

# PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION

---

# TO THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE

January 2022

ONTARIO ENGLISH  
Catholic  
Teachers  
ASSOCIATION

The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) represents the 45,000 passionate and qualified teachers in Ontario's publicly funded English Catholic schools, from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

Barb Dobrowolski  
President

David Church  
General Secretary

Ontario English Catholic Teachers'  
Association 65 St. Clair Avenue East,  
Suite 400 Toronto, ON M4T 2Y8  
416.925.2493 or 1.800.268.7230  
Fax: 416.925.7764  
[catholicteachers.ca](http://catholicteachers.ca)

January 2022

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION .....	1
2.	RESPECT FOR PUBLIC SERVICES AND WORKERS .....	3
3.	QUALITY PUBLICLY FUNDED EDUCATION FOR ALL .....	5
	Consultation and Collaboration.....	5
	Safer Schools for All .....	6
	<i>Beyond the Pandemic</i> .....	8
	Learning Recovery.....	9
	Equity in Education.....	11
	<i>Addressing Discrimination and Inequality</i> .....	11
	<i>Destreaming</i> .....	13
	Mental Health .....	15
	Class Size .....	18
	Online/Hybrid Learning .....	19
	Special Education .....	22
	Infrastructure and Technology .....	24
	Education Quality and Accountability Office .....	26
	Full-day Kindergarten .....	27
	Indigenous Education .....	29
	Professional Development .....	31
	English Language Learners .....	32
	Adult and Continuing Education.....	33
	Publicly Funded Catholic Education .....	34
4.	A FAIR AND JUST SOCIETY .....	35
	Early Childhood Education and Care .....	36
	Opportunity for All.....	38
5.	CONCLUSION .....	43
6.	RECOMMENDATIONS .....	43
7.	WORKS CITED .....	49

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.01** The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) welcomes the opportunity to provide input on behalf of 45,000 Catholic teachers, as the government develops the 2022 provincial budget.
- 1.02** We are now into the third calendar year under the cloud of COVID-19, and the pandemic continues to shine light on social and economic inequalities that persist within our society. While the pandemic has affected everyone, evidence shows that it is having a disproportionate impact on individuals and families from Indigenous and equity-deserving populations, including women, Black, racialized, and socio-economically disadvantaged groups. With uneven access to testing, vaccines, and worker protections, some observers have suggested that we are in the midst of "two pandemics" (Wherry 2020).
- 1.03** These challenges have reinforced the vital role of publicly funded education. Beyond student academic development, the pandemic has brought into sharper relief the benefits that in-person learning contributes to student mental health and well-being. We have also seen renewed emphasis on the ability for publicly funded education to serve as a "leveler" of social inequality. At the same time, COVID-19 has highlighted and exacerbated longstanding issues, such as the consequences of failing to invest sufficiently in comprehensive student supports, lower class sizes, and infrastructure and technology upgrades.
- 1.04** It is for these reasons that our Association has taken every opportunity to urge the Ford government to deliver a strong public response, one which protects all Ontarians over the long term from the negative effects of health emergencies, natural disasters, and the whims of the market. We have called on the government to consider the social and economic benefits of investments in education, health care, and social services, and to adopt a more collaborative approach, by engaging in genuine dialogue with stakeholders before making decisions. Sadly, the Ford government has refused to heed this advice.
- 1.05** Too often, the government's approach to COVID-19 can be characterized as too little and too late. Instead of careful planning involving meaningful consultation

with experts, the government has relied upon social media “trial balloons” and public polling to arrive at major policy decisions (D’Mello 2021). In some cases, announcements have been made, only to be walked-back hours later in the face of overwhelming backlash and questionable legality, precipitating widespread confusion and chaos (Crawley 2021). At every step, the government has sought to do the bare minimum, while downloading responsibility onto others to do the bulk of the work.

- 1.06** This has certainly been the case in publicly funded education, where, despite the remarkable efforts of teachers, education workers, and families, the government’s series of belated half-measures and unfulfilled promises have jeopardized the ability for schools to reopen and stay open to in-person learning, through successive waves of COVID-19. The consequences of the government’s inaction have been significant, as Ontario’s students have suffered the longest in-person learning disruptions in North America (Benzie 2022).
- 1.07** All the while, the Ford government has continued its tendency to mislead Ontarians about the nature and scope of their actions. Despite the government’s repeated claims of “historic investment,” last year’s budget included a \$1.3 billion cut to education (Ministry of Finance 2021). This was followed by the Fall Economic Statement in November, where an additional \$467 million was missing from school funding, with no explanation from the Minister of Education (Ministry of Finance 2021a; Herhalt 2021).
- 1.08** Now is not the time for this government to continue its ideologically-driven preoccupation with cutting public services. We are still grappling with COVID-19, but we must also look ahead and outline a robust, multi-year, and equitable recovery plan. To make this a reality, the government must immediately reinvest in publicly funded education and the broader public sector.
- 1.09** It has been well established that investment in publicly funded education yields long-term dividends for society and the economy. According to an analysis by the Conference Board of Canada (2019), every dollar increase in publicly funded education investment produces \$1.30 in economic impacts for the province. This is in addition to cost-savings on social program spending associated with increased graduation rates. The report concludes that investment in publicly funded education

creates numerous benefits, including a healthier population, greater economic production, and a higher standard of living (McArthur-Gupta 2019).

