

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Labour Action

What is labour action?

Labour action is the legal right of any union during the bargaining process. Actions can range from withdrawal of service to a full strike, where staff do not attend their positions and sometimes picket at locations.

Why are schools closed during strike action?

OSSTF, OSSTF-ESS and ETFO members have an important safety role in schools. They are responsible for daily safety checks, help when transportation issues arise, and provide real-time support that helps keep students and staff safe, and our schools running smoothly.

During a strike, we cannot ensure the safety of students—this is our top priority. As a result, we have no choice but to close schools affected by strike actions taken by the various employee groups.

Elementary Schools



Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO)

- Elementary Teachers
- Elementary Occasional Teachers

Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation – Educational Support Staff (OSSTF-ESS)

- Attendance Counsellors
- Library Technicians
- Educational Assistants
- Early Child Educators
- Child and Youth Workers
- Secretary
- Computer Technician/Technologist
- Board Office Administration
 - *Accounts Payable Clerk*
 - *Accounting Clerk*
 - *Payroll Clerk*

Secondary Schools



Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF)

- Secondary Teachers
- Secondary Occasional Teachers

Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation – Educational Support Staff (OSSTF-ESS)

- Attendance Counsellors
- Library Technicians
- Educational Assistants
- Early Child Educators
- Child and Youth Workers
- Secretary
- Computer Technician/Technologist
- Board Office Administration
 - *Accounts Payable Clerk*
 - *Accounting Clerk*
 - *Payroll Clerk*

What is happening?

In Ontario's publicly funded education sector, contracts for teachers and other education workers are collectively bargained. This bargaining typically occurs on a three-year cycle. The prior contracts expired on August 31, 2019. New contracts are being negotiated between education unions and the Ontario government.

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A union must give five days' notice before it can start a strike. In the education sector, a strike does not necessarily mean the withdrawal of all services by the employees represented by the unions. If the union escalates its strike to fully withdraw services from a school, it must give a further five days' notice of that intent.

On Tuesday, November 26, 2019, the Ontario Secondary Teachers' Federation (OSSTF), the Educational Support Staff of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (ESS) and the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario's (ETFO) employee groups announced strike action in the form of job sanctions (known as "Work-to-Rule").

This employee group includes secondary school teachers and educational support staff (Educational Assistants, Secretaries, Attendance Counsellors, Child and Youth Workers, Information Technology staff, office staff, Librarians and Early Childhood Educators). This is occurring province-wide and is a legal strike action. It is in response to a labour dispute with the Government of Ontario through the central collective bargaining process.

Why aren't other school boards closing schools?

The OSSTF, OSSTF-ESS and ETFO unions represents different employee groups in different school boards. In the Superior-Greenstone District School Board, unions represent the various employee groups as described in the image illustrated above.

Do I need to call the school to mark my child as absent during the strike?

No, you do not need to call in your child's absence.

How will this impact student learning?

During the strike and resulting school closure, students will miss course and class work. Because we don't know how long the strike will last, we are not yet in a position to address the loss of learning. We appreciate that this is difficult for families and students, and we will continue to monitor the labour situation and provide updates to you as they become available.

Are evening or weekend permits still taking place?

All evening and weekend permits are being honored at this time.

Can parents/community members volunteer at schools to help during job action?

Parents and community members cannot take on a task that would traditionally be completed by a union member.

Where can I get updates about the labour actions?

To find out the status of labour action in the Superior-Greenstone District School Board:

- Follow [@SGDSBoard](#) on Twitter and/or like our page on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/SGDSBoard>.
- Visit the Superior-Greenstone District School Board website at <http://www.sgdsb.on.ca/labour-action-update>.
- Parents can sign up to receive immediate alerts by subscribing to "School Messenger" by speaking to the school Principal.
- Watch for updates in the local news— radio, newspaper.

Support for Parents

The government has launched Support for Parents, an initiative that will provide financial support to parents of eligible children for each day of school that is missed on account of the labour disruption. Parents with children attending school-based child care centres that are closed on account of the labour disruption will also be eligible to receive support. Parents will be able, and strongly encouraged, to submit applications via an online system.

If you have questions about this financial support and to submit an online application, please visit the Ministry's website at www.Ontario.ca/SupportForParents or the dedicated Support for Parents Helpline at 888-444-3770.

