

As rotating strikes continue, Ontario government offers daily compensation for parents

Written By ALYSSA PARKHILL

Ontario's four major teachers' unions are taking action as negotiations with the Ford government continue.

The Elementary Teacher's Federation of Ontario (ETFO), the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) are all taking part in standing up to the negotiations and walking off the job.

Ontario Education Minister Stephen Lecce came forward with a compensation of \$60 a day for families to help pay for child care costs incurred as a result of these rotating strikes.

"Our aim has always been to reach a negotiated settlement that keeps kids in class, which we have done successfully with multiple labour partners to date," says Minister Lecce in a previous press release. "We recognize the impact of union escalation on families is real and unions expect hard-working families to bear the costs of their cyclical labour action. While unions impose hardship on families and students, our government is taking proactive steps to ensure students remain in school and families supported in the event that unions decide to further escalate job action in their fight for enhanced compensation and other demands. The contrast could not be clearer."

Parents are able to gain compensation due to these on-going strikes by meeting certain criteria. Those with children up to the age of 12, or with students with special needs to the age of 21 will receive some form of compensation. Mr. Lecce confirmed that \$60 a day will be provided to families whose children age 0 to 6 who are yet to be enrolled in school but go to a child care centre that is affected by the strike. \$40 a day has been allocated for students in junior kindergarten to senior kindergarten. \$25 a day for students Grade 1 to Grade 7, and \$40 a day for students in junior kindergarten to Grade 12 who have special needs.

"Our government will continue to support parents and provide predictability during this period of union-caused uncertainty," explained Jilly Dunlop, Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues. "We will always put families and children first."

Social media has blown up over the issue, with people on both sides of the fence expressing mixed feelings. Some Ontarians agree with the compensation, feeling it will help parents affected by the strikes, while others see it simply as a bribe from the provincial government.

Strikes began this past Monday and plan to rotate through strikes until a negotiation deal is set in place with the province by the end of this week.

Mayor Allan Thompson hopes the matters between the Ford government and the unions are resolved soon.

"This is a matter between the Province, the teachers and their union. My hope is that a resolution can be found as soon as possible for all involved," comments Mayor Thompson.