

MEDIA STATEMENT

For Immediate Release: Wednesday, September 13, 2023

OSSTF/FEESO Rejects Ford Government's attack on 2SLGBTQI+ students

TORONTO, ON – OSSTF/FEESO resoundingly rejects statements made by Premier Doug Ford and Minister of Education Stephen Lecce that attempt to manufacture false divisions between parents, educators, and students over issues of student privacy and gender expression.

Recent comments from the Premier and Education Minister accused Ontario's public educators of indoctrination while suggesting that they should betray the confidence of 2SLGBTQI+ students, despite risks to student safety and mental health.

These harmful comments disregard the rights and needs of students and demonstrate a profound lack of respect and understanding of the role of public education. Such comments have real-world consequences for many 2SLGBTQI+ youth and act as a form of erasure of the identities of 2SLGBTQI+ students across the province.

Supporting students through their decisions around gender expression is an important part of helping young people in their right to self-determination. Denying students their autonomy to choose how they self-identify can affect their sense of self-worth and can cause emotional and social distress, leading to negative mental health outcomes, such as self-harm, bullying, and other forms of exclusion. In turn, this distress can adversely impact a student's achievement and success in school.

Instead of protecting the safety and well-being of students across Ontario, the Ford government has tried to pit parents against students and educators in a shameful attempt to use students as a distraction from public allegations of corruption in the sale of Greenbelt lands.

If the Ford government attempts to enact this harmful rhetoric as public policy, OSSTF/FEESO will vigorously defend its Members in exercising their professional judgement in creating safe schools and upholding the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Ontario's public educators are committed to working with students, staff, and parents to create learning environments that are safe for all students across the province.

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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