

Publicly-funded education in Ontario has been dedicated to providing students with rich learning opportunities, skills, and a sense of community for generations. These building blocks for student success enhance the social and economic fabric of a diverse, dynamic, and prosperous province. The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) believes that a strong publicly-funded education system continues to be essential to Ontario's future.

Our plan *Strengthen Public Education—Rebuild Ontario*, will protect and build up Ontario's publicly-funded education system, just as we have for over 100 years. Our education system is one of the province's most valuable assets; it must be protected.

The global pandemic presented unprecedented challenges and revealed the deep levels of inequities in society. The pandemic highlighted the crucial role education plays in maintaining a strong and vibrant society. However, it has also magnified the significant inequities that continue to plague our public services and institutions and negatively affect the lived experiences for students and families in Ontario.

OSSTF/FEESO urges everyone in Ontario to join us in building for a better tomorrow, one that moves beyond the status quo. Now is the time to embrace the opportunity before us. Our plan, *Strengthen Public Education—Rebuild Ontario* will protect and enhance Ontario's publicly-funded education system. It will also help rebuild the province and the people living in it. OSSTF/FEESO recognizes the need for publicly-funded education to evolve to meet the needs of all who rely on it and is committed to working with families, community leaders, elected leaders, and various stakeholders who seek to strengthen and enhance publicly-funded education in Ontario.



PREAMBLE



INCREASING STUDENT-CENTRED SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

Providing permanent, predictable, and meaningful funding for specialized programming and supports for all students strengthens learner outcomes and translates into increased graduation rates and student opportunity and success. Equity objectives are met best when funding is accessible and widespread. Having more staff in buildings creates safer school buildings and campuses, promotes student and worker mental health, and healthy communities.

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STAFFING MODELS THAT SUPPORT STUDENT AND WORKER OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESS

- Standard formula for worker staff/student ratios for education workers in publicly-funded education sites are required.
- All supports must be culturally relevant and workers need to be provided with training opportunities on the harms of colonialism.

B

INCREASE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS

- Trauma and learning support post-COVID-19, from early learning through post-secondary.
- Mental health supports in every school/worksite.

C

SUPPORTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEWCOMERS

- Support for universal child care, anti-poverty supports, and a living minimum wage.
- Culturally-responsive curriculum, learning materials, assessment/evaluation, testing, and learning environments.

CENTRING SCHOOLS AS PART OF OUR COMMUNITIES

A robust publicly-funded education system is dependent on investments in communities and public services. The foundation of economic growth begins with families and communities. When they have direct access to strong public services and supports, families and communities succeed. Strong public services fuel economic growth.



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INVESTING IN EDUCATION IS AN INVESTMENT IN ONTARIO

- Services, such as affordable child care, universal basic income, and improving access to supports will build stronger, healthier communities.
- Lower tuition fees will reduce the financial burden on students and families and improve access to quality publicly-funded post-secondary education.

B

SUPPORTING THE GROWTH OF COMMUNITIES

- Greater investments in community training and education for newcomers to Canada, as well as improved skill retraining opportunities for people entering or transitioning back into the workforce successfully fuels economic growth.

C

PERMANENT, PAID SICK DAYS FOR WORKERS IN ONTARIO

- Allowing workers the ability to stay home when sick will significantly reduce the spread of illnesses in workplaces and communities.
- Paid sick days provide financial security for families while helping to keep communities and workplaces safe.

Addressing systemic inequities in access to technology, curriculum opportunities, programming, and educator supports will lead to greater student success. Providing culturally relevant learning opportunities for all students benefits all communities.

IMPROVING LEARNING CONDITIONS FOR ALL

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IN-PERSON LEARNING

- In-person learning helps to diminish inequities in education for marginalized, racialized, Black, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQI+ students.
- Better supports are available in-person for the social and emotional growth of students, including Educational Assistant support.

B

SMALLER CLASSES

- Students achieve greater success in smaller classes
- Smaller class sizes keep smaller rural school communities open, ensuring robust opportunities for learning.

C

SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS

- More school and community services should be made available to students to help address the increase in mental health issues.
- More school-based speech and language services are needed to support students in the classroom.
- Increase funding for services provided by board-employed practitioners.

D

SUPPORTING SPECIALIZED, CULTURALLY-APPROPRIATE PROGRAMMING AND STAFFING FOR ALL STUDENTS

- Removal of School Resource Officers or other similar programs from all of Ontario's publicly-funded schools.
- Dedicated, sustained funding for violence-prevention initiatives from early learning to post-secondary.

ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES

Systemic changes are necessary to achieve equitable outcomes. Changes to education must provide positive impacts for marginalized groups and they must be actionable and permanent. Training must be provided for all education workers and teachers. Consultations and collaboration with all stakeholder groups, including education unions, families, and community groups is needed to support open dialogue and action.

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FOCUS ON FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS, AND INUIT COMMUNITIES

- Infrastructure supports for education, including access to full school programming, technology, Wi-Fi, and sustainable, safe buildings.
- Recentring the curriculum with a lens on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of knowing and learning.

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ADDRESSING AND CONFRONTING ANTI-BLACK RACISM AND OTHER FORMS OF RACISM AND OPPRESSION

- Decentring whiteness in education.
- Dismantling white supremacy and colonial legacy practices in education.

C

DE-STREAMING

- Advocating for increased permanent funding for de-streaming.
- Smaller class sizes, dedicated education workers in classes, and training for all education workers and teachers is required for the successful implementation of de-streaming.

D

HIRING AND RETENTION PRACTICES

- Advocating for greater access to professional training and retention programs/policies for members of Black, Indigenous, and other racialized communities.
- Advocating for greater diversity, transparency and accountability in hiring practices in publicly-funded education.

PROVIDING SAFE, HEALTHY LEARNING AND WORKING CONDITIONS

All students, teachers, and education workers, from junior kindergarten to post-secondary, need safe, healthy, well-maintained environments in which to learn and work. Investments in well-maintained physical spaces and resources will protect and improve the physical and mental health of staff and students in Ontario's publicly-funded education system and will result directly in jobs for Ontario workers. Additionally, students and staff want a learning environment that is free from violence. We need a culturally responsive, proactive violence prevention plan that includes training and the funding.

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CREATING SAFER, HEALTHIER, AND ACCESSIBLE SCHOOLS

- Fix the \$16.3-billion repair backlog for Ontario public schools.
- A comprehensive review to establish stable funding for school infrastructure, and increased board employed staff necessary to address and prevent further disrepair in Ontario's schools.
- Funding to meet the 2025 *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) deadline.

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ADDRESSING VIOLENCE IN THE LEARNING AND WORKING ENVIRONMENT

- Establish an Education Sector Regulation within the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.
- Increase the number of qualified and trained adults in our schools. Professional student services personnel, secretaries, custodians, educational assistants, early childhood educators and teachers all provide a high level of care for students.
- Provide mandatory enhanced training to prevent, appropriately respond to, and report incidents of violence in schools.