

Welcome to ETFO

A guide for **members in their first five**
years with the Elementary Teachers'
Federation of Ontario





Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO)

136 Isabella Street | Toronto, ON Canada | M4Y 0B5

416-962-3836 | 1-888-838-3836

Copyright © 2025 Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario



etfo.ca



ETFOprovincialoffice



@ETFOeducators



@ETFOeducators

FIRST IN FIVE CONFERENCES

Are you an ETFO member in your first five years?

If so, you should know that your union offers dedicated programs and conferences to support your involvement, leadership growth, and understanding of ETFO.

To register for any of these events, visit events.etfo.org.

Visions Program for DECE, ESP, or PSP

**October 7–8
2025**

**April 23–24
2026**



This multi-session program for women highlights union involvement and focuses on developing an anti-oppressive and feminist framework while building leadership and activism.

Introduction to Collective Bargaining

**January 17
2026**

Learn how the bargaining process works and how ETFO conducts bargaining at the central level (with the provincial government) and local level (with school boards).

Gearing Up! New Member Orientation

**April 14 and 15
2026**



Consider this ETFO 101, for women members seeking to know more about their union, workplace rights, and ways to get involved in the Federation.

Per ETFO provincial guidelines, the costs for member release time, travel, meals, and accommodation are covered for these conferences.

For information on new member services, email Denise Hammond, dhammond@etfo.org.



ETFO Equity Statement

It is the goal of the ETFO to work with others to create schools, communities, and a society free from all forms of individual and systemic discrimination. To further this goal, ETFO defines equity as fairness achieved through proactive measures, which results in equality, promotes diversity, and fosters respect and dignity for all.

ETFO's Equity Initiatives

ETFO is a union committed to social justice, equity, and inclusion. The Federation's commitment to these principles is reflected in the initiatives it has established as organizational priorities, such as: ETFO's multi-year strategy on anti-Black racism; two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning education; and addressing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit issues. ETFO establishes its understanding of these issues within an anti-oppressive framework.

The Federation ensures its work incorporates the voices and experiences of marginalized communities, addresses individual and systemic inequities, and supports ETFO members as they strive for equity and social justice in their professional and personal lives. Using the anti-oppressive framework is one of the ways ETFO is operationalizing its Equity Statement.

Definition of an Anti-Oppressive Framework

An anti-oppressive framework is the method and process in which we understand how systems of oppression such as colonialism, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, and ableism can result in individual discriminatory actions and structural/ systemic inequalities for certain groups in society.

Anti-oppressive practices and goals seek to recognize and dismantle such discriminatory actions and power imbalances. Anti-oppressive practices and this framework should seek to guide the Federation's work with an aim to identify strategies and solutions to deconstruct power and privilege in order to mitigate and address the systemic inequalities that often operate simultaneously and unconsciously at the individual, group, and institutional or union level.

ETFO Human Rights Statement

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario is committed to:

- providing an environment for members that is free from harassment and discrimination at all provincial and local Federation sponsored activities;
- fostering the goodwill and trust necessary to protect the rights of all individuals within the organization;
- neither tolerating nor condoning behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of individuals or the integrity of relationships; and
- promoting mutual respect, understanding, and co-operation as the basis of interaction among all members.

Harassment and discrimination on the basis of a prohibited ground are violations of the Ontario *Human Rights Code* and are illegal.

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario will not tolerate any form of harassment or discrimination, as defined by the Ontario *Human Rights Code*, at provincial or local Federation sponsored activities.

ETFO Land Acknowledgment



In the Spirit of Truth and Reconciliation, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario acknowledges that we are gathered today on the customary and traditional lands of the Indigenous Peoples of this territory.

LETTER FROM YOUR PRESIDENT



Welcome to the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), the largest union representing teachers in Canada!

With 84,000 members, we work together to build a stronger, more connected, and more powerful union to defend educators, the profession and public schools. As a union committed to social justice, equity, and inclusion, these core principles are reflected in our campaigns, advocacy, and lobbying, along with the defence and professional development offered to members.

With the alarming rise of hate in our communities, your provincial Executive and members at the Annual Meeting have affirmed our commitment and priority to fight back and educate against the powerful views that are harming so many. ETFO's ongoing efforts to address anti-Black racism include celebrating Black excellence and joy and recognizing the intersectional identities of Black members as key priorities in this work. With our anti-oppressive framework guiding us, our federation continues to play an active role in communities, demanding equity and working to create a better world for all.

For almost 30 years, ETFO has fought for – and won – many improvements to working conditions for members through assertive collective bargaining and proactive political lobbying. These successes include securing the 200 minutes of preparation time that exist today and primary class size caps through the 2004 round of bargaining, reductions in class size averages in grades 4 to 8 during the 2008 round, and a staffing model for the new Full-Day Kindergarten program that included designated early childhood educators (DECEs) in 2009. This year, we are celebrating the 15th anniversary of DECEs as members of the Federation and the countless contributions these educators make to students and public education.

Despite wins throughout our history and some gains in our last round of provincial bargaining, including preservation of sick leave, funding for 401 new specialist teaching positions, and increased wages, the work of our union remains more driven than ever. After seven years of funding cuts to public education, amounting to approximately \$6.35 billion, the crisis caused by the Ford government can no longer be ignored.

This is a vital time for our union to come together and act in solidarity to defend our profession and public education, and to demand improved learning conditions for students. And it is your active involvement that will make an incredible difference because united, together, I know we can win!

Your current central collective agreement expires on August 31, 2026. Preparation for the next round of bargaining is well underway. ETFO has established class size as a significant bargaining issue. Look for our Smaller Classes, Big Difference campaign advertising in your community and help spread the word to ensure the public is informed and engaged in our fight for students.

Thank you for all that you do as a professional in public education. It is members like you who make our public education system one of the strongest in the world. And it will be you – through our unified collective action – who will continue to defend and strengthen public education.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'David Mastin'. The signature is fluid and stylized, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

David Mastin
President



WELCOME TO YOUR UNION: THE ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' FEDERATION OF ONTARIO

Across Ontario, the union represents 84,000 teachers, occasional teachers, designated early childhood educators (DECEs), education support personnel (ESP), and professional support personnel (PSP) who work in 2,400 public elementary schools.

