

Franco-Ontarian Teachers Vote: 97% in Favour of Strike Action

OTTAWA, December 20, 2019 – Regular and occasional teachers from the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO) voted in favour of a strike mandate, with some 97% of them in favour of strike action. AEFO called on its members to vote after several weeks of fruitless discussions with the government and the Employer Bargaining Agency (EBA), which represents the twelve French-language school boards in Ontario.

“This decisive ‘yes’ vote shows, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that Franco-Ontarian teachers are determined to fend off the government and the EBA, who have been trying to take away what teachers have gained over the years and undermine their rights,” states AEFO President Rémi Sabourin. “This result of 97% reinforces our position at the bargaining table to defend the rights and working conditions of our members.”

According to AEFO, bargaining has hit multiple sticking points, not limited to working conditions and teachers’ rights, but also including the government’s stubborn desire to impose requirements that would have disastrous consequences for students’ learning in the French-language system.

“We are not only fighting for our rights. We are also deeply concerned about issues that directly impact students’ education,” adds Mr. Sabourin.

The two mandatory e-learning courses necessary for secondary graduation and the increase in class sizes – which will inevitably lead to a decrease in the number of teachers – are two major obstacles to an agreement being reached.

“It’s clear that for the government, it’s all about the money,” indicates Rémi Sabourin. “However, reducing the choice of courses offered to our students, forcing them to take online courses and eliminating teaching positions isn’t really a solution. The government and, to our dismay, the EBA seem to be showing little regard for the consequences of these actions on students’ learning. Our members, our students, and our education system deserve better.”

AEFO wishes to thank its members for this vote of confidence, which gives it the right to use a strike as leverage if needed. A union, according to the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Act of 2014*, must give the government and the school boards at least five working days’ notice before launching any strike action. A strike mandate doesn’t signal the end of negotiations either. New meetings between AEFO, the government, and the CAE are planned for January 2020.

AEFO has about 12,000 members and represents French-language elementary and secondary teachers in Ontario, from both Catholic and public school boards, and professional and support staff working in various French-language workplaces.

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