

Arbitration award decision issued on compensation for ETFO teachers, occasional teachers

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TORONTO, ON – In December 2023, teacher and occasional teacher (OT) members of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) ratified a central agreement that included the referral of compensation (salary and daily OT rate) to binding arbitration; the hearing was held on April 17. Today, the Arbitration Board, chaired by William Kaplan, issued its decision.

The Arbitration Board awarded ETFO's 80,000 teacher and OT members salary increases of 11.25 per cent over the term of the 2022-2026 collective agreement—an 11.73 per cent increase when compounded over the four years. This represents increases of three per cent for 2022-23, three per cent for 2023-24, 2.75 per cent for 2024-25, and 2.5 per cent for 2025-26. The compensation award applies to salary grids, wage schedules, applicable premiums and allowances, and the daily OT rate, and represents the highest increase over the term of an agreement in over a decade.

Recognizing the expertise and qualifications of OTs, the Arbitration Board also decided that all daily OT rates will be adjusted up to a baseline average rate as of Sept. 1, 2024. All ETFO locals with daily OT rates lower than the baseline average rate will increase to the new average rate plus receive the 2.75 per cent awarded for the 2024-25 school year. Any locals with a daily OT rate higher than the new baseline average rate will continue at that rate, plus the 2.75 per cent awarded for 2024-25. All daily OT rates will then increase by an additional 2.5 per cent in 2025-26. Over the course of the agreement, ETFO expects the compounded compensation increase for daily OTs moving to the new baseline average rate to be in the range of 14 to 15 per cent. The compensation increase for all ETFO OT locals overall should be above 13 per cent.

The Arbitration Board's decision to award ETFO members more than the insulting offer proposed by the Ford government at the central bargaining table (i.e., a 1.25 per cent salary increase) is proof that ETFO's decision to reject their unacceptably low proposal and obstinate stance during this round of bargaining was sound. Notes ETFO President Karen Brown, "This compensation award should have been achieved at the bargaining table. Instead of coming together to reach a fair and reasonable agreement, the Ford government was intent on devaluing our members who are already facing increased violence, insufficient supports for students with special needs, heavy workloads, and burnout. This award highlights the Ford government's failure to recognize and fairly compensate ETFO members."

Fair compensation is not only about acknowledging the indispensable contributions of educators; it's also the cornerstone of a sustainable public education system. Adds Brown, "Teachers and OTs are professionals with specialized skills developed through rigorous training and continuous professional development. Just compensation honours this expertise and helps ensure dedicated, qualified individuals feel valued and remain in the teaching profession."

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As this award is final and binding on both parties, the decision cannot be appealed. School boards that have concluded local bargaining must now issue retroactive payments to all eligible members no later than 30 days after the release of this decision.

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