As a member, you are supported and defended by the union provincially and on a regional, school-board level by one of the 76 ETFO locals. The name of your local is associated with your district school board.

This booklet provides helpful information for your career in the public education system. It also outlines the work of your union, the services available to you, and a few ways you can get involved. In your workplace and through your local, you and other members build ETFO's power when you make your voice heard to ensure your rights are upheld and protected.

For more information, register for the member secure site at members.etfo.ca.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHAT IS ETFO?

Over the past 25-plus years, ETFO has become Canada's strongest and most influential teacher union.

As a provincial labour organization representing elementary educators including teachers, occasional teachers, designated early childhood educators, education support personnel, and professional support personnel, our main objective is to advocate for members and their rights at work. Union representatives negotiate the central (province-wide) and local school board collective agreements. These two legal documents outline your rights as a worker.

To empower members, your union also provides a range of membership services, including workplace representation, professional development and training, as well as advocacy, advice, and legal support to address workplace issues that may arise.

While ETFO's primary objective is to represent, advocate for, and defend you and the membership of 84,000 elementary educators and education workers in public schools across Ontario, your union also works to promote the economic and labour rights of all workers, educate and advocate for equity and social justice within Ontario's public education system and broader society, and take action to defend public services.

ETFO'S PURPOSE

The objects that define ETFO's purpose and guide the work of the union are contained in the **Constitution**, which is accessible online at etfo.ca/about-us/governance.

As part of the union's democratic process, members attending the Annual Meeting determine and approve the priorities that guide the activities and initiatives undertaken by ETFO. A complete list of the ETFO's priorities can be viewed at etfo.ca/about-us/who-we-are.



BUILDING A MORE JUST SOCIETY

ETFO is a leader in promoting dialogue and action on equity and social justice in classrooms, schools, and communities. Along with professional resources and training on human rights issues to assist members in building inclusive classrooms, ETFO publicly promotes social justice causes and supports coalitions and grassroots groups with similar aims to advance education interests and the rights of all people, especially those who have historically faced discrimination and barriers to success.

Every year, ETFO produces new equity resources and offers a diverse range of programs and conferences that are available to you as a union member. For a complete listing of upcoming events, please visit the dedicated ETFO events site at events.etfo.org. To ensure all members have equitable access to participate, release time, travel, accommodation, and dependent care are covered by the union for most programs (check event details to confirm).

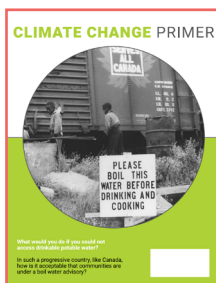
Working towards a more just society with curriculum

As a leader in social justice, the union produces several resources for your classroom use.

Here are a few of the recently released curriculum resources to consider incorporating into your classroom. To access the resources, log in to the members' site at members.etfo.ca.



Anti-Oppressive Framework: A Primer



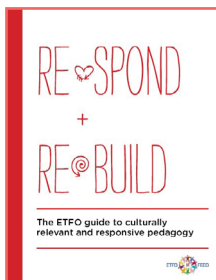
Climate Change Primer



Healing Conversations: A Collection of Activities for the Primary Classroom



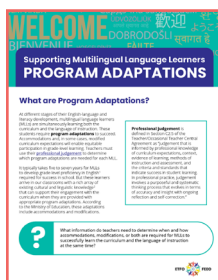
Race Matters: Teaching Students to be Race-Conscious



Respond and Rebuild: The ETFO Guide to Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy resources



Special Education Needs in the Regular Classroom – Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder



Supporting English Language Learners resources



The Places We Meet: Embedding Intersectional Feminism in the Classroom, Kindergarten to Grade 8

Other resources can be purchased through shop.etfo.ca for a nominal cost. ETFO's online store also offers clothing, accessories, and gifts to show your union pride. Visit shop.etfo.ca to see what's available.

02

YOU AND YOUR UNION



As a teacher or occasional teacher working in a public elementary school, or as an education worker in a workplace where ETFO holds bargaining rights, you are automatically a member of the union.

Membership in a union entails supporting the union's priorities, purpose, and values; respecting the rights of other members; adhering to our code of professional conduct; and contributing member fees that help finance the Federation's programs and services. Solidarity within ETFO and with other labour organizations is a core value that strengthens your working rights and our union.

ETFO's Constitution outlines the rights, obligations, and privileges that every member has. For information about your specific rights and entitlements or workplace issues, please contact your ETFO local.

Contact information for all bargaining units and ETFO locals can be found on the ETFO website at etfo.ca/locals.



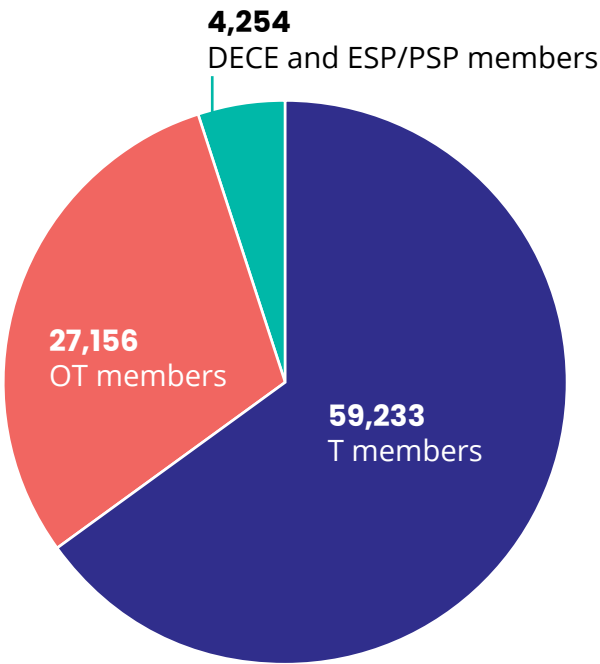
ETFO BY THE NUMBERS

Numbers are based on the 2024-25 year.
ETFO represents more than **84,000 members**, including 71,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) members.

