Students deserve better

Since the last election, every member of ETFO and every student in this province has been affected by the Tories' avalanche of change. Almost every aspect of life in schools has been re-organized: school boards, collective bargaining, curriculum, text books, testing and report cards have all undergone significant change in the last four years. These changes have gone too far, too fast. They have not improved Ontario's schools.

Creating a crisis

This era of "common sense" began with the Premier's newly appointed Minister of Education and Training, John Snobelen, proposing to "create a crisis" in education. In fact, it would not have been possible for the Tories to press their fiscal agenda without creating a crisis.

This government was well aware that those of us who are really interested in improving our schools would never agree to stripping \$1.2 billion from the province's education budget. And the government needed that kind of money to pay for its tax cut - an election promise designed to help high income earners most of all.

So instead of working with us, education's front line workers, to implement a positive agenda for change, the government forced confrontation upon us; upon parents; upon students.

Take action!

Across Ontario, teachers and education workers have been working with others to nominate and, we hope, elect candidates who are most likely to support public education. Any Mike Harris Tory running for re-election is unlikely to meet this criteria.

ETFO's provincial office has provided Locals with information to assist them to decide which candidate is likely to defeat an incumbent

As teachers and education workers, we are primarily concerned with protecting public education. However, we have also seen the crises this government has created in health care and in social services.

Lives at risk

In health care, the government is now beating the bushes to hire 10,000 more nurses after it downsized the profession so seriously that lives are at risk. While the Tories blame the federal Liberals for the state of health care in Canada, Mike Harris could have chosen to support hospitals rather than cut taxes. He didn't do so. Nurses, like teachers, are thor-

oughly demoralized and many have left nursing forever. It is going to cost Ontarians a great deal of money to rebuild our health care system, something the Premier should have considered before he began dismantling it.

gry. We see parents who are so exhausted by the struggle of their daily lives that they are simply unable to give their children the support they need. Many of our students live in sub-standard housing. Ontario's non-profit housing program was one of the first casualties of the Common Sense Revolution.

The Premier's announcement in April with regard to teacher recertification confirmed that, if it is reelected, his government will continue to undermine the work we do. This was a timely reminder that Mike Harris will continue to attack public education as long as he has the power to do so.

Incompetence, mismanagement, mean-spiritedness and an inability to accept responsibility for (or to learn from) its errors, have characterized this government's actions. It does not deserve our support.

We will fight hard for our rights and for the rights of our students. We will fight hard to protect publicly funded education. We care about what happens to education, health care and social services. Now is the time for us to take action!

At ETFO's Annual Meeting in August, 1998, delegates overwhelmingly endorsed the following motions:

- That ETFO work to defeat the Harris government in the next provincial election;
- That ETFO work to elect MPPs to the provincial legislature who support high quality, publicly funded education in Ontario.

Tory. In most electoral ridings, the choice is clear. In some ridings, where the Liberals and the New Democrats have equal chance of success and where a Tory is unlikely to be elected, ETFO members may well choose to work on different campaigns.

ETFO is not telling its members how to vote. That is a private matter. We are urging members to work to elect candidates who support public education. We are urging members to vote. We are urging members to urge others to vote to save our schools.

In social services, the story is much the same. Statistics show that 50,000 more children live in poverty today than in 1995. Teachers see the results of the Tories cruel 21.6 % tax cut to family benefits every day. We see children coming to school hun-

Children are hungry



Phyllis Benedict, President

Get on the voters' list

Don't wait to be enumerated. For the first time, the Ontario government is using the National Register of Electors as its voters' list. If you have any doubt about your name being on that list, contact the Returning Officer for your provincial riding. If you have difficulty tracing that number through directory assistance, call your chosen candidate, your Local President or Elections Ontario at 1-800-677-8683 for more information.

Promotion Status:
Promotion at risk

Grade In April:
Barely measurable

Marks**Achievement of Expectations**

D- - D+

Has demonstrated some of the required knowledge and skills in limited ways. Achievement falls much below the provincial standard. (Level 1)

R

The student has not demonstrated the required knowledge and skills. Extensive remediation is required.

Subjects**Strengths/Weaknesses/Next Steps****Funding**

R

The government's agenda was about cutting expenditures and centralizing control, not about improving education. Prior to Bill 160, \$525 million was cut from elementary and secondary education. The new education funding formula cuts a further \$672 million - a total of \$1.2 billion since 1995.

