

Section III – Items for the Information of the Board

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Directors
Meeting #8/19, Friday, September 27, 2019

FROM: Darryl Gray, Director, Education and Training

**RE: UPDATE ON ONTARIO TEACHER LABOUR NEGOTIATIONS AND
POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON TORONTO AND REGION CONSERVATION
AUTHORITY EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

KEY ISSUE

Update on Ontario teacher labour negotiations and the potential impacts on Toronto and Region Conservation Authority education programs and activities.

RECOMMENDATION

WHEREAS TORONTO AND REGION CONSERVATION AUTHORITY provides out-of-classroom learning activities related to natural science and cultural heritage to schools within the Toronto region;

AND WHEREAS the current collective bargaining agreements between the Province of Ontario and Federations representing Ontario teachers and education works expired August 31, 2019 and negotiations are ongoing;

AND WHEREAS labour disruptions within Ontario schools has the potential to impact student and class visitation to Toronto and Region Conservation Authority education centres;

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT the following information report be received.

BACKGROUND

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) has worked with local schools and school boards to provide curriculum-linked out-of-classroom learning experiences for students related to natural science and cultural heritage since 1953. These programs are delivered within TRCA-owned greenspace systems, conservation areas and education centres, including the Kortright Centre for Conservation, Black Creek Pioneer Village, Albion Hills and Lake St. George Field Centres, Claremont Nature Centre and Tommy Thompson Park. Education programs at TRCA centres focus on providing experiences outside of the school environment in a way that improves learning outcomes by contextualizing the lessons learned. For the 2018 reporting period, 128,771 students primarily from the Greater Toronto Area schools participated in TRCA out-of-classroom learning experiences at one of the above noted education centres.

With collective agreements for Ontario teachers having expired on August 31, 2019, there is a risk of labour disruptions during the 2019/2020 school year which has the potential to adversely impact student access to TRCA out-of-classroom learning experiences.

Collective bargaining for teachers employed by Ontario school boards is governed by the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Act* (SBCBA) and is undertaken in a two-tier process:

1. Central bargaining between each of the four unions representing teachers in Ontario and

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- bargaining agents for Ontario school boards (Ontario Public School Boards Association) to address items with a Province-wide scope or nature, such as financial matters; and
2. Local bargaining between the four unions representing teachers and individual school boards for locally related items.

The four unions representing teachers in Ontario are the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO), Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF), Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA), and L'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEF). As the vast majority of education programs delivered at TRCA sites are delivered to elementary school students, ETFO and OECTA are the two key unions whereby any ongoing labour disruptions would have an impact on TRCA educational activities.

Negotiations between the four unions representing Ontario teachers and the Province are underway and there is currently no job action planned.

CUPE, the union representing education workers, filed a no-board report with the Ministry of Labour on September 5, 2019, meaning that custodians, librarians, education assistants and other administrative staff will be in a legal strike position on September 23, 2019. Further negotiations are scheduled for September 16 and 17, 2019.

While it is difficult to predict the outcome of ongoing collective bargaining negotiations, historically, labour disruptions within the education system have consisted of work-to-rule and/or a strike/lock-out. In the event of either a work-to-rule or strike/lock-out, there are varying implications for TRCA out-of-classroom learning programs.

Work-To-Rule: In spring and fall 2015, Ontario elementary teachers represented by ETFO participated in a work-to-rule that was incremental in nature, meaning that while initially there was minimal disruption to student activities, over time the types of non-teaching duties that teachers ceased participating in as part of the job action escalated to include rotating strikes and the curtailment of extra-curricular activities, such as sports teams, graduation ceremonies and field trips. The autumn 2015 work-to-rule resulted in a 26% reduction in year-over-year school bookings for day trips at Black Creek Pioneer Village and a 32% reduction in year-over-year school bookings at the Kortright Centre for that period. Further, TRCA's three field centres (Albion Hills, Claremont and Lake St. George) experienced a similar average drop in bookings for overnight visits of 28%.

Strike/Lock-Out: While there have been local one-day strikes by teachers in individual school boards, there has not been a multi-day province-wide teacher strike since 1997. During a strike or lock-out, students do not attend school and, as a result, all field trips are cancelled. As there hasn't been a province-wide strike in over twenty years, we do not have any reliable historical data on the impacts of a complete work stoppage, however, strikes are typically shorter in duration compared to work-to-rule and the long-term impacts on field trips are less pronounced.

RATIONALE

While it is difficult to predict the ultimate outcome of current ongoing labour negotiations, it is important to note that the autumn 2015 teacher job action occurred a full year following the August 31, 2014 expiration of teacher contracts. While Ontario teachers and education staff are currently working without contracts, there is no immediate job action planned.

In the event of work-to-rule within Ontario's school system, TRCA has historically made

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provisions to ensure student access to TRCA learning programs while minimizing the financial impacts on TRCA budgets, including:

- Accommodating disrupted school visits later in the school year;
- Adjusting TRCA's cancellation policy to allow for schools to apply deposits to rebooked visits;
- Converting overnight visits to TRCA Field Centers to day visits;
- Shortening day trips to accommodate teacher or administrative supervisors

In the event of a strike or lock-out, TRCA education facilities have prepared day camp and family programming to provide parents with options for their children that have been displaced from regular school as a result of work stoppages, thereby offsetting some lost revenue while also meeting TRCA objectives related to engaging children and youth in nature-based and cultural learning opportunities.

Additionally, to minimize or avoid staff lay-offs, during labour disruptions, where possible, staff are redeployed to other parts of the organization that have funded operational or program needs that are not affected by the work disruption, such as TRCA's in-class and community programming areas.

Relationship to Building the Living City, the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following strategies set forth in the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan:

Strategy 5 – Foster sustainable citizenship and Strategy 6 – Tell the Story of the Toronto Region

FINANCIAL DETAILS

Depending on timing of any labour disruptions, the impact on TRCA education centres will vary. Labour disruptions during the September/October December and May/June months will have a larger financial impact, as these are the busiest months for TRCA's education centres. During the autumn 2015 work-to-rule, education bookings for the September – December period dropped an average of 29% across all TRCA education facilities, resulting in a reduction in revenue of approximately \$184,000 across all education activities. However, since 2015, TRCA staff have worked to diversify education business activities to strengthen private school, day-care and other non-school bookings, which could have a moderating effect during future labour disruptions depending on the duration and timing of such a disruption.

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

TRCA staff will continue to monitor ongoing labour negotiations and in the event of a disruption, work with local schools and school boards to minimize impacts on program delivery and on TRCA staff in relevant business units.

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