

Waterloo Region Assembly of Public School Councils Meeting Minutes – February 4th, 2020

Attendance: 50 attendees representing 39 Schools, and 4 Guest speakers

Motion to approve agenda: motioned by Bel Roth, seconded by Melissa Jenkins. Approved.

Motion to approve minutes: motioned by Melissa Jenkins, seconded by Christine Rose. Approved.

I. Welcome

- WRAPSC members welcomed to our February 4th meeting.
- Angelica Allen introduces Greg Weiler, who is president of the local EFTO, Rob Gascho, president of the local OSSTF, and Michael Weinert, who is the coordinating superintendent of Human Resources for the WRDSB.

II. Ontario Government and Teachers – record of remarks

i. Greg Weiler - president of EFTO

- Priority funding was discussed with the previous government, but the current government is more concerned with savings. Current government not accepting the previous contract, and indicated that the matter will have to wait until negotiations.
- Kindergarten is a concern due to what has been said, and the current government is not willing to put any guarantee in writing.
- EFTO is just trying to get them to commit to a contract at this point, even a 2-3 year contract.
- There OSSTF and EFTO have different concerns that they are trying to negotiate as they are two different unions.
- EFTO is fighting for a contract around special needs support, along with fighting for the status quo in regards to class sizes.
- Once the government makes changes that they mandate, it is hard to change them.
- Teachers can't do their job properly without classroom supports.

ii. Rob Gascho - president of OSSTF

- Right now it would appear that the government strategy is to not negotiate, but to impose.
- OSSTF union represents public secondary school teachers along with support staff, Custodian/ maintenance teams and the supervision monitors. Some of these workers get paid far less than the teachers.
- Originally the Ontario government wanted a classroom ratio increase from its current 22 to 1 up to 28 to 1, with 4 online courses that were to be mandatory to every student.
- A few months ago the government did dial back from 28 to 1 ratio to a 25 to 1 ratio with only two online courses. This is a government bargaining method.
- This year, due to collective agreements, the ratio is currently 22.5 to 1. This does not mean that there are 22 students in a classroom to one teacher, this means on average there would be 22 to 1.
- In high school typically there are about 30 to 32 students per academic class. This happens so the applied courses and Spec. Ed. classrooms can have a lower teacher/student ratio, and allows a lower threshold of students needed for specialized courses such as art and music. This causes academic class size to rise.

- Teachers are worried that academic class sizes will reach 40 to 45 students per class should the 25 or 28 to 1 take place.
- In some school boards, some of the specialized courses like physics are being made split classes so that multiple grades are in the class.
- Should classroom sizes increase to 25 or 28 to 1 many classes and teachers will disappear. Each teacher teaches on average six courses (three per semester). So if the school loses one teacher, it loses six courses, extracurricular activities and anything else that teachers assist with throughout the school year.
- If there are fewer support staff and custodians, the overall maintenance of the school will deteriorate.
- The e-learning program has been brought in, with recommendations that comes from the state of Alabama. Alabama ranks about 49 to 50 in the United States, even with their students only being mandated to do one e-learning course.
- The failure rate for an e-learning course is high, as teenagers aren't always self-motivated or self-disciplined.
- OSSTF and all teachers are concerned that a certified teacher will not be teaching the online courses and that the course will have to be modified to allow more students to pass.

iii. Michael Weinert - Coordinating Superintendent

- There are two parts to these negotiations. Right now part A, which is the central part of the negotiation, is between unions and the provincial government. The main source of school funding comes from the Ontario Government, so all union talks with Boards are generally on pause.
- This is a unique style of bargaining by the provincial government, as a lot of it is more on social media and not on paper.
- The current contract that expired on August 31, 2019 is still in effect until a new agreement has been made. That means that the classroom size should still be maintained at 22 to 1 and has been funded at 22 to 1 for now. The Province has provided an attrition fund that will slowly decrease over the four-year period until the class size ratio is 25 to 1.
- The Board is to honour and follow the agreement contract even though it has expired, until a new one is in place. The only exception to this is the monies that were brought in by the previous government for additional staff. There was a time limit on these monies that has since expired. The Board has had to make adjustments on that part of the agreement.
- Negotiations are always a rocky road and a lot of bumps occur during its process.
- Michael touched on the 28 to 1 and the 22 to 1 Classroom sizes explaining that when it comes to specialized classes there needs to be a lower ratio and in turn another class needs to have a higher ratio to balance out the average.
- It is acknowledged that JK registration has started and if negotiations are not completed until after March break it will be difficult to plan staffing size for kindergarten.
- It has been noticed that some schools cannot accommodate larger class sizes due to limited space in many classrooms.
- The board has advised that FDK will be left alone, however this is not on paper.
- There is currently nothing to show that the Province is considering legislating workers back to work. In order to legislate teachers and workers back to work, the government would need to make a case that the school year is in jeopardy. If that case was

successful and the workers are legislated back to work, unions and the government will still have to deal with a contract.

General discussion:

- ACTION: If you want to help schools and teachers, please to write a letter/email to your local MPP and your board of trustees with your concerns and comments.
- You can also visit buildingbetterschools.ca and Hereforstudents.com.
- If you are concerned about your child's progress, it is advised to be in contact with your child's teacher.
- While schools will have to notify parents whether their children has passed the grade, there is nothing legally that says a report card has to go home.

III. **Barbara Ward - Mental health leader of Waterloo regional district school board.**

- Barbara came in to talk about mental health resources, as well as vaping and cannabis use in schools. The final topic was a sex trafficking curriculum.
- She started by talking about the risk factors. It was asked at what age parents think it is appropriate that students should start talking about vaping and marijuana use in schools. After much discussion, it was suggested that this should be covered in the curriculum starting around grade 6, while kids are still impressionable.
- The goal is to stop kids from from vaping by teaching them what it does to the body and dispersing the myths.
- What is vaping doing for these kids is often asked, and the answer could be a "cool factor" or maybe even to help with stress.
- Barbara brought some kits that had been designed by secondary school students to help younger students learn about what the effects of vaping and cannabis use. Some of these include visual advertisements within the school, placed along corridors and bathrooms. Other ideas include a pocket card that was designed by students. Members suggested that presentations be held by people who have suffered ill effects, so that the students really understand the danger.
- Members also suggested that presentations to parents would be helpful, and some of these will be offered soon.
- Barbara touched briefly on sex trafficking and how sometimes the signs are not noticeable. It is a myth that children are often kidnapped and then trafficked out. It is becoming more and more common that children are being groomed into the sex trafficking world.
- ACTION: All school councils that prepared remarks based on the resource sheet should send them to the WRAPSC email: wrapsc@gmail.com so they can be passed on to Barbara. Thanks very much for making the effort to respond.

IV. **Closing**

- Our next meeting will take place on April 7, 2020 at the Forest Heights library. Should the location change, WRAPSC Members will be notified.

AD/14 Feb/2020