

APRIL 2009

INFLUENCE POWER

Be Active in Political Parties

Political Party Members have influence

OSSTF/FEESO encourages members to join and become involved with a political party. Members active in a political party are in a good position to promote public education, shape strong policy positions, and raise matters of concern to OSSTF/FEESO within the party. The more of us there are, the more a party has to pay attention to what we have to say.

Direct involvement by members in a political party is a valuable addition to the lobbying and advocacy campaigns OSSTF/FEESO leaders and its members use to affect decisions from outside. "Insiders" are in a position to influence their party's direction on an ongoing basis both during and between elections.

What does joining a political party offer?

As a member of a political party, you can play a bigger role in the political process than just casting your ballot each election. This includes opportunities to:

- shape party policies through local discussion and at policy conventions;
- vote for the leader of the party;
- help choose the local candidates representing your party in provincial and federal elections;
- gain access to and discuss issues with elected representatives and their staff more readily;
- build influence with political party leaders and staff at different levels in the organization;
- connect with other party members and stakeholders by working in elections and within the party structures;
- become active in your community at events sponsored by the political party and/or the elected representative.

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What does being a member of a political party involve?

Party members are expected to support their party's principles and objectives. Beyond that, your level of involvement is up to you.

In general, you can expect to receive phone calls, mailings and communiqués from the party, including:

- updates on the party leader and the party's policies and activities;
- appeals for donations;
- requests to take a sign and/or volunteer during an election.

For those wanting to be more involved, there are many opportunities in the local riding association to volunteer, including:

- running for a position on the riding executive;
- representing the riding at convention;
- working on election campaigns;
- helping out with community events;
- being a candidate for office at the provincial, federal or municipal level.

You may also want to get active at other levels within the party's organization.

What support does OSSTF/FEESO provide?

OSSTF/FEESO offers financial support to help members attend and participate at political party conventions. Check with the provincial office for details. Information on education issues and other positions of OSSTF/FEESO is available as well.

Provincial and district support may also be given to endorsed candidates during an election campaign. This could include financial donations and volunteers to the campaign, as well as providing information to our members.

How to join a political party

Contact information for the different political parties is available on the Internet.

Specific information on political parties in Ontario can be found on their websites, including:

- Ontario New Democratic Party — <http://ontariondp.com/leader>
- Ontario Liberal Party — www.ontarioliberal.ca
- Green Party of Ontario — <http://www.gpo.ca>
- Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario — <http://www.ontariopc.com>

Resources:

- OSSTF Kit. *Shifting the Balance of Power*: 2003
- *Political Action*: A Practical Guide, Alberta Teachers' Association — www.teachers.ab.ca