

DISTRICT 4 T/OTBU  
CHIEF NEGOTIATOR'S REPORT  
May 14, 2020

To say that this was an unusual year is an understatement, and I certainly had no idea that the Federation year would be wrapping up in this fashion. In fact, for all the headway that was made in terms of bargaining, it still feels like we are ending the year with as much uncertainty as we started.

As we head toward a potential ratification of the central terms for our collective agreement in the next 2 days I know that some of you feel deflated or defeated somehow, that all our efforts over the course of the year were wasted somehow. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The members of District 4 showed this board, the Government of Ontario, and most importantly the citizens of the province that we are serious about defending public education. Our grassroots, membership-based social media campaign that you were so instrumental in, got more people talking about education (and on education workers' sides) than ever before. We walked in freezing cold and pouring rain to do all we could to save the education system we are so proud to be a part of. And doing all we could has landed us at this point.

The current government was (and is) intent on slashing the education budget by cutting jobs and privatizing portions of the system. They planned to do that by moving from 22:1 to 28:1 for a funding generator. Our combined actions forced them to move all the way back to 23:1. They wanted to make e-learning mandatory for all students. Our combined actions forced them to make an opt-out (triggered by parents or us, the staff members who know the students best) possible.

Bargaining is a 'long-play' game. It is always the goal to make incremental gains in successive contract negotiations, but sometimes there are setbacks. I'm sure we all consider the central terms to be a setback, but when you consider how bad it could have been, I believe that those working for us at Mobile Drive accomplished all they could. There is nothing left at the table.

In the coming weeks, I am looking forward to getting to the table (or virtual table!) to negotiate the local terms of the collective agreement so we can move on from this round of bargaining and set our sights on the provincial election in 2 years. That will be our opportunity to elect a government who recognizes the value of public education and supports it accordingly.

From job action to all your hard work to make emergency distance learning work for your students, thank you for all you did this year to support public education.

Yours in Federation,

Dave Weichel