

OSSTF/FEESO Comments to the Ministry of Education Re: Bill 101 Putting Student Achievement First, 2026

April 27, 2026



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Preamble

The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) was founded in 1919. OSSTF/FEESO represents over 60,000 public high school teachers, teachers at provincial schools, occasional teachers, educational assistants, instructors, psychologists, secretaries, speech-language pathologists, behaviour analysts, child and youth workers, social workers, plant support personnel, and many other educational workers and support staff in public schools and universities.

OSSTF/FEESO is pleased to provide its submission on Putting Student Achievement First, 2026 ("Bill 101") with a posting date of Monday April 13th and comment due date of Monday April 27th (a mere 2 weeks after it was posted.)

Context

The Ontario government has introduced Bill 101, which contains five schedules that, if passed, would amend the [Child Care and Early Years Act](#), the [Education Act](#), the [Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario Act](#), the [Ontario College of Teachers Act](#), the [Ottawa-Carleton French-Language School Board Transferred Employees Act](#), and the [School Boards Collective Bargaining Act](#).

The government claims that the proposed amendments would move Ontario towards a more accountable, consistent and modernized model of high-quality education delivery across the province. However, the Bill instead removes accountable parties, silences voices and eliminates sources of evidence based-research. There is nothing modern in this approach, it is simply an age-old centralization of power.

Significant Impact of Bill 101

There are several significant changes being proposed to the Education Act and to the School Board Collective Bargaining Act that would significantly impact the members of OSSTF/FEESO if this bill is passed. OSSTF/FEESO strongly expresses its disappointment that there was no meaningful consultation with those most invested in putting student achievement first, the teachers and education workers committed to providing the highest standards of public education. While we are pleased to provide a submission now, it is unfortunate that no discussion took place until now when the passing of the Act is imminent and central bargaining is about to begin. There are many questions still to be answered and many details through regulations still to be provided and yet, there will be significant impacts to the education sector if this bill is passed which come into effect immediately upon Royal Assent.

Comment/analysis

While OSSTF/FEESO supports initiatives which advance the education system, it is decidedly uncertain whether the amendments in this Bill will produce any such advancements. Of greatest concern to OSSTF/FEESO are the proposed changes to the Education Act and to the School Board Collective Bargaining Act (SBCBA). Below are the major areas of concern for OSSTF/FEESO in order of the schedules as presented in the proposed Bill.

Changes to the Education Act (Schedule 2)

Approved educational materials: OSSTF/FEESO members have always adhered to the Trillium list when looking for educational materials such as textbooks and other teaching resources. We take no issue with the government adding a new proposed definition of “educational materials” which includes digital learning materials and digital textbooks. However, it is unclear whether a teacher’s professional judgement would allow them to deviate from the materials listed under this new expanded list as this new bill proposes stronger language to ensure that boards adhere to the relevant policies/guidelines with respect to selecting and using approved educational materials. We believe teachers know their students best and should be able to exercise their professional judgement when it comes to use of educational materials.

Assessment of student achievement: This section provides the Minister with the power to establish binding policies and guidelines for the assessment of student achievement. While that is the only reference to student achievement in this bill, ironically entitled Putting Student Achievement First, it is rather concerning in its sweeping endowment of powers to the Minister. By mandating exams and assessment standards for secondary school students, the Minister is already promising to override teachers’ professional judgement currently outlined in Growing Success. OSSTF/FEESO welcomes efforts to “help improve student preparedness for postsecondary pursuits and ensure consistent assessment practices for students” however, there are very few details on what this actually means. There is great concern that this could be the start of more standardized testing which will also erode a teacher’s professional judgment. There is much research pointing to the failure of standardized testing while OSSTF/FEESO believes strongly, instead, in meeting students’ differentiated needs. Included in this one line in the Bill about student achievement is the promise made through the Ministry’s website and press releases that attendance and participation will form part of a student’s mark. While there is no specific mention made of this in the Bill itself, it is implied in the sweeping generalization and interpretation of the minister’s new power. It is unclear that students who have a history of low attendance would be positively affected by a corresponding low mark bestowed on them for their lack of attendance. What is clear, however, is the fact that many of our students do not attend school regularly due to factors such as mental health issues, anxiety brought on by overcrowded classrooms and few support systems, violence in the schools, bullying and other factors that are the root causes of the student absenteeism so keenly obvious in our school system. OSSTF/FEESO encourages the government to devote more resources to the classroom in support of our most vulnerable students instead of exacerbating the issue even further by tying their absenteeism to an even lower mark which does nothing to promote their success.

Director of Education: The changes proposed to the leadership in the school boards under the guise of accountability are also troubling. It is understood that 8 boards were taken over by the ministry this year because of reports of financial mismanagement, however, there are 72 boards in total in Ontario, and these proposed changes seem to be an overreaction to the reality in most school boards and an attempt to quiet those critical of the Ministry’s education reform. Replacing all the Directors of Education with a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who must have business qualifications and who is ultimately responsible for all educational decisions promotes the notion of corporatizing public education – an idea which OSSTF/FEESO vehemently opposes. It is a well-researched fact from the Conference Board of Canada report on The Economic Case for Investing in Education (2019) that “Each dollar of public education spending generates \$1.30 in total economic impacts to Ontario. At the same time, the inverse holds true for each dollar taken from public education.” OSSTF/FEESO would encourage a revisiting of this new

structure to ensure that the new Chief Education Officer (CEdO) is actually the one responsible for maintaining the high standards of public education in Ontario rather than a focus on dollars before students.

