

## DETAILS

<b>Date:</b>	June 4-6, 2023	<b>Conference:</b>	CTF/FCE Teacher Collective
<b>Time:</b>	9:00 AM-4:00 PM		Bargaining Conference
<b>PX:</b>	Joel Swaan	<b>Location:</b>	InterContinental Montréal, PQ

## SUMMARY

I respectfully acknowledge that Montréal is located on the traditional and unceded territory of the Kanien'kehà:ka, a place which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst many First Nations including the Kanien'kehá:ka of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Huron/Wendat, Abenaki, and Anishinaabeg. I recognize and respect the Kanien'kehà:ka as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters on which the conference was situated.

This was my first time attending the Canadian Teachers' Federation's Teacher Collective Bargaining Conference, and what a ride. As with every conference, one's individual mileage will vary with the specific sessions, but overall the conference was an excellent blend of information, connecting, and culture. I'd like to share some of the quotes and notables that stood out to me at each of the sessions. I acknowledge that this is a lengthy "summary" report, but I also feel that what doesn't get shared here would be my secret to hold forever.

Notes & quotes from **Building Political Power from the Ground-Up**: Marie Clarke Walker, Former Executive Vice-President and Secretary-Treasurer of Canadian Labour Congress:

- For true inclusion to occur, people need to be involved in the whole process: the difference between having people at the table vs. having them with you when you buy the groceries, when you make the meal, and then also being at the table.
- On "equity-deserving" vs. "equity seeking": everyone deserves equity; some are not yet being afforded it.
- The union movement is a microcosm of society – we need to make sure the choices we make (including voting) don't hurt others. It is why unions have issues campaigns instead of telling people to vote for a particular party.
- On micro-aggression vs. macro-aggression: It's all aggression. Micro to one person may be macro to another.
- From the International Labour Organization: [Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work](#), Convention No. 190 was ratified in Canada in January 2023. It can be added to existing collective agreements without opening them up.
- Engage young workers; but don't expect them to come to a meeting.

Notes & quotes from **Bridging the Gap: Achieving Equity and Diversity at the Bargaining Table**: Marie Clarke Walker, Former Executive Vice-President and Secretary-Treasurer of Canadian Labour Congress; Josée Scalabrini, Président, Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement (FSE); Deborah Morran, Assistant Director in Field Service Division (Bargaining), BCTF/FECB

- [JS thought: BCTF has a French acronym (FECB). Should MTS at times be “MTS/SEM: Société des enseignantes et enseignants du Manitoba” or “MTS/SÉM: Société des éducatrices et éducateurs du Manitoba”?]
- *This is a panel discussion, so many generalizations, opinions, and counter-opinions were shared (vs. research studies)*
- Social unionism vs. Business unionism: Women tend to be involved in social unionism – rights for childcare, elder care, washroom access. Women are thinking about different issues. When women bring policy forward, it's not just good for women; it's good for everyone. COUNTERPOINT: Women don't bring different issues – women bring more issues. When we say “different” we're perpetuating the myth that women do things differently. Rather, we bring a different perspective.
- When men and women are protected by the same collective agreement, men will say “this is how the CA is applied”. Women are more concerned about how the CA will affect their time in the classroom.
- When there are more women at the table, it's easier for those women. It increases participation for all if people see themselves represented.

Notes & quotes from **Open Heart and Open Eyes: Bargaining Towards Equity**: Deborah Morran, Assistant Director in Field Service Division (Bargaining), BCTF; & Robin Toczak, Second Vice-President, BCTF

- Women in Negotiation training: need to also look at an intersectional lens. How do we make the table seem inviting? And how, as a bargaining team, are we seeking out these voices?
- At their bargaining conference, submissions were presented from provincial advisory committees, including Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee and the Committee for Action on Social Justice.
- Established a transparent process for members that demonstrated how bargaining objectives are determined (ideas, not the wording of actual clauses).
- Preparation to address equity objectives includes:
  - o Recognition of identities and positionality within team
  - o Support and consultation with staff
  - o Review of reports from advisory committees
  - o Review of TRC Calls to Action and UNDRIP
- BC has a [Letter of Understanding – Employment Equity for Aboriginal Teachers](#): “The parties recognize that Aboriginal teachers are under-represented in the public education system...”. School districts can [apply](#) to the BC Human Rights Tribunal for special hiring initiative program approval for employee equity programs.
- Recent BC Improvements:
  - o Acknowledgement of Traditional Treaties, on the Cover Page of the Agreement

