

AEFO Announces Phase 3 of Strike Action by Franco-Ontarian Teachers

OTTAWA, February 7, 2020 – Franco-Ontarian teachers who are members of the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO) will be launching the third phase of strike action. During phase 3, all 12,000 regular and occasional teachers will walk out one day a week, province-wide, every week. Current work-to-rule guidelines will continue to be enforced. The first walk out is planned for February 13, 2020.

AEFO President Rémi Sabourin stated: “AEFO is waging several battles. On the one hand, school boards continue to reject the concerns of Franco-Ontarian Teachers. On the other hand, the Minister of Education, Stephen Lecce, and Premier Ford refuse to maintain, notably, financing earmarked for special needs students. We have already witnessed the Ford government’s gutting of the Ontario Autism Program for children and their families. It is appalling to see them now taking aim at the success of our special needs students. These are some of the reasons why AEFO members are preparing picket lines. They are ready to use whatever means necessary to fight for their rights and for working conditions that are conducive to students’ learning.”

This escalation of job action follows recent meetings at the central bargaining table where, once again, negotiations went nowhere.

“School boards and the government seem determined to oppose any possibility of moving forward with bargaining. For example, school boards continue to insist on curtailing teachers working conditions. And the government is still claiming that negotiations are hinging on salaries and benefits. However, we have repeatedly explained that Franco-Ontarian teachers, who care about their students’ success, want them to revisit certain decisions such as the increase in class sizes and the new e-learning requirements, to which we can now add the refusal to extend 2017 funding levels for special needs students. Phase 3 is meant to convey to the government that we can’t just keep staring at each other pointlessly at the bargaining table.”

Furthermore, it is the first time since the inception of French-language school boards in 1997 that AEFO has been forced to launch strike action of this scale. AEFO President Rémi Sabourin adds: “Teacher demands are extending way beyond the usual negotiating framework. Many parents, students, and citizens are deeply worried about the very real threats to the quality of our French-language education system. We fervently hope that the government and school boards do not ignore this historical labour and social movement.”

AEFO knows that strike action may have an impact on the daily life of Franco-Ontarian students and their families, and asks parents to understand that this job action aims to fight against the deterioration of our education system. Picketing sites will be posted on the AEFO website in the coming days. For more information regarding work-to-rule guidelines: www.ensemblepouragir.ca.

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

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