- T – permanent teacher
- OT – occasional teacher
- DECE – designated early childhood educator
- ESP – education support personnel
- PSP – professional support personnel

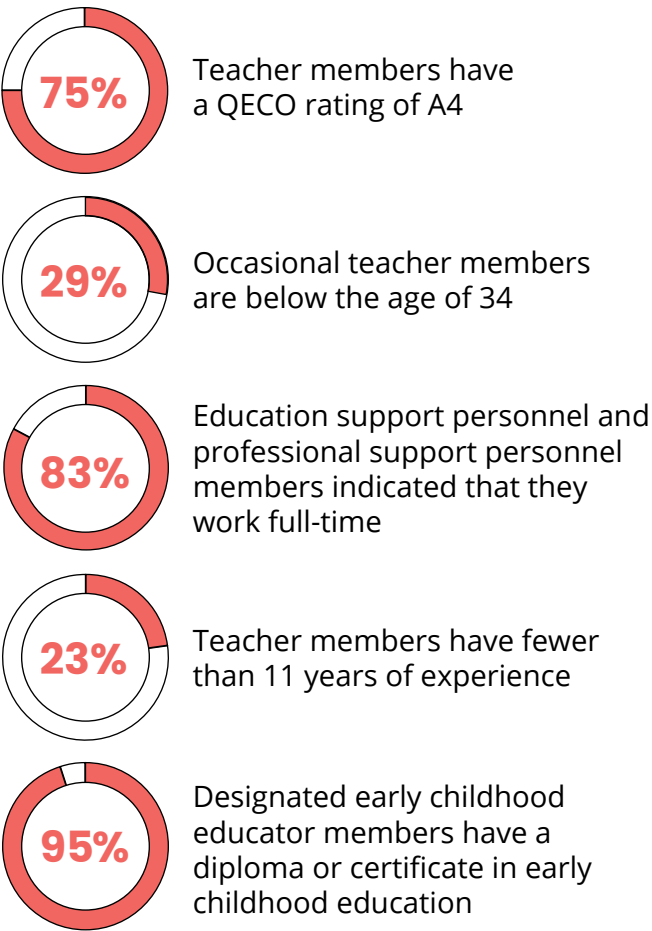
Demographics of membership based on self-identification from 2024-25 annual member survey:

0.94%	0.03%
First Nations	Inuit
0.73%	4.26%
Metis	person with a disability
11.98%	4.0%
racialized members	2SLGBTQ+

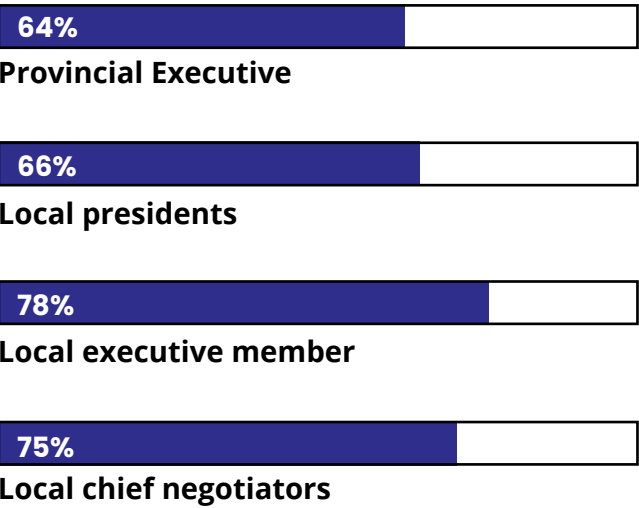


Number of members in each education group within ETFO

According to the 2024-25 annual member survey:



In 2024-25,
82% of members identified as women



DESIGNATED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR MEMBERS (DECE)



This year marks 15 years of Full-Day Kindergarten in Ontario, and the 15th anniversary of DECEs joining our union!

Since 2010, ETFO has represented DECEs in workplaces where the union has bargaining rights. DECEs are covered under both a local collective agreement and a central education worker collective agreement.

Early childhood educators are an integral part of the education system in Ontario, primarily working in Kindergarten and early years classrooms in partnership with teachers.

ETFO offers programs and services for our DECE members, including workshops, professional development, and Kindergarten resources. While general programs and conferences are available to all members, there are a few designated learning opportunities for DECEs.

Resources for DECEs

- The etfopley.ca site for Kindergarten teams offers a wealth of professional learning in the early years (PLEY) resources, videos, and more.
- An Ounce of Prevention: Kindergarten - This conference designed for members working in a Kindergarten program provides education in professional boundaries, rights and responsibilities, and mental health.
- [*An ETFO Guide to Your Role as a Kindergarten DECE*](#) and [*Supporting the Kindergarten Team Partnership*](#) are available on the etfopley.ca site in the resource section.

- The [*PRS Matters bulletin DECE Performance Appraisal Learning Plans and Continuous Professional Learning*](#) is helpful, as it is tailored to your unique DECE role. All PRS Matters bulletins can be accessed at etfo.ca/prs-matters-bulletins.
- The *Building and Enriching Partnerships in Kindergarten* resource supports the ongoing professional learning of members through its use of partnership stories, stories from the field, research connections, and reflection questions. Order a copy through shop.etfo.ca.



ESP/PSP MEMBERS

The number of children in Ontario's schools who require support is on the rise, and ETFO's education support personnel (ESP) and professional support personnel (PSP) members are a small but mighty force answering the call.

As an ESP/PSP, you are covered by local and central collective agreements, which entitle you to rights and protections, including workplace safety provisions. To learn more about your employer's responsibilities to keep you safe in the workplace, and for tips on how to access support, visit etfohealthandsafety.ca or [contact your ETFO local](#). If you need additional advice or support, the provincial staff in Professional Relations Services are also a great resource.

Resources for ESPs/PSPs

The provincial union offers programs and conferences to assist with your professional learning and development. Most provincial programs are available to you with release time, travel, and accommodation paid for, and dependant care reimbursement, per ETFO provincial policy.

For a list of upcoming events, be sure to check the members' site at members.etfo.ca.

OCCASIONAL TEACHER MEMBERS

As an occasional teacher (OT), you are part of ETFO and entitled to rights and great membership services. Your working rights are outlined in the individual local collective agreement of each school board that you work for and in the central collective agreement.

