

Presentation June 25 Guelph

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Work changing over the last two decades.

As a teacher what concerns me most is what jobs are available for our graduating students. Listening to my graduates and to my students I am noticing a lack of well paid jobs. Unionized manufacturing jobs that were available in the 90's are now gone. These jobs paid triple minimum wage or better in those days. Now they are replaced by minimum wage or just above minimum wage jobs that force workers into long hour of overtime, short minimum standards for health and safety and little to no benefits. These are not jobs that are going to support a vibrant middle class in Ontario. Further these workers have little knowledge of ESA, H and S and the Labour Code. They are often left in the dark about their rights and what the laws are to protect them. The MoL needs to find ways to ensure not just unionized workers are protected but all workers are protected. Those that are the least able to protect themselves are the most vulnerable.

Key changes needed:

Workplace standards have to be raised. When the government allows minimum standards that is what the employer gives. When the government does not enforce the penalties for the employer the workers are left to be abused. Management as has happened with the teachers gave themselves raises while the workers had their wages frozen and even rolled back. Yet the government has not fined the managers. In addition, they are allowed to retire and continue to be hired back as consultants. They are paid at the top dollar while doing work that could be given to other less paid administrators. Our unionized custodians are being replaced by lower waged non-unionized custodians in many of our isolated or smaller school communities.

Worker protection as they organize

The need for workers to be protected when they try to organize needs to be entrenched in our rights under the Ministry of Labour. What happened last year where closed lists at Toyota disputed Unifor's campaign to unionize should not be allowed. Union movements need to have freedom and access to information. Employer's need to be accountable to laws to provide workers the freedom to exercise the benefits associated with living in a democratic and free nation. We need to enshrine the rights workers have fought for and enjoyed since the Rand Formula was developed and put into effect.

Even in the teaching profession our H.R. Department places road blocks in the way of members who wish to be represented by their Union reps. Access to work sites, paid release, notice of member meetings with administrators are all at risk. If employers can refuse to allow fair representation and freedom to organize and meet then there is no fairness in the workplace. If employers abuse their power and ignore standards to allow union reps to be present at administration and member meetings they need to be fined and the fines have to be harsh enough to stop employers from abusing the rules. Last year our HR department sent a message that members could not approach the union with questions until they spoke to HR. We received an apology for the HR supervisor but the damage was done and no real penalty was inflicted on the employer.

These rights are all in our Canadian Charter of Rights and must be upheld by the Ministry of Labour.

Decent Working Conditions and Decent Wages

We discuss the need for decent work. Part time, seasonal and temporary jobs abound. These jobs even if paying close to a permanent employee have several important deficiencies. First they usually do not provide any paid benefits. Second they leave employees scrambling from contract to contract and these do

not allow individuals to start to plan for their future if they are barely getting by pay cheque to pay cheque. Permanent full time jobs are what lead to a strong middle class. The strong middle class provides security to our society as parents with benefits and a stable income can raise a new generation of middle class people to be the back bone of our standard of living in Ontario. Temporary jobs and part time jobs do not lay a foundation for a strong population in Ontario.

In my profession, small piecemeal contracts are handed out and many employees struggle for years to get full time work when they should have a priority in gaining and accessing new positions. The current Board and Ministry of Education plans further erode their ability to gain full time permanent meaningful careers.

One major problem facing teachers is the holding of jobs as Occasional temporary contracts. These jobs are used when permanent teachers gain outside the classroom positions, certain leadership positions or special education positions. However these jobs are all permanent and though a teacher called upon to assume alternate duties should be allowed back into a classroom at their school the Occasional Teacher would still have a permanent position as someone fills the vacated non-classroom teaching role. Tightening up the offering of permanent jobs would allow hundreds if not thousands of teachers a permanent job sooner and access to benefits and other protections including a stable economic family income.

If unions were allowed more input into ensuring full time permanent jobs were prominent then young and new teachers would get full time permanent jobs faster.

Paid vacations

It is just impossible to imagine that our workers who earn and accumulate 2 weeks of paid holiday time are on par with China. Or in other words we are one of the worst countries in the world when it comes to recognizing that workers

need to have time off. How can a country who is in the G7 compare to China? How can a country that purports to care about it's citizens have the worst vacation time of any country in the first world. Raise paid vacation time immediately to three weeks for all.

Language for universal coverage of workers under the Ontario Health and Safety Act. Teachers are at risk as they perform duties related to their teaching career but perhaps in an extra-curricular role with the students or Board. They also work in the summer to prepare for the year or are in the school in July as they finish work from the previous year. Clear guidelines are needed to protect these workers especially the new teachers who are trying to develop an impressive portfolio around volunteer activities or as they start to prepare for their first classroom assignment in September but have never received a permanent pay cheque.

Temporary Agencies and Assignments

When we speak of this in the teaching profession you may not think this is a concern. However equal pay for equal work and equity do have a similar topic for teachers. Teachers on a daily salary Occasional workload are not paid according to their colleagues. They are paid less than permanent staff as their years of experience and qualifications are not taken into any consideration. This could easily make a teacher make 100 dollars and even up to 200 dollars less than their permanent colleagues.

This also relates to multiple long term contracts that lead no where as principals and administrators constantly bend the rules on hiring despite recent gains under the MoU Reg 274 as principals can assign teachers classes with an eye to leaving strange subject combinations so a teacher they may know who is relatively new or even totally new with no days as a supply teacher under their belt getting the position. Just another example of the employer bending the rules with little means for the union to object or win a grievance.

Rights without remedies

The inability of the unions to stop the employer from moving in a direction either directly against the MoL or the Canadian Employment Standards or the Ontario H and S Act must be addressed. Currently teachers are working in a situation where regular and yearly H and S inspections have not been taking place for well over a year. We are just pawns as the Board refers to committee, turns down opposition from our worker H and S Reps and plays the run around game with the MoL and the Unions. We need the ESA to have a method to adjust timelines and help stop improper practices immediately rather than have the employer play the grievance delay game and send it to arbitration. We recently found out the Employer had not submitted the Terms of Reference updates since 2008 and three further agreed upon updates are not in effect. We are still requiring the MoL to assist us to reach an agreement and in the mean time H and S inspections have stopped placing all workers (and their students) at risk.

This is a massive undertaking in non-unionized work places and those employees need a means to access government protection to ensure their workplaces are also safe places for them to work. An adoption of Quebec's legislative approach to anti-psychological harassment would be a step in the right direction as it requires the employer to take action to address and prevent workplace bullying which usually is associated by opposition to employer plans that violate the various ESA codes and related rules and regulations.

Early Disclosure of Employee Lists

Though I have spoken about the problems UNIFOR has with organizing labourers in the Toyota Manufacturing drive this is also a problem in school boards. Believe it or not as President of our Local I only receive lists at certain specific times through the year. Many of these timelines are ignored and it takes multiple requests to receive the information. In particular as new hires arrive through the year they can go unnoticed on our membership list for months and months

before we even know they are working with us. We are a relatively small Board with just under 700 teachers both part time, permanent, and supply teachers. This must be a huge problem in larger Boards. Employers need to be required to share and disclose their hire lists as they add employees within a two week period if not immediately.

First Contract Arbitration

Well we have all read the papers the last year. Teachers are in their 10th month without a contract. The Ministry is directly involved in these negotiations. The Unions have no recourse to adopting binding arbitration until a long lengthy process has been reached and ultimately will probably lead to many weeks of job actions across the province. If we had the right to binding arbitration the entire process would go forward without any possible job actions on the part of the unions.

