

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Ford government's plan to reopen some schools announced under the radar**

Toronto—Yesterday's school re-opening announcement by the Ford government remains unclear. In the absence of any information directly from the Ministry, our communities remain very concerned about in-person learning, supports, and services in physical classrooms. Most families are still utterly confused about the status of their children's learning in the near term.

"We're pleased that health and safety considerations have taken apparent precedence in a number of Southern Ontario school boards," said Harvey Bischof. "That said, there has been no consultation with education unions or provision of the data that have triggered the move back to in-person learning in Northern Ontario and elsewhere in the province."

The Premier and Minister of Education Stephen Lecce continue to minimize the safety concerns of families in Ontario. Stay-at-home measures offer insufficient protection to students, education workers, teachers, and families who will be engaged in face-to-face learning next week.

"To reduce the spread of COVID-19 and keep our education workers, teachers, and families safe, we again call for an immediate pause on in-person learning, supports, and services for all students across the province," said Harvey Bischof. "We know the best place for students is in a face-to-face classroom; however, we also know that we all have to do our part to prioritize the safety of our communities. At this time, that means keeping learning remote until clear benchmarks are announced and met to allow a safe return to school buildings, especially when community transmission rates remain high," concluded Bischof.

It is time to end the uncertainty and chaos and to establish transparent, evidence-informed metrics that will clearly inform everyone when it is safe to move students, education workers, and teachers safely back to face-to-face classroom environments.

In the meantime, OSSTF/FEESO members remain committed to providing exceptional public education, supports, and services despite the inconsistent and confusing responses to the pandemic by the Ford government and Minister of Education Stephen Lecce.

*OSSTF/FEESO, founded in 1919, has over 60,000 members across Ontario. They include public high school teachers, occasional teachers, educational assistants, continuing education teachers and instructors, early childhood educators, psychologists, secretaries, speech-language pathologists, social workers, plant support personnel, university support staff, and many others in education.*

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