Occasional teacher collective agreements will typically contain provisions on the occasional teacher list, the call-out system, the timetable of the occasional teacher, leaves, insured benefits, and other working conditions and entitlements.

If you encounter a workplace issue, be sure to contact your ETFO local and check the agreement for that specific board.

Resources for OTs

Programs and conferences the provincial union offers are available to you with release time, travel, and accommodation covered, and dependant care reimbursement, as per ETFO provincial policy.

- ETFO's annual occasional teacher conference is open to all occasional and long-term occasional members. This professional learning program includes a series of workshops and presentations with practical strategies, resources, and networking opportunities tailored to the needs and interests of occasional teachers.
- There is a dedicated OT site featuring resources and tools to meet a variety of your professional needs. Access the site at members.etfo.ca/resources/occasional-teachers.
- You may also find the PRS Matters bulletin *Advice to ETFO Occasional Employees* useful in your role, as it provides tips, suggestions, and resources for your work in schools.

TEACHER MEMBERS

Working as a teacher in the elementary panel of a public district school board includes making sure you have all qualifications and certifications in place and that you understand the expectations, rights, and professional responsibilities of teachers.

Teachers newly hired to a board may be on probation for a specified time. The length of the probationary period, if it exists, will be outlined in the collective agreement that has been negotiated between your ETFO local and the board. Every district school board must provide a [New Teacher Induction Program \(NTIP\)](#) for certified new teachers (including teachers trained out of province) who have been hired into full-time or part-time permanent positions.

Teacher collective agreements have clauses on working conditions such as the scheduling of supervision time and preparation time, leave of absence provisions, insured benefits, seniority, transfer, probationary period, and much more.

Learn more about your union by talking to your workplace steward, reaching out to your local, or visiting the [members' secure site](#) to explore all the information available.

Resources for teachers

[Qualifications Evaluation Council of Ontario \(QECO\)](#) evaluates eligible teachers based on specific academic criteria and places them in one of five salary categories (Category A to Category A4). QECO will issue a statement of evaluation, which you must submit to your school board for appropriate placement on the salary grid.

Permanent teachers have a comprehensive health and life benefits package and a pension plan as part of their compensation. Newly hired eligible permanent members and eligible long-term occasional teachers (LTOs) will receive enrolment information and notifications from OTIP sent to their board email. For more information, please visit the [ETFO ELHT website](#).

The provincial union offers several professional learning opportunities throughout the school year including equity programs, curriculum-based conferences, and leadership development. These learning opportunities are also available to you and all members with release time, travel, and accommodation covered, and dependant care reimbursement, as per ETFO provincial policy.

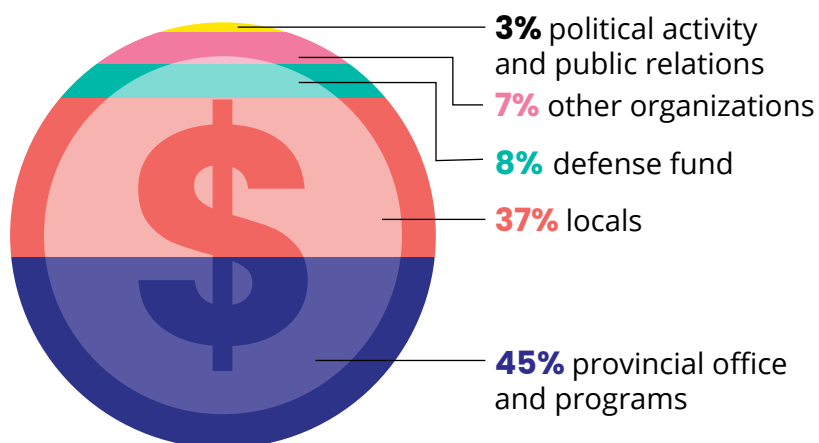
To stay informed about upcoming events and learning opportunities, visit events.etfo.org.

YOUR UNION FEES

Union fees are determined by member delegates at the ETFO Annual Meeting held each August. The member fees for the 2025-26 school year are 1.4 per cent of gross salary.

The school board directly deducts your union fee from your pay cheque and submits it to the ETFO provincial office to confirm your membership. Fees are used to fund programs, operate membership services including professional development and training, provide advocacy and representation for all members, and undertake government lobbying and political action.

Annual provincial budget 2025-26



WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

ETFO is a powerful union because members are informed, active, and show solidarity. It's never too early in your career to get involved or make a difference in your workplace or union.

Here are a few ways to activate your ETFO membership:

Stay informed



Read the ETFO bulletin board in your workplace and share updates/news with others



Speak with your workplace steward or local executive



Subscribe to the union's biweekly e-newsletter - *ETFO News*



Attend in-school meetings called by the steward



Log in to the members' secure site at members.etfo.ca to find new classroom resources, upcoming events, and important updates on the work of the union

CONNECT WITH YOUR ETFO LOCAL



Attend new member functions hosted by your local.



Participate in professional development events and workshops offered by your local.



Attend your ETFO local general meetings and annual meeting and bring a colleague.



Volunteer to join a school committee or assist with a project or event.



Get involved in social justice and community activities through your local.



Volunteer to be a health and safety representative or a steward.



Share on social media to amplify ETFO's message to defend public education and advocate for student supports.



Wear your I am ETFO button and connect with other union members in your community.

Let's keep our
UNION
strong!

Union learning opportunities

Enhance your professional learning with an ETFO provincial conference or workshop. For many programs, the union pays for release time, travel, and accommodation to help you access these resources.



Enrol in an ETFO Additional Qualification (AQ) course



Apply to be a member of one of the more than 30 provincial standing committees



Write an article or a book review for ETFO's magazine, *Voice*



Apply to be a curriculum writer, facilitator, or a blog contributor for the Heart and Art of Teaching and Learning website

However you decide to get involved with ETFO, remember the union is better when you are informed and active in it!



Stay connected

It is critical that your local and provincial union have your up-to-date personal contact information in the ETFO database. Update your information with Member Records using the email below or QR code.