- *The employer and the union acknowledge that the Province of British Columbia is situated on the traditional territories of many First Nations, each with their own unique traditions and history. We commit to building respectful, productive, and meaningful relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit groups.*
  - Article B.14 Experience Recognition
    - Allows members with previous teaching experience in First Nations schools in BC to have this experience recognized for placement on current salary grid.
  - Article E.1 Non-Sexist Environment
    - Definition expanded to clarify that no discrimination will be tolerated based on sex, gender identity or expression, or by refusing to acknowledge one’s gender identity.
  - Article E.2 Harassment/Sexual Harassment
    - Now allows for complainant to request a mediator, investigator, or facilitator who is Indigenous or a person of colour.
  - Article G.11 Cultural Leave for Aboriginal Employees
    - The Superintendent of Schools or their designate, may grant (5) paid days per year leave with seven (7) days written notice from the employee to participate in Aboriginal Cultural event(s). Such leave shall not be unreasonably denied.
  - LOU 4: Employment Equity – Indigenous Peoples
    - Many locals and districts have successfully agreed to preferential hiring, post and fill, and layoff protection provisions for Indigenous teachers.
    - Now includes development of a provincial Implementation Guide to assist in the application for and implementation of special programs.
    - Clarifies that the support for preferential hiring is not limited to positions funded by targeted by Indigenous Education funding.
  - LOU 16: Employment Equity – Groups that Face Disadvantage
    - Builds on success and learning gained from LOU 4
    - Encourages districts to work with locals in applying for a special program to allow preferential hiring
    - Encourages the hiring of applicants from “groups that face disadvantage” such as people with disabilities, racialized people, 2SLGBTQIA+, etc.
  - LOU 13: Committee to Discuss Indigenous Peoples Recognition and Reconciliation
    - Establishes a joint committee to discuss ways the provincial parties can support the *Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA)* and the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action*
    - Will also discuss ways to further support the recruitment and retention of Indigenous teachers
    - May mutually recommend potential changes to the collective agreement for the next round of bargaining.
- [Joel’s Thoughts: When working on our strategic plan, consideration needs to be given to the Equity Audit, WEL Report, TRC Calls to Action, UNDRIP, and Convention 190]

Notes and quotes from **Maximizing Leverage Through Political Bargaining (2019-2020)**: Chris Samuel, Policy Analyst Researcher, OSSTF/FEESO

- Context: 5700 teacher positions could've been lost through proclamation to change class size averages from 1:22 to 1:28; graduation requirement for every high school student to take 4 on-line courses.
- Transparent Bargaining
  - o "Kept the government's feet to the fire, and it kept our members feeling as if they knew what was happening"
  - o Needs to have trust at the table. Needs to be room for good faith give-and-take
  - o All proposals and counter-proposals were available for public to see on-line.
  - o BargainingForEducation.ca – not a lot of traffic, but accountability to press and public (link no longer active)
- Public Communications Strategy
  - o No Cuts to Education campaign
  - o Positioning (the adults in the room; relies on evidence)
  - o Targeted communications (social media advertising; postcards to vulnerable PC MPPs)
  - o A unified local message (training; information pickets)
- Novel Tactics
  - o Rallies (30 000 people)
  - o Information pickets
  - o Working with parent groups
  - o Working with consultants
  - o Transparent bargaining
  - o Media training
  - o Commissioned study
  - o Communications beyond members
  - o The "whole building" approach
  - o Intensified social media
  - o Opinion polling; focus groups
  - o Fact-checking
  - o Rotating strikes
  - o Social media ads targeting Conservative voters
  - o Targeting Ontarians without children in K-1
- OSSTF Whole Building: TW & PFLS sides working together. TW typically handled all bargaining. PFLS provided research, developed communication strategies. Fact checking politicians' speeches in real-time.
- Strategy (Overarching vision of where we want to be and how to get there) and then Tactics (Concrete actions taken to implement the overall strategy)
- Strategy (Political Bargaining): For them, "bargaining strategy and political action strategy are inextricable"

**Reforming Canada's Employment Insurance System:** Pierre Laliberté, Commissioner for Workers, Canada Employment Insurance Commission

- Information on how EI/COVID payouts were handled over the pandemic

Notes and quotes from **Supporting Educators Through Psychologically Healthy and Safe Workplaces:** Michel Rodrigue, President and Chief Executive Officer, Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC)

- 1 in 5 people will have a mental health issue
- Of today's young people, it will be 1 of 2 by the time they reach age 40
- 500K people are absent from work each week with mental health issues.
- We need to eliminate stigma on mental health. (relationship between breaking an arm and missing work, vs. being gone from work for a mental health issue)
- Systems treat mental health differently. The mental health wait times for healthcare access is months or even years, which we wouldn't accept if your body needed care.
- WHO has declared a World Crisis in Mental Health. They anticipate that by 2030 mental health diseases will surpass contagious diseases. Today, more than ever, we need to look at this within workplaces, schools.
- Looking at youth, including post-secondary students: Isolation, lack of access to peers, anxiety, depression
- Women who take care of kids at home: increased cannabis and alcohol use for the same reasons.
- Mental health funding: \$2.18 cost savings for \$1 spent. Mental Health First Aid; has been given to 1M people in Canada.
- Employers who have a mental health program and offer services to employees have a better chance of keeping employees at work, including retraining and retention.
- What type of services can be supported through collective agreements?
  - o Generate "help seeking", develop a common language including a continuum. Demystify mental health. When people seek are courageous enough to seek help, the services need to be available.