Changes to the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario Act (Schedule 3)

OSSTF/FEESO is equally concerned with the proposed changes to the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario Act. The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario provides the Ministry of Colleges, Universities Research Excellence and Security with high quality research so that the Ministry can make evidence-based decisions on matters of post-secondary education. This appears to be another attempt to muzzle voices critical of the underfunding of the post-secondary education system and the Americanization of the funding provided to our institutions of higher learning.

Changes to the Ontario College of Teachers Act (Schedule 4)

Bill 101 proposes changes to the Ontario College of Teachers Act, and while we applaud the change to both the length of time it takes to obtain a teaching certificate and the increase to the amount of time required during the practicum portions of that training, we feel that this is too little and much too late. There are over 70,000 members of the college who are not currently teaching in Ontario, and these changes do not address that issue at all. The issue is not that people are not willing to go to teachers' college and set out to become teachers. The issue is that once they are finished that training, they decide to do something else. They do this because of the working conditions in Ontario schools. They do this because they see that the professional judgement of teachers is not respected. They do this because they can see that Principals and Vice Principals have had all tools at their disposal removed from them to deal with students who need boundaries and consequences for their actions. The root cause of why people never start a career in teaching after their training needs to be addressed. These changes merely move powers away from institutions of higher learning to a professional college that is no longer made up of educators and have no expertise in what it takes to become a teacher or what it is like to be a teacher.

Changes to the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act (Schedule 5)

With less than three months to go before the 2026 round of school board negotiations, Bill 101 makes drastic changes to the legislation that governs this bargaining, namely the SBCBA. These changes are not subtle but substantive and impact years of history through successive rounds of negotiations. Labour relations players involved at both the central and local tables are drastically upended. Again, the centralization of power removes decision making power from those that have a better understanding of labour relations and the negotiation history in the education sector since the introduction of the SBCBA in 2014. This responsibility is placed into the hands of CEOs that don't see education as an investment opportunity but rather an expense. Removal of Trustee Associations from the bargaining process removes public voice, it removes accountability and places it in the hands of CEOs that cannot be removed without government approval. These changes are yet another aspect of this Bill that removes voice from those with ideas and thoughts that may differ from the Ford Government on how education should be conducted and funded in Ontario.

The School Boards Collective Bargaining Act specifically sets out a framework for central bargaining where the school boards and unions are parties to the negotiation, and the Crown is only a participant. In this new regime the Crown, through the Minister, can remove CODE and, “designate a person or body of persons to exercise the rights and privileges and perform duties on its behalf until central bargaining is completed”. In this way the Crown is much more than a participant and in fact now has complete power over the bargaining agent for the employers. Yet at the same time changes to the SBCBA seek to shield the government and its agents from any kind of liability. OSSTF/FEESO is strongly concerned that these changes will have a significant impact on the 2026 round of bargaining. These changes are being implemented much too quickly with absolutely no consultation with education stakeholders, most importantly in the bargaining process, those that represent the thousands of frontline workers that keep the system for the students they support.

Further to these issues the Trustee Associations, OPSBA and OCSTA are intricate parties to both our Teacher and Education Worker EHLTs. In addition to this they are employer representatives on the OMERS sponsors corporations and none of this is addressed in these legislative changes.

Lack of Consultation

If the government wants to improve student achievement, they should start by consulting representative unions of front-line education workers and teachers along with student groups, parents, and community organizations. To fully appreciate what is happening in schools, the government should be actively engaging with all stakeholders. They should be holding proactive and ongoing consultations and not a single day of presentations to committee.

Yet, the Ford government chose not to consult with any education union that represents the teachers and education workers who deliver education every day to Ontario’s two million students prior to introducing Bill 101. Instead, this bill aims to increase Ministry overreach into the autonomy of education workers, teachers, and school boards, a tactic of this government continues to wield, despite how often it undermines the excellent work being done in the public education system. It may more aptly be termed the “Putting the Minister of Education First Act.”

Given this government’s record on education, Ontarians have little reason to believe that the government will use the extensive powers it has given itself under this legislation to improve the province’s public education system. As witnessed through successive budgets, public education from kindergarten through university is being underfunded, ignored, and silenced. The public is routinely insulted with claims of, “historic funding” as if they aren’t keenly aware of how inflation works every time they go to the gas pump or grocery store. It’s no different in education.

Improving student achievement and strengthening public education is something OSSTF/FEESO and its members have been advocating for over 100 years. Convening a Ministry Initiatives Table under the guise of a consultation after the Bill has passed second reading does not rise to the level of meaningful consultation, particularly when government representatives weren’t able to answer simple questions satisfactorily.

It must be noted that, since being elected, this government has repeatedly ignored and dismissed our recommendations and good-faith demonstrations of our willingness to collaborate.

Ontario's education workers and teachers continue to support student achievement and overall success, even when faced with a government that ignores and dismisses them as demonstrated by the development and introduction of Bill 101.

The efforts of OSSTF/FEESO members are integral to student success. More can and should be done to ensure our students succeed, and OSSTF/FEESO remains committed to student achievement and enhancing public education.

As the representative of over 60,000 front-line education workers and teachers, we hope the government will finally begin working with us in earnest so our schools and universities can have the necessary resources and support that our students need and deserve to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally.



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