Your personal contact details will only be used to provide vital workplace updates, including news about your collective agreement, professional learning, membership services, and government announcements.

If your information has changed, needs updating, or you are not receiving the biweekly *ETFO News* e-newsletter to your personal account, submit your contact details in one of the following ways:

- 1 Go to etfo.ca and search for the “[Update Member Information Form](#)”
- 2 Email memberrecords@etfo.org with your ETFO ID number, if known, or your OCT number, as well as your current information including your personal email and mailing addresses and phone number, and your school board
- 3 Call Member Records at 1-888-838-3836, extension 3806.

Access the members' secure site

In addition to ETFO's public website, there is a dedicated site for members: members.etfo.ca. This is where you can access resources and information, including details about upcoming opportunities just for members, classroom resources, professional supports and curriculum guides, member advisories, and more.

Registration is the first step to getting access!

Go to members.etfo.ca, click the red “Register Today” button, and follow the steps. You will need your ETFO ID number to register.

If you have any questions during the process, email webadmin@etfo.org.

Get social

The provincial union and many locals have individual accounts on various social media platforms to share important information and communicate with members. In addition to keeping members informed about conferences and important professional updates, ETFO provincial uses digital platforms to demand action from the government and school boards.

Use your voice as a member to amplify the union's key messages to your own followers. And remember your role as a professional educator when you are using social media. Personal information, images of students, or school information should not be shared online.

To understand your rights and social media use, view the PRS Matters bulletin *Electronic Communication and Social Media – Advice to Members*. Find all PRS Matters bulletins at etfo.ca/prs-matters-bulletins.

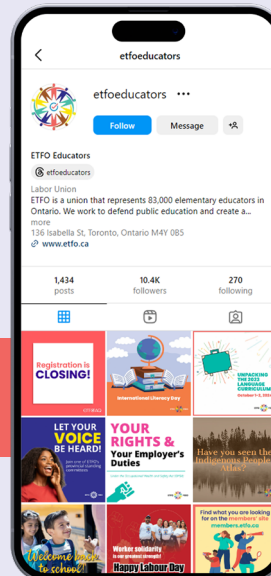
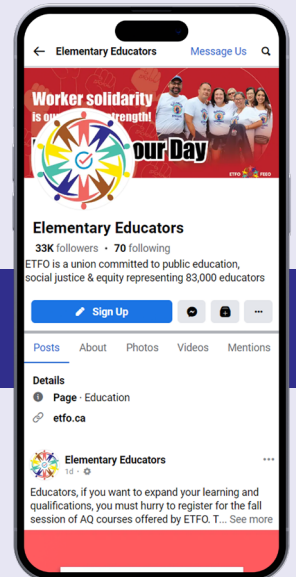


Find us and

FOLLOW



Facebook.com/etfoprovincial



[@ETFOeducators](https://www.instagram.com/ETFOeducators)



[@ETFOeducators](https://twitter.com/ETFOeducators)



OUR STRUCTURE

LOCAL REPRESENTATION

76

ETFO locals across Ontario



separate locals for teachers, OTs, DECEs, and ESP/PSPs



locals generally correspond geographically with district school boards



two or more bargaining units may be combined within a local in some school authorities

Your local is your union “home base.” If you have questions related to your collective agreement or need help addressing workplace and board-related issues, contact your local first. Find your local on the ETFO website at etfo.ca/locals.

Each local has an elected executive body to represent their members. The executive includes a president, executive members, committees, and other positions to meet the needs of the local membership. As a member, you have the right to vote and run for a position with the local executive, attend local meetings and events, and volunteer – so get involved!

WORKPLACE REPRESENTATION

Steward



union representative in the workplace



direct contact and advocate for you and your rights at work



responsible for monitoring the implementation of the collective agreement



advises members of local and provincial services and programs offered by the union

Stewards are your on-site union representatives. You can connect with them to ask about workplace issues or concerns, but note that, as stewards are often teacher members, they are limited in their capacity to advise OTs and members of other bargaining units. If you are an OT, DECE, or ESP/PSP member looking for information about your specific rights and entitlements, workplace issues, or collective agreement, please contact your ETFO local.

Health and safety representative

This workplace volunteer is there to help advise and assist you in knowing your health and safety rights. Speak with this representative about any concerns you have, and visit etfohealthandsafety.ca for information and advice on how to address workplace hazards or if you feel unsafe at work.

PROVINCIAL REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

The Representative Council is composed of the president from each local and additional representatives from a local depending on its size or number of members.

3x

meets three times a year



responsible for reviewing the proposed annual budget



recommends policy and actions to the provincial Executive or Annual Meeting



approves bargaining goals



influences initiatives and work of the union

Do you have a workplace question or concern?

Contact your ETFO local today!



ETFO.CA/LOCALS



PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE

The provincial Executive acts as the board of directors for the union and meets regularly throughout the year. It is responsible for conducting the business of the Federation (including budgetary matters not decided by the Annual Meeting), receiving reports and recommendations from committees, authorizing legal support for members in employment-related cases, and carrying out a variety of other responsibilities.

elected every two years by delegates at the Annual Meeting

14

members on the Executive

4

full-time released officers: president, first vice-president, two vice-presidents (one VP position designated for women)

1

ETFO representative (table officer) to the Ontario Teachers' Federation

9

additional elected members from locals/bargaining units across the province

Three of the Executive positions are open to women only, including one that is designated for a woman who also self-identifies as belonging to one of ETFO's designated groups: First Nations, Métis, or Inuit (FNMI); member with a disability; two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, plus (2SLGBTQ+); or racialized. One of the other positions is also designated for a member who self-identifies as belonging to one of the designated groups.