Extensive remediation required.

Ontario now ranks 55th out of 63 jurisdictions in North America in terms of education spending. In terms of Canadian provinces and territories, Ontario spends 4% of its gross domestic product on education. Only Quebec and Alberta spend a lesser percentage on education.

Schools

D-

Under the education funding formula, the pupil accommodation grant, which allocates 100 sq. ft. per elementary pupil, funds the operation and maintenance of school buildings and new pupil spaces. The formula places pressure on boards to close schools not operating at close to 100% capacity. Many schools are threatened with closure.

Has demonstrated some of the required knowledge and skills in limited ways. Just lately, the Premier has shown limited understanding of the issue. In response to outcries from across the province, he announced a one-year delay of the cuts in accommodation grants and allowed schools at 80% capacity to receive full funding. **N.B.** this has only delayed the crisis of school accommodation until after the election.

School busing

D-

The transportation budgets for 1998-1999 were originally cut by 3% at the same time five days were added to the school calendar - for a total loss of almost 6% of the funding.

Has demonstrated some of the required knowledge and skills in limited ways.

After considerable pressure, the government increased transportation funding by 3.7%, leaving a shortfall of 1.5% to 2%.

English as Second Language

D-

The funding formula does not fully recognize the needs of immigrant children. The government has determined that students need ESL support for only three years. The research and experience indicate that support is needed for five to seven years.

Extensive remediation required.

Many boards have had to cut ESL services and programs for 1998-99, some by as much as 50% or more.

School resources

D-

In 1998, the People for Education Tracking Survey found that, of the schools they surveyed:
64% had no physical education teacher.
44% had no music teacher.
18% had a library that was open only part time.
60% reported that children had to share textbooks.
74% reported textbooks that were worn or out of date.
39% of money raised from fundraising went to textbooks or classroom supplies.
46% of money raised from fundraising was spent on computers.

Extensive remediation required.

While some schools rely on fundraising to provide necessary resources, others have no access to such funds. This results in significant disparities in students' access to resources. In addition, many students must bring their own pencils, glue, crayons, markers, erasers, scissors, calculators, paper, rulers, binders, dictionaries, combination locks, workbooks and French workbooks to class. Many schools are without in-class support for special education students. \$8.2 million will be cut from special education in 1999-2000 in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board alone.

Covering the curriculum

D-

Government advertisements assert that the new elementary curriculum will better prepare students for the future. In fact, the curriculum was developed without consultation with teachers and without field testing.

Extensive remediation required.

The teacher training offered around the implementation of the curriculum has been woefully inadequate. The vast majority of elementary teachers entered their classrooms in September 1998 with new curriculum to teach, but no training or resources to support it.

Class size

R

Class sizes in Ontario have been increasing over the past decade. The Harris government has maintained that their actions to regulate the average class size of 25 in elementary will solve this problem. But classes are still too large for effective learning.

Extensive remediation required.

The Tories are misleading the public into believing there are only 25 children in each elementary class. Yet ETFO's class size contest revealed many classes with more than 35 students; some have as many as 42, 43 and even 50 students.

Report cards

R

New report cards were introduced with little time and attention being paid as to how teachers might actually use them. The huge amounts of energy teachers were forced to spend on the report cards would have been better spent on more worthwhile projects.

Problems ignored - Extensive remediation required.

Problems with technology and unrealistic deadlines forced teachers to spend dozens of extra hours hunched over the computer. The Minister of Education and Training refuses to accept any responsibility for any difficulties attached to the Province's new report cards.

Health Care

D-

The government has so seriously downsized this sector that lives are at risk. Dozens of hospitals have been threatened with closure; thousands of nurses have been laid off. The Harris government acknowledges the crisis, but blames the Federal Liberals. Harris could have funded health care but chose instead to press on with the tax cuts.

Has demonstrated some of the required knowledge and skills in limited ways.

Knowing Ontarians are very concerned about the state of their health care, the government is now desperately seeking to rehire the thousands of laid off nurses. However, like teachers, nurses are thoroughly demoralized, many have moved on to other careers and may not be eager to return.

Social Services

R

In a punitive war on the poor, this government cut support to single mothers and others in need by 21%. This meant 50,000 more children were coming to school hungry. In addition, the government cut Ontario's affordable housing program, pushing those who couldn't pay market rents onto the streets.