- 1.10 The development of the 2022 provincial budget provides the government a final opportunity to set a new tone, look ahead to a post-pandemic era, and finally – if belatedly – do more to ensure the health and prosperity of our province and our people, now and in the future.

## 2. RESPECT FOR PUBLIC SERVICES AND WORKERS

- 2.01 The Ford government came to power promising to be “for the people.” Unfortunately, much of the government’s legislative agenda since 2018 has seemingly been designed to undermine and attack public services and public servants, while ignoring the expertise of frontline workers, including educators.
- 2.02 Over the past year, in the education sector alone, the Ford government has cut almost \$2 billion in funding (Ministry of Finance 2021; Ministry of Finance 2021a); laid secret plans to commercialize online learning (PressProgress 2021); refused to implement health and safety measures demanded by public health experts (Hristova 2021); suspended reporting of COVID-19 cases in schools; made major announcements at the last minute via social media leaks (Aguilar 2021); and attempted to blame teachers and their representatives for the government’s failure to consult on school reopening plans (Frankish 2022).
- 2.03 Taken together, these actions represent an ongoing pattern of profound disrespect – one that extends beyond education, and predates the pandemic.
- 2.04 In November 2019, the government introduced Bill 124, the ironically-named *Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act*. Draped in misleading language around a supposed fiscal emergency, the act imposes a one per cent limit on salary increases, for three years, for a range of public sector workers, including in education, health care, and long-term care.
- 2.05 The act – which the Association firmly believes is unconstitutional, and is currently subject to a court challenge – is an egregious affront to free and fair collective

bargaining. It is a blatant attempt by the government to tie the hands of both the employer and employee representatives at the bargaining table, which has the potential to interfere with workers' rights to join and advance our own interests, as well as to interrupt the free flow of ideas and proposals.

- 2.06** At the same time, the legislation perpetuates the fallacy that public sector wages are out of control. In reality, according to federal government data, in Ontario private sector wage increases have outpaced those in the public sector in all but one year since 2013 (ESDC 2022). Over the same period, public sector wage increases have been below the annual rate of inflation each year (Statistics Canada 2021). All the while, Ontario remains the lowest per capita spender on government programs of any province (RBC 2021). These are not distinctions of which we should be proud.
- 2.07** The government's approach of underfunding the public sector and disrespecting workers is producing detrimental consequences. As the government's own Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table has made clear, understaffing in the health care sector has created unprecedented levels of burnout among workers (Maunder et al. 2021). Research from the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) confirms that teachers are experiencing similar levels of anxiety, and in Ontario feel abandoned by their provincial government. Among OECTA respondents to the CTF survey, 72 per cent identified continual disruptions to the learning environment as the primary source of anxiety, and only 0.9 per cent of OECTA respondents feel supported by the Ford government (CTF 2020).
- 2.08** Ideally, a government would be looking to recruit and retain the best possible talent to staff Ontario's public sector, while fostering an environment in which public sector workers feel respected and supported. Instead, the Ford government is deliberately interfering with public sector workers' fundamental rights and cutting vital public services.
- 2.09** It is well past time for a course correction. **The Ford government must finally demonstrate respect for the frontline public service workers who have played an integral role in keeping Ontario's economy and society functioning throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.**

### **3. QUALITY PUBLICLY FUNDED EDUCATION FOR ALL**

#### **3.01 Consultation and Collaboration**

The successful reform of Ontario's publicly funded education system since 2003 has been due in large part to the way evidence and experience have guided education policymaking, and the important investments that have been made in programs with well-established, long-term benefits. The co-operative professional relationship between policymakers and teachers in Ontario has been held up as a model for others to follow, providing further evidence that education systems work best when education policy is developed collaboratively (Schleicher 2018; OECD 2010).

**3.02** As the frontline workers in the field of education, teachers possess firsthand knowledge and experience of how education policy works in the classroom, and which practices and methods are most conducive to student success. Genuine consultations with teacher unions and other education stakeholders could help to guide decisions about education policy in a way that would minimize disruption for students and ensure positive outcomes over the long run.

**3.03** Unfortunately, the government has chosen a much less constructive route. Since they came to office, the Ford government has been developing policies with little understanding of how publicly funded schools in Ontario actually work, and a disregard for the perspectives of the professionals who work in schools every day.

**3.04** Following the government's announcement in July 2020 of its intention to de-stream the Grade 9 math curriculum, the Association urged the government to consult with educators to ensure that the proper resources and supports were in place to improve equity and diversity in Ontario's publicly funded schools, so such a program would not inadvertently exacerbate existing problems. No such collaboration occurred, and instead when a de-streamed math curriculum was released, its implementation was oversimplified, underfunded, and rushed, placing the success of destreaming in jeopardy.