Released Executive officers 2025-27

President, David Mastin
Durham Teacher Local

First Vice-President, Shirley Bell
Kawartha Pine Ridge Teacher Local

Vice-President (Woman), Gundi Barbour
Upper Grand Teacher Local

Vice-President, Mary Fowler
Durham Teacher Local

ETFO Table Officer, Nathan Core
Waterloo Occasional Teacher Local

Executive members 2025-27

David Berger
Kawartha Pine Ridge Teacher Local

Manjit Deol
Peel Teacher Local

Liana Holm
Rainbow Teacher Local

Shideh Houshmandi
Hamilton-Wentworth Teacher Local

Heather Latam
Greater Essex County Occasional Teacher Local

Carolyn Proulx-Wootton
Grand Erie Teacher Local

Mario Spagnuolo
Greater Essex County Teacher Local

Mike Thomas
Thames Valley Teacher Local

Sylvia van Campen
Upper Canada Occasional Teacher Local

PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

The administrative leaders and provincial staff manage the day-to-day operations of the union. The senior administrators are also part of the provincial Executive in an unelected capacity.

The dedicated staff in the provincial office work in different service areas to represent the needs of members, offer advocacy and support, and provide high-quality programming, services, and professional learning opportunities approved by the Executive and the Annual Meeting. Services offered provincially are in addition to the support your local provides.

Senior administrative team

General Secretary, Sharon O'Halloran
Deputy General Secretary, Lorna Larmour
Deputy General Secretary, Sabrina Sawyer



HOW YOUR UNION WORKS FOR YOU

PROTECTING YOUR RIGHTS AND DEFENDING WORKING CONDITIONS

Your collective agreement is a contract negotiated on your behalf; it is a legally binding document that identifies your workplace rights, entitlements, and protections.

Under the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014*, ETFO is the designated bargaining agency for all elementary teachers in the English-language public education system and all DECEs, ESPs, and PSPs employed in every school board in Ontario for which ETFO is the union that holds bargaining rights.

There are two parts to of your collective agreement:

Part A is the central agreement that ETFO provincial leadership and staff negotiate with the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (for teachers/OTs) or the Council of Trustees' Associations (for DECEs/ESPs/PSPs) and the provincial government. The central agreement details rights for all ETFO members.

Part B is a separate local agreement bargained by your local and ETFO provincial with your school board that outlines the rights and procedures that apply only to your board. Since Part B is negotiated with each board, there are often differences among local collective agreements. If you work for multiple boards, be sure to review the agreement for each specific board.

Collective agreements are generally bargained every two or three years, though the process can take longer if the negotiating parties are unable to come to agreement on key issues.

If you have any questions or concerns about your collective agreement or its implementation, contact your local. Learn more about the bargaining process at etfocb.ca.

Every member has a role to uphold the collective agreement. Be sure to read it, maintain it, and defend it. Our union is stronger when members are active and informed!



Collective bargaining updates

The current collective agreement expires August 31, 2026.

You can get news and updates in the lead-up to and during provincial rounds of collective bargaining in a variety of ways, including:

- etfocb.ca – the dedicated central bargaining site
- CB e-newsletter sent to your personal email inbox
- ETFO CB Facebook group – this is a closed private group for members; to join, you must request access
- central bargaining bulletins distributed through your ETFO local communication channels

ADVOCACY AND REPRESENTATION

While educators have unionized to protect workers' rights, unions in Ontario and Canada have also organized collectively into organizations to fight for better working and living conditions for everyone. ETFO and all its members are represented by different organizations on provincial, national, and international levels.

Provincial representation

ETFO is a member of the [Ontario Teachers' Federation](#), an umbrella organization of more than 160,000 teacher members who are represented by one of four affiliated education unions:



Association des enseignantes
et des enseignants Franco-
Ontariens (AEFO)



Elementary Teachers'
Federation of Ontario (ETFO)



Ontario English Catholic
Teachers' Association (OECTA)



Ontario Secondary School
Teachers' Federation (OSSTF)



**ONTARIO
FEDERATION OF
LABOUR**

ETFO and all members are directly part of the [Ontario Federation of Labour](#), a labour body that represents over one million Ontario workers belonging to more than 53 affiliated unions in addition to ETFO. The OFL works to push the provincial government to strengthen public services and advance working rights and equity in the workplace. Visit ofl.ca for more information.

National representation



The [Canadian Teachers' Federation](#) represents approximately 370,000 educators across the country. The CTF works to uphold teaching as a profession and advocates for adequate resourcing, labour rights, and social justice across Canada and around the world.



ETFO is also an active member of the [Canadian Labour Congress](#), the largest labour organization in Canada, representing more than three million workers across the country. Explore canadianlabour.ca to learn more.

International representation

The voices of educators working in Canada are represented by [Education International](#). On a global scale, EI represents more than 32 million teachers and education workers from 383 member organizations in 178 countries and territories.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Throughout the year, ETFO offers programs, workshops, and leadership development opportunities to our members through the provincial office and in partnership with locals.

Some of the union's signature conferences include:



...and still we rise – An annual leadership conference for women focusing on social justice, equity, and union involvement.



Code Black: Leadership Program for Black Members – Intended for Black members to explore their leadership abilities, develop new skills, and increase their involvement within the Federation.



Conscious Classrooms: Responding to Gender-Based Violence – A two-day workshop examining how children are affected by gender-based violence against women, and what educators can do to help.



An Ounce of Prevention: Kindergarten – A two-day conference for members working in Kindergarten who are interested in strengthening their understanding of the Kindergarten program and the Kindergarten teaching partnership.



First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education Symposium – This annual learning forum provides members with an opportunity to learn about FNMI pedagogies, resources, and teaching practices.



Occasional Teacher Conference – Includes a series of workshops and presentations with practical strategies, resources, and networking opportunities tailored to the needs and interests of daily and long-term occasional teachers.



Summer Academy – Offered throughout July and August across the province, with more than 40 three-day professional learning courses designed and presented by members for members, including courses that highlight equity and social justice.

Find more information about conferences and upcoming programs at events.etfo.org.



Additional Qualification (AQ) courses

ETFO AQ is a leading provider of professional development courses in Canada. Content is developed by educators who understand effective and practical teaching strategies that work within the realities of today's classroom.

As an accredited AQ course provider, ETFO AQ follows the curriculum guidelines and hours of study as set by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) and required by legislation.

Visit the ETFO AQ website, etfo-aq.ca, for more information and to view the full course catalogue.