Extensive remediation required.

The Harris government has deliberately widened the gap between rich and poor in Ontario, believes it is on the right track and has no intention of making any changes in this area. Defeat at the ballot box would seem to be the only possible way to correct this situation. Needs help with conflict resolution.

Tax cuts

R

The total annual benefit from the Tories tax cut is \$738 for the median household. Offset against that benefit are these expenses incurred by the average household:
\$47 for drug plan user fees;
\$315 for increased property taxes - largely due to the province downloading its responsibilities to the municipalities; and
\$181 for increased payments to municipalities, universities and colleges, school boards and hospitals, such as sewer and water payments, for example.

Extensive remediation required - Number sense and numeration severely lacking.

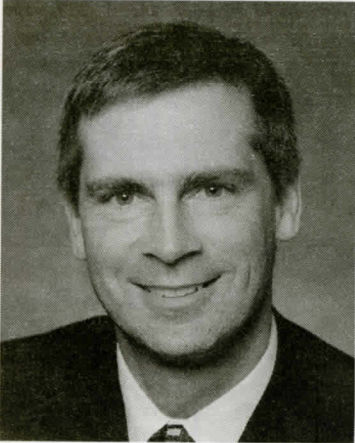
The province paid for the tax cut by increasing the provincial deficit. The interest on the money borrowed to pay for the tax cut costs each Ontario household \$198 this year. The cost of the tax cut - the loss in provincial revenues - is about \$6 billion a year. By the end of the 1999-2000 fiscal year, the interest costs to pay for the tax cut will be \$1.2 billion a year - exactly the same amount as has been cut from the education budget.

Learning skills: Independent work, initiative, homework completion, use of information, cooperation with others, conflict resolution, class participation, problem solving and goal setting to improve work all need more time and attention than this student is capable of giving them.

ETFO Asks the Leaders About the Issues

ETFO asked the Leaders of all three major Ontario political parties to respond to a questionnaire on education issues. The Progressive Conservatives chose not to respond. What follows are the responses received from the Ontario Liberal Party and the Ontario New Democratic Party.

ETFO: What is your party's position with respect to full-day Senior Kindergarten and to Junior Kindergarten?



Dalton McGuinty, Leader, Ontario Liberal Party.

Liberals: One year ago, Dalton McGuinty released First Steps, the Report of his Task Force on Children. In First Steps we committed to ensuring that Junior and Senior Kindergarten is offered by all boards. This is the recommendation of every major study on early learning and this is what we will do.



Howard Hampton, Leader, Ontario New Democrat Party.

New Democrats: Ontario's New Democrats have a strong commitment to early childhood education, the beginning of a system of life-long learning. We would reverse the cuts the Conserva-

tive government has made to Junior and Senior Kindergarten.

ETFO: Will your party commit additional money to lower class sizes, particularly in the early years?

Liberals: Lowering class sizes, especially in the early years, is an important goal. By fully funding Junior Kindergarten, I will ensure that it is available province-wide, at class-size levels appropriate for four year olds. We are concluding our consultation on this issue and will be announcing our specific proposals in the near future as part of the election platform. Specific funding commitments will be contained in our election platform.

New Democrats: Yes. Through our Dialogue for Change policy development process, we developed an education policy that is perfectly clear: "Provide funding to reduce maximum class sizes in early years of education, without increasing class sizes in later years."

ETFO: What is your party's position on universal, non-profit child care?

Liberals: Experts agree that the first three or four years are essential to a child's long term development. They tell us not only how valuable it is to get these first few years right, but also how damaging it can be for children when they don't get the help they need at an early age.

A child's success at school depends on their readiness to learn before they enter grade school. Early childhood education, particularly junior kindergarten, is indispensable. This is why our First Steps report included recommendations to help get children off to a good start, including: integrating not-for-profit childcare into the publicly funded school system; providing incentives to encourage employers to provide family friendly workplaces including access to quality, on-site, not-for-profit childcare; fully funding junior kindergarten and making it available province-wide; establishing pilot projects to provide greater access to after-school care; and recognizing the role of the schools as a

"Community Hub" for child services.

New Democrats: The NDP has always supported universal non-profit child care as a social right and an essential component of a productive and prosperous society. Working families need quality, regulated, non-profit child care in order to contribute as productive employees.

