

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release: Friday, June 20, 2025

More funding for teacher training at universities is welcome, but won't solve the real crisis in Ontario's classrooms

TORONTO, ON — The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) acknowledges the Ford government's reannouncement today of funding to expand teacher training seats at universities across Ontario. While increasing capacity in Faculties of Education is a necessary step, it will not solve the deeper crisis in teacher recruitment and retention facing Ontario schools.

"Training more teachers is important, but this announcement misses the mark," said Karen Littlewood, President of OSSTF/FEESO. "We're seeing unprecedented numbers of teachers leave the profession within their first five years, and this plan does nothing to address the root causes of why they are leaving in record numbers."

Teachers are leaving because working conditions have deteriorated under the Ford government. Chronic underfunding has led to increased violence in schools, larger class sizes, rising classroom complexity, and crumbling infrastructure. Education workers, the caring professionals who deliver services for our most vulnerable students, are also leaving the profession, causing even more stress and strain on the system. However, the Ford government continues to devalue and denigrate the education profession through divisive rhetoric and policies that undermine respect for teachers and education workers.

Furthermore, the province has yet to provide clear, detailed information to Faculties of Education or school boards about whether funding for more spaces will be targeted in areas that have the greatest shortages. Despite claims that the investment will support northern, rural, Indigenous, French-language, and technological education, the lack of specifics suggests a failure to understand the urgent, localized needs of Ontario's education system.

"School boards across the province are desperate for French and technological education teachers, and for staff in remote communities, but this plan offers no concrete solutions to fill those specific gaps," said Littlewood. "Without clear direction, it's just more smoke and mirrors."

If the government is serious about solving the teacher shortage, it must invest in retention strategies, improved working conditions, and provide targeted, responsive recruitment supports where they are needed most. OSSTF/FEESO has repeatedly called on the government to create a dedicated "stay and learn" tuition waiver program to attract students to post-secondary programs for education sector occupations experiencing shortages, similar to initiatives in health care and long-term care.

“The government likes to make splashy announcements, but students and educators deserve more than headlines,” added Littlewood. “They need real investments, supports, and solutions.”

OSSTF/FEESO would welcome the opportunity to work with the government on meaningful policies and programs to address Ontario’s recruitment and retention crisis. These efforts must be informed by the realities in our schools and developed in partnership with those who know the system best, teachers and education workers.

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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