Contact the **Qualifications Evaluation Council of Ontario** (QECO) to learn more about how it evaluates teacher academic credentials (including AQ and ABQ courses) for salary purposes. QECO is recognized by all boards for teacher salary grid placement.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

ETFO plays a crucial role in helping its members ensure that their workplaces are safe and healthy. Your union offers support, training, and resources on a wide range of topics, including psychosocial hazards, refusing unsafe work, and addressing [violence in schools](#). Visit etfohealthandsafety.ca for more information.

Addressing workplace violence

Workplace violence is the biggest health and safety concern of ETFO members. Your union works to make sure that the government and school boards take responsibility for keeping workers safe from harm due to violence. You also play a crucial role in addressing violence in schools, and your union will support you and advocate to make sure that school is a safe place to work and learn.

1 **Report** all violent workplace incidents

Violence experienced by a worker, whether physical force, an attempt of physical force, or a threat of physical force, **must be reported** using the school board's online reporting system. This is true regardless of the age or abilities of the person who caused the violence.

3 **Refuse** unsafe work that is likely to endanger you

Danger due to workplace violence is not a part of being a teacher or education worker. Make sure you understand and use your right to refuse unsafe work.

2 **Recognize** workplace illness and injury

An injury or illness caused at work (including psychological impacts of work) is covered by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB). If you miss work or seek medical attention, make a WSIB claim.

Making schools and your workplace safe

All workers have the right to a safe workplace – it's the law, outlined in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA).

School boards and principals have the responsibility to take "every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker" and the OHSA provides workers three main rights:

KNOW: You have the right to be informed about hazards in your workplace, and how to stay safe.

PARTICIPATE: Identifying workplace hazards is the responsibility of every worker, and you have the right to take part in health and safety processes.

REFUSE: You have a right to refuse work if you have reason to believe that it is likely to endanger you. If you are a teacher, there are limitations on your right to refuse, as students cannot be left in unsafe situations.

PROFESSIONAL RELATIONS SERVICES

Professional Relations Services

PRS

Just a call away

Professional Relations Services (PRS) is available to you and all ETFO members as a protective service. Often, we refer to this confidential membership service as PRS.

The PRS staff team at the provincial office operates on a daily on-call schedule to provide you with information, advice, support, and intervention tools if you are experiencing professional difficulties.

Support is available on a wide range of issues, including performance appraisal, conflict resolution, duty to report, harassment and discrimination, allegations and complaints from your professional College.



Call the provincial
office at
416-962-3836 or
toll-free at
1-888-838-3836

PRS Matters bulletins

PRS Matters bulletins are designed to keep members informed about a variety of important legal and professional issues impacting education workers. Topics include:

- duty to report and obligations under the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*
- performance appraisals and evaluations
- using social media
- maternity and parental leaves

Find the [full index of PRS Matters](#) bulletins at About Us/Advice for Members on [etfo.ca](#).

Legal assistance card

The legal assistance card provides advice and information should you face an allegation related to your professional duties or employment responsibilities. It includes a statement you can use if you are contacted by the police or a Children's Aid Society (CAS) about an allegation, and the phone number for PRS. Emergency after-hours assistance is available.

To access this card, please contact your ETFO local.



YOUR ROLE IN THE PROFESSION

UNDERSTANDING YOUR PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT

Professional judgement is such an important concept for teachers that ETFO fought to have it enshrined as a right through bargaining. It is defined in Section C 2.5 of the Teacher/Occasional Teacher Central Agreement as follows:

Professional Judgement shall be defined as judgement that is informed by professional knowledge of curriculum expectations, context, evidence of learning, methods of instruction and assessment, and the criteria and standards that indicate success in student learning. In professional practice, judgement involves a purposeful and systematic thinking process that evolves in terms of accuracy and insight with ongoing reflection and self-correction.

As a result of legislation and policy, teachers have varying degrees of autonomy in exercising professional judgement. ETFO's position is that a supervisor can direct members to fulfil the duties and responsibilities listed in the document *Understanding Your Professional Judgement* available at members.etfo.ca, subject to the provisions of the collective agreement.

The Professional Judgement Matters series was created to support members in acting on and advocating for your professional judgement in specific contexts. These resources can be found at members.etfo.ca/resources.

If you have questions or concerns about professional judgement or think your ability to exercise your professional judgement is being challenged, reach out to your school steward or ETFO local. ETFO staff in Professional Relations Services (PRS) at the provincial office are also available to help. PRS can be reached at 416-962-3836 or 1-888-838-3836.

Duty to report

Under the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017*, members are legally obligated to immediately report suspicions of child abuse or neglect to their local children's aid society. The Ontario College of Teachers and the College of Early Childhood Educators have both issued professional advisories that contain helpful guidance and information.

Be prepared

Keep all documents related to your career in a safe and accessible place:

- Certificate of Registration from the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) and/or the College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE)
- college/university transcripts
- contract from your district school board and other correspondence related to your hiring and placement
- certificates from professional development activities
- copy of criminal record check/offence declaration
- Qualifications Evaluation Council of Ontario (QECO) evaluation
- documents related to your performance appraisals and evaluations
- information from your ETFO local
- Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP)
- Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System (OMERS)

YOUR BENEFITS AND PENSION



**ETFO Employee Life
and Health Trust (ELHT)
Benefits Plan**



**Ontario Teachers'
Pension Plan (OTPP)**



**Ontario Teachers
Insurance Plan (OTIP)**

**OTIP Occasional and
Casual Members (OCM)
Benefits Plan**



**Ontario Municipal
Employees Retirement
System (OMERS)**

EMPLOYEE LIFE AND HEALTH TRUST BENEFITS PLAN

Eligible members are entitled to coverage under the ETFO Employee Life and Health Trust (ETFO ELHT) benefits plan, which was established in accordance with the provisions of the ETFO central agreements for teachers/occasional teachers and DECEs/ESPs/PSPs.

The ETFO ELHT benefits plan offers comprehensive group health and dental, emergency out of country, and basic life/accident insurance coverage, as well as member-paid optional life insurance.