The NDP's commitment to public education will help to protect and expand non-profit Early Childhood Education and ensure public schools have funding to enable child care centres within them to operate.

ETFO: Does your party support free collective bargaining for teachers? Does your party support teachers' right to strike?

Liberals: Yes to both questions. Treating teachers with respect means recognizing their right to strike, allowing the collective bargaining process to work and always acting in good faith.

New Democrats: Yes to both questions.

ETFO: Does your party believe changes should be made to the education funding formula for elementary and secondary schools? If yes, what changes?

Liberals: Yes. The turmoil that has resulted from the government's funding formula leads to one clear conclusion: a one-size fits all cookie-cutter approach to funding does not work for Ontario's diverse education system.

The funding formula isn't working. It is forcing the closure of neighbourhood schools and strangling boards with its lack of flexibility. It needs to be changed and we will change it.

We have made a number of commitments to specific funding reinvestments for junior kindergarten, special education, English as a second language, adult education, school-based professionals and paraprofessionals and reintegration of school-based childcare.

In addition to funding from the province, a McGuinty government will also ensure that communities have the ability to raise a limited amount of funds locally for

their local education priorities.

We are concluding our consultations on this issue and will be announcing our specific proposal in the near future as part of the election platform.

New Democrats: Yes. Our Party's commitment to public education supports:

- Cutting university and college tuition fees for 140,000 college students and 225,000 university students by 10%. University students will save an average of \$340 yearly. College students will save \$170. Make this part of an immediate \$180 million down payment toward bringing Ontario's spending on post-secondary education up to the national average.

- Investing \$360 million immediately to help keep community schools open; protect junior kindergarten and early childhood education; and adequately support special needs education. This is an important first step toward repairing the damage caused by the Harris Conservatives in cutting \$1.4 billion from our schools.

- Changing the school funding formula so it includes vital school functions, such as: the use of school facilities for such education-related activities as school council meetings, child care, and night and summer school classes; sufficient space for low-enrolment special education classes; and dedicated rooms for physiotherapy, speech and language assistance, lifting and changing of students with disabilities, and other needs.

ETFO: What role does your party see for school councils and for school boards? What relation should there be between the two?

Liberals: I have committed to restoring the advisory role of parent councils. Parental involvement is an important part of the school community. Parents need a voice in their children's education. Parents have told us they want their role to be advisory, that the day-to-day operations of schools are best left to the experts. We agree.

School boards have played an important role in determining priorities for a community's schools.

The Mike Harris govern-

ment has taken away this ability. A Dalton McGuinty government will give boards the flexibility they need to respond to local needs and priorities.

Education must be delivered by means of a partnership. School boards, parent councils are important parts of that partnership, as are teachers and government.

New Democrats: We support school councils; in fact, our government followed the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Learning that councils be established in all schools. However, we believe the role of school councils should be advisory in nature.

ETFO: Should local school boards have taxing authority to fund education?

Liberals: I have committed to giving boards the ability to raise a limited amount of funds locally for local education priorities.

New Democrats: Yes. New Democrats believe that school boards are the appropriate mechanism for putting control of schools where it belongs - in local communities. We would bring stability to Ontario's education system by restoring local democratic control, adequate and equitable funding, and respect for public education. Equitable education funding does not mean lowering it to the level of the poorest school boards. While education should be provincially funded, local school boards should be enabled to raise up to 10% above the provincial grant to meet local needs - with safeguards for disparities in local tax bases.

ETFO: Does your party support the creation of charter schools in Ontario?

Liberals: No.

New Democrats: No. Our policy is clear. New Democrats will defend public education as a cornerstone of a democratic and classless society and firmly rejects the privatization of education. Bill 160 is, in reality, the framework for the privatization of education in Ontario, whether through charter schools, vouchers, private schools, or private colleges and universities. We are committed to repealing Bill 160. □

ETFO VOICE

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Kids deserve better.

ONTARIO
YOURS TO
RECOVER

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www.etfo.on.ca

Provincial Election 1999




The Harris government has cut more than \$1.2 billion from Ontario's classrooms.

That money is being used to pay for tax cuts that benefit the wealthy most of all.

Kids Deserve Better

Vote for candidates:

- **who are committed to public education.**
- **who will take action to eliminate child poverty in Ontario.**

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