

MEDIA RELEASE

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Chaotic and unclear remote learning and vaccination plan for education workers and teachers

TORONTO, ON— Education workers and teachers in Ontario are feeling more confused and let down than ever after Premier Doug Ford and Minister of Education Stephen Lecce’s announcement about vaccinations last week. Ford and Lecce said on Thursday that they would immediately open access to vaccinations for education workers and teachers in hot spot areas of the province, as well as to those staff who work with students with special needs who will continue to learn in-person after the April Break.

However, many education workers and teachers report that they are unable to get immediate appointments through the Ministry of Health or their local health units despite the Ford government’s assurances that access to vaccinations would be immediate.

“Here we have another example where Health Units, school staff, school boards, and other key stakeholders in health and education find out the government’s plan from the podium of a press conference, leaving everyone confused and scrambling,” said OSSTF/FEESO President Harvey Bischof.

“For example, we heard from one of our Northern Ontario leaders that the local health unit says that they do not have the vaccines to give to education workers and teachers who will be told to report to school buildings to support students with special needs next week. In another area of Ontario where case counts are high, many education staff who are supposedly eligible to receive a vaccination based on Ford’s announcement are not able to get an appointment for their first dose until May,” continued Bischof. “There is a great deal of confusion out there.”

OSSTF/FEESO calls on the government to immediately offer access to COVID vaccinations to all education workers and teachers, prioritizing those staff who:

- Work in hot spot areas of the province,
- Work with special needs students who require in-person learning and supports, and,
- Provide student support services, including counselling and mental health supports.

“The education workers and teachers of OSSTF/FEESO want to be teaching, supporting, and providing services to students in-person, but it must be safe to do so. We believe that students learn and receive supports and services best when they are in-person in school, something that the Minister of Education has echoed many times. It’s time that this government comes up with

a clear plan based on evidence-informed medical advice to allow front-line education staff immediate access to vaccinations and keep schools open safely,” concluded Bischof.

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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