The benefits plan is governed by the ELHT board of trustees, which includes representatives from ETFO, the government, and the Ontario Public School Boards' Association.



etfo-elhtbenefits.ca



inquiries@etfo-elht.ca

ONTARIO TEACHERS' INSURANCE PLAN

The [Ontario Teachers' Insurance Plan \(OTIP\)](#), a not-for-profit organization created and governed by ETFO and the other three education affiliates in Ontario, acts as a third-party administrator to the ETFO ELHT benefits plan and Manulife acts as the claims payer.

Newly hired eligible permanent teacher members and eligible LTO teachers will receive enrolment information and notifications from OTIP via their board email.

To learn more, visit otip.com or call 1 866 783 6847.

ONTARIO TEACHERS' PENSION PLAN

The [Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan \(OTPP\)](#) provides a lifetime pension to active and retired teachers and their survivors. It also provides benefits if members die, become disabled, or permanently leave teaching before retirement.

Teacher members can find a full description of the plan and information about your pension on the OTPP website, otpp.com.

OCCASIONAL AND CASUAL MEMBERS (OCM) BENEFITS PLAN

Eligibility for the Occasional and Casual Members Plan (OCM) is determined by school boards. The OCM benefits plan is administered by OTIP, and enrolment is voluntary for eligible members. If you are eligible, your board will send enrolment information to your board email address in August or September.

For more information, visit the OCM website at otip.com/group-benefits/occasional-casual.

Injured at Work?



LONG-TERM DISABILITY PLAN

Participation in ETFO's long-term disability (LTD) plan is mandatory for all active full- or part-time teacher local members and requires payment of LTD contributions by all covered members. Some ESP, PSP, and DECE members have LTD coverage under school board-owned LTD plans, separate from the provincial ETFO LTD plan.

The provincial LTD governance board oversees the plan, with OTIP acting as the third-party administrator. For more information, please read ETFO's *Member's Guide to Long-Term Disability*.

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM

The [Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System \(OMERS\)](#) is the pension plan for most members of DECE/ESP/PSP locals. OMERS offers great webinars for members to help them understand their benefits and plan for their future. Visit the OMERS website at omers.com to learn more.

RESOURCES

In addition to our public-facing website, etfo.ca, the union operates a members' site at members.etfo.ca, which provides announcements and access to information including member alerts, classroom resources, bargaining updates, upcoming events, and much more. Register today at members.etfo.ca.

You will need your ETFO ID number to register. If you do not know your number, please contact Member Records at memberrecords@etfo.org or 416-962-3836/1-888-838-3836 extension 3806.

ETFO BLOGS AND WEBSITES

etfofnmi.ca

The First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education website provides practical resources with a focus on topics related to Indigenous Peoples.

etfoassessment.ca

Members Sharing in Assessment offers a selection of strategies and tools for educators.

members.etfo.ca/resources/occasional-teachers

The dedicated site for occasional teachers includes resources, tips and tools, and best practices to support your teaching practice, as well as information on your local and provincial collective agreements.

etfopley.ca

The Professional Learning in the Early Years website includes ETFO videos, resources, and insights to create a welcoming and engaging environment for the youngest learners.

Find collective bargaining information, updates and bulletins, and details about the bargaining process and central agreements at etfocb.ca.

etfo-elhtbenefits.ca

Qualifying members can visit this website to learn about their Employee Life and Health Trust benefits plan coverage for health, dental, life, and accidental death and dismemberment (AD&D).

heartandart.ca

Heart and Art of Teaching and Learning is an interactive blog with practical ideas and topics of interest for teachers throughout their careers.

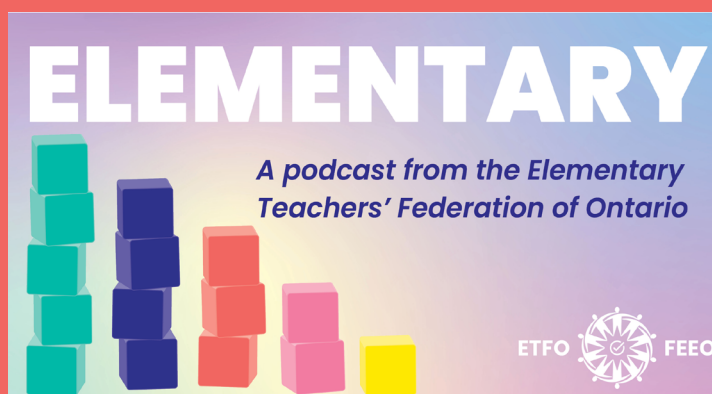


Subscribe to receive print copies of Voice, ETFO's quarterly member magazine, or read current and back issues digitally at etfovoice.ca.

OTHER RESOURCES

The union's online hub for parents and the general public is BuildingBetterSchools.ca, which encourages the broader community to become engaged in supporting and improving our publicly funded schools. Visit the site and participate in ETFO's online actions to defend, protect, and enhance public education in Ontario.

Survive and Thrive (survivethrive.on.ca) is a website from the Ontario Teachers' Federation designed for beginning teachers, occasional teachers, mentors, and teacher candidates, with many useful tips and resources.



IMPORTANT LOCAL CONTACT INFORMATION



My ETFO local is:

My ETFO local president:

My ETFO local website:

My ETFO local phone:

My ETFO local email:

My health and safety representative:

My school steward (if applicable):

KEY ETFO CONTACT INFORMATION

ETFO provincial office 416-962-3836 | 1-888-838-3836 (toll-free)

To update your contact information, name, school, or to ask for your ETFO Member ID, contact Member Records at memberrecords@etfo.org or call the provincial office.

ETFO Additional Qualification Courses

etfo-aq.ca

aqcourses@etfo.org

ETFO AWARDS & BURSARIES

2025-26



Application Deadline
Awards: February 1, 2026
Bursaries: April 30, 2026

To apply, visit etfo.ca/awards.

To contact the Awards Committee,
email awards@etfo.org.

Say **NO**
to the EQAO

I *am* ETFO

ETFO



FEEO



etfo.ca



[ETFOprovincialoffice](https://www.facebook.com/ETFOprovincialoffice)



[@ETFOeducators](https://twitter.com/ETFOeducators)



[@ETFOeducators](https://www.instagram.com/ETFOeducators)

Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO)
136 Isabella Street | Toronto, ON Canada | M4Y 0B5
416-962-3836 | 1-888-838-3836