**3.05** In the case of reopening schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, our Association has been trying since March 2020 to engage the government in constructive dialogue about how to make schools as safe as possible while meeting the needs of all

students, but our suggestions and proposals have been rejected at almost every turn. In some cases, meetings have been scheduled on very short notice, with little opportunity for serious conversation. And frequently, the government has made a disingenuous show of soliciting input, only calling in teachers' unions when decisions had already been made.

**3.06** International research has shown that a collaborative, professional relationship between governments and teachers' organizations is a key ingredient in successful education systems; it is still not too late for the Ford government to change their approach and avoid the chaos and confusion Ontarians have had to endure thus far (Schleicher 2020; Schleicher 2018). **Moving forward, it will be a far better use of everyone's time and resources for the government to engage in regular, open, and constructive dialogue with teachers and education workers, and to heed the advice of those on the frontlines of publicly funded education.**

### **3.07 Safer Schools for All**

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began almost two years ago, the Ford government has demonstrated a baffling incompetence, bordering on negligence, in their refusal to implement the health and safety measures repeatedly called for by Catholic teachers, and other education and public health experts, including the Ontario Science Table and the Hospital for Sick Children (Science, Thampi, and Bitnun, et al. 2021; SickKids 2020).

**3.08** Not only has the government's response been inadequate on a policy level, but their ineffective communication and frequent plan reversals have contributed to widespread disruption and chaos, negatively impacting student learning and well-being.

**3.09** The early months of the 2021-22 school year once again saw individual schools and classrooms across Ontario close due to COVID-19 cases. The issue became more pronounced in December, after the discovery of the highly infectious Omicron variant, which spread across the province, including through schools. Instead of proactively collaborating with stakeholders, and providing school boards and families with clear direction regarding school reopening plans, the government left the

province in suspense, while the Minister of Education refused to make public appearances or respond to media inquiries.

- 3.10 The situation turned calamitous when, in the span of one week, the Ford government insisted schools would reopen on January 3, then announced a two-day extension of the holiday period, and then reversed this reversal, by announcing schools would move to virtual learning for an additional two weeks.
- 3.11 Making matters worse, the government failed to use the additional time it had given itself to substantively enhance school safety, leaving many legitimate questions and concerns about whether schools will stay open, in the long run.
- 3.12 For a safe and sustainable learning and working environment in Ontario schools, **Catholic teachers continue to call on the Ford government to prioritize access to booster shots for all teachers and education workers across the entire province, not just those in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.**
- 3.13 Additionally, **the government must ensure that PCR and rapid antigen tests are widely available to everyone in schools; case counts are reinstated and joined by a comprehensive COVID-19 testing and tracing program; a sustainable plan is put in place to address potential staff absences due to COVID-19-related illness and/or isolation; all teachers and education workers are immediately supplied with non-fit-tested N95 masks, and continue to be supplied with N95 masks as needed; and students are provided with the best possible masks, with improved guidelines to ensure masking compliance.**
- 3.14 To provide the greatest level of protection to our students and communities, **Catholic teachers urge the government to reduce class sizes to promote physical distancing.** We also believe that **everyone working in, or attending school who is eligible to be vaccinated, should be vaccinated. COVID-19 must be added to the list of designated diseases in *Ontario Regulation 261/13 Designated Diseases* under the *Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA)*, requiring students to be vaccinated against COVID-19, and**

**coupled with a robust public campaign promoting the importance of student vaccination.**

**3.15** The government must also improve ventilation and install HEPA filters in all classrooms and public areas in schools. This must include publicly available metrics and standards, including information on risk control programs and measures, in recognition and acceptance of the fact that the virus is airborne. Ventilation standards should be based on metrics outlined by the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), an internationally respected standard-setting organization. Any failure to implement such standards violates provisions of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

**3.16** *Beyond the Pandemic*

As we look ahead, we must remember the significant challenges that existed before COVID-19. Of particular concern is the problem of violence against teachers and education workers. In our 2017 survey of classroom teachers, 85 per cent of respondents said the incidence of violence against teachers is increasing, while 80 per cent said incidents are becoming more severe. More recently, a report surveying 3,854 education workers, led by researchers from the University of Ottawa, reported “shockingly high” rates of workplace violence, with 70 per cent of those surveyed indicating they have been subject to some form of physical force (Bruckert et al. 2021). The report found a “disturbing normalization of workplace violence... that violence ‘is part of the job’” (Bruckert et al. 2021).

**3.17** This has repercussions for everyone in the school community. More than threequarters of OECTA survey respondents said violence in schools makes teaching more difficult, and more than a quarter have had to take time away from work due to the physical or mental toll of a violent incident (OECTA 2017).

**3.18** Despite greater attention being paid to this problem over the past few years, and negotiated obligations requiring school administrators to report incidents of violence, we are still a long way from implementing the solutions outlined in our *Safer Schools for All* platform (OECTA 2017a).

**3.19** The situation will only become more acute as more students return to in-person learning following the COVID-19 pandemic. The relationship between isolation, school closures, and mental health challenges among students has been well established (St. George et al. 2021; SickKids 2021). And during school closures, some students may not have had regular access to the mental health supports they require. As such, it is imperative that **the government provide resources and supports for more child and youth workers, social workers, psychologists, and other professional services to help students deal with their social, emotional, and behavioