

## COVID-19 Pandemic Information Update

### Closure of Elementary and Secondary Schools for the Remainder of the School Year

On Tuesday, May 19, Premier Doug Ford announced that elementary and secondary schools in Ontario will remain closed for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, and that the current emergency remote learning plan will remain in place through to the end of June.

At the same press briefing, the Minister of Education announced his plan to expand summer learning opportunities for students. His announcement coincided with the Ministry's release of "Ontario's Framework for Continued Learning," which is attached to this update. This document outlines seven areas of focus for the Summer Learning Plan. OSSTF/FEESO has not yet received any details about the government's summer learning plan beyond those contained in the attached Ministry document. In reviewing the document we have begun to identify concerns, including how the expanded programs would be staffed. We will remain engaged in a dialogue with senior officials in the Ministry of Education bureaucracy, and through those discussions we will continue to offer the benefit of our frontline experience and our informed insights regarding the path forward, both in the immediate short term and through to the 2020-2021 school year. We will share more information as it becomes available from the Ministry of Education.

The Minister also reinforced his government's intention to "continue to make the case for synchronous, live and dynamic learning."

OSSTF/FEESO has made our position clear to Ministry of Education officials, as well as to the public through a number of media interviews with President Harvey Bischof. While we do not oppose the use of online synchronous learning opportunities during the current pandemic, we insist that the use of synchronous learning tools must be subject to the professional judgement of educators. Furthermore, for the safety of both students and staff, school board employers

need to ensure that privacy and security concerns are resolved before these online tools are used.

### **Donations to Support Those in Need During COVID-19**

Since the onset of the global health emergency, OSSTF/FEESO has donated to a number of agencies and coalition partners in an effort to support those in need during the COVID-19 crisis.

Beyond the \$100,000 donation to four important services in Ontario, as reported in COVID-19 Update Issue #2, the Federation has also given support to international organizations in need of help during the pandemic.

OSSTF/FEESO is part of a coalition of unions who have worked for several years with the Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity to raise awareness about the exploitation of garment workers. As part of this coalition, OSSTF/FEESO has donated \$5,000 in emergency relief funds to the Centre, to help provide food baskets and basic medical kits to workers who face hunger because they have lost their job or income due to COVID-19. The Canadian Labour Congress, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Public Service Alliance of Canada, United Food and Commercial Workers, and the United Steel Workers also contributed to the fund.

In addition, OSSTF/FEESO sent \$5,000 to the Canadian Teachers' Federation as part of a national donation to the Education International COVID-19 Response Solidarity Fund. This Fund will assist education affiliates around the world who find themselves in dire circumstances due to COVID-19, especially those countries that are lacking in basic infrastructure and public services.

As the COVID-19 pandemic crisis continues to unfold, OSSTF/FEESO will be issuing frequent updates to provide members with as much pertinent information as possible.

**Please frequently check the *myOSSTF* section of the OSSTF/FEESO website for updated information.**