Notes and quotes from **Strategic Communications to Support the Bargaining Strategy:** Rich Overgaard, Director of Communications, BCTF/FECB

- The Communications Strategy is not the Bargaining Strategy.
- We know "how" to communicate:
  - o Members increasingly want to see us advocating and advertising in between the bargaining rounds
  - o Members want to see us doing our jobs as they do theirs. Answer the question, "where is the union"
  - o When the union asks members to ratify a collective agreement or vote for job action, they need to feel connected to the potential outcome.
- They flooded the areas around schools through geotagging, as well as the legislature.
  - o BCTF "[Morning Announcements](#)" commercial – first time BCTF showed a teacher struggling in a commercial.
  - o BCTF "[Hallway Shuffle](#)" – 15-second ad

- Filmed series with testimonials. “Teacher Testimonial – Sam” ([ItTakesATeacher.ca](http://ItTakesATeacher.ca))
- The Bargaining Cycle is not the Public Opinion Cycle, so the ads need to continue beyond bargaining.
- Parents age out of the system, there is generational change. New audiences always.
- In the lead up to the 2022 round of bargaining, ads and messaging focused on how hard teachers worked through the pandemic to keep kids safe and learning
- Unlike past rounds, there was no natural “villain”. The makes mobilization harder.
- No concessions or “provocative proposals” from government.
- As Bargaining picked up pace:
  - Focused on teacher shortage, salary, and burnout
  - Joint public service ads, messaging, and coordination through the BC Federation of Labour
  - The power of solidarity
  - Realistic and transparent member communications
- “fist pumps vs. head nods” – you need to move the entire bell curve (of member engagement) closer to your ideal goal
- This is all a tough task, takes work and hard conversations about priorities and strategies
- Find a way to balance what members deserve (a lot!), how much pressure we can create to get meaningful gains, and what we are likely to get
- In 2014 strike, their public messaging was ahead of their bargaining, which was a problem
  - didn’t ask the question “What happens when we get what we want?”
- You want members to feel proud of the result – members need to feel they’ve won something.
- Back to 2022
  - Deeper connections between the bargaining and communication teams
  - Worked closely together on member communications, messaging debriefs, and updates to government bodies
- Key strategies
  - **Transparency with members – all proposals were available for all members to see**
    - Union Proposals
    - Employer Proposals
    - Agreed
    - Withdrawn and rationale
  - Union needs to be prepared for media attention
    - We’re OK. We have big asks, they’re expensive, we have messaging ready to go
  - Message discipline
    - Focused on shortage, burnout, better wages
  - Realistic with members
    - Employer’s message was “we are not going to better your working conditions”
  - **The key question to ask yourselves: How can we, better than ever, attach our communications strategy to our bargaining strategy**
- Some best practices:
  - Transparency with members

- Communicate to those with a lot of understanding as well as those with little to none
- Internal accountability and understanding of the size of proposals
- Prepare for media leaks – not with obstruction, but carefully crafted rationale
- Don't stop communicating bargaining issues between rounds
- Develop a strategic communications and advertising plan and shift as needed
- Bring communicators, officers, and bargainers together often
- Ensure your communications efforts support your bargaining strategy, even as it shifts
- BCTF feels they should've communicated better AND had a better aligned strategy on how to do so
- Employer and union agreed that communication to members can happen in confidential spaces. "Heads up" for public/media was given to other side.
  - More leaks in 2014 & 2019. No leaks in 2022, but communications dept was prepared for them. Go open, have rationale, be prepared.
- [Joel's thought: We need a "[provbargaining@mbteach.org](mailto:provbargaining@mbteach.org)" email address where any member can ask questions about what's happening]

Notes & quotes from **Alternatives to Austerity and Inflation**: Jim Stanford, Economist Director, Centre for Future Work

- "Collective Bargaining is the way to solve inflation."
- Bargaining to Protect our Living Standard:
  - Two key challenges in current wage bargaining
    - Protect against future inflation
      - A COLA clause takes away the uncertainty
    - Make up for past real wage loss
  - Be cautious re: lump sums and other one-off compensations
- Anticipate the Arguments
  - "Public sector wage gains will cause inflation"
    - Wages lagged inflation since 2021, no correlation there
    - They can, and should exceed inflation
  - "Public sector workers are already overpaid"
    - Real wage declines in public sector occupations have been the biggest of any industry
  - "Public sector wage gains will cause deficits"
    - Government benefits from inflation due to expanding revenue base
    - Compensating their own staff for the resulting impact on purchasing power uses up only a small share of that increase in income
    - Both federal and provincial deficits have disappeared
- The Labour Movement's Challenge
  - Explain to our members and all workers that we did not cause this inflation, and corporations have benefited from it
  - We will not sacrifice our living standards to 'solve' a problem we didn't create
  - Keep bargaining wages that:

- keep up with current inflation
- make up for past losses
- Reject Bank of Canada's money austerity as the solution
- Put in protection against the coming recession
  - EI repairs
  - Public services, public investments, and job creation

My thanks to the provincial executive for sending me to this conference. As the Chair of the Provincial Bargaining Committee, I directly see the applicability to the work that I'm doing with the committee and the table team, as well as PX, and I'm excited to implement my learnings. I'm hoping that the information presented will be a part of many conversations here at the Society as we move forward.

**Respectfully submitted,**

Joel J. Swaan  
Provincial Executive