

News Release

August 21, 2023

Catholic Teachers to Hold Province-wide Strike Vote

The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) has released the following statement from President René Jansen in de Wal, announcing that OECTA will conduct a province-wide strike vote on October 18 and 19.

"We have reached a critical moment in the bargaining process. Catholic teachers have been bargaining with representatives of the Government of Ontario and Catholic school boards for more than a year – with the goal of realizing a fair, negotiated agreement that supports all students, educators, and families.

However, the Ford Conservative government has failed to demonstrate real interest to engage in meaningful discussions about the critical issues facing publicly funded education in Ontario.

While the government is telling one story publicly, the reality at the bargaining table is quite different.

In public, Education Minister Stephen Lecce has said the government is 'available every day to negotiate.' In reality, our Association has been provided only a couple of days per month to meet – 30 meetings in more than 440 days since we filed notice to bargain – despite our repeated offers and requests for more days.

The Minister has said he wants to 'discuss details at the table.' But almost 15 months into bargaining, the scope of negotiations has *still* not been finalized, and the creative solutions we have proposed to move the process forward have been rejected out-of-hand, often without explanation or alternative suggestions.

To make matters worse, the Association asserts that the government has violated its legal obligation to negotiate in good faith by [unilaterally implementing Policy/Program Memorandum 168 – a topic we had brought forward for discussion in bargaining](#). We have filed a complaint with the Ontario Labour Relations Board stating that the government is circumventing the collective bargaining process rather than engaging in meaningful discussions.

Against this backdrop, the Ford Conservative government continues its steady assault on the excellence of the publicly funded education system they inherited five years ago – with real-dollar cuts to per-pupil funding, a budget that falls well short of inflation, and a baffling refusal to provide the resources and supports that students need and deserve.

Actions speak louder than words and none of the government's actions to-date suggest they are serious about working toward realizing a fair deal.

To continue making progress, it has become necessary to conduct a strike vote to demonstrate our Association's solidarity and resolve. We will be asking Catholic teachers to stand united, prepared to do whatever is necessary to protect and build on the success of Ontario's publicly funded education system, and to support the students we serve.

Bargaining will continue while the strike vote is being conducted. Our goal, as always, is to negotiate a fair collective agreement: one that recognizes Catholic teachers' vital contributions to Ontario's society and economy, and makes the proper investment – in our students, in our schools, and in our future."

OECTA represents the 45,000 passionate and qualified teachers in Ontario's publicly funded English Catholic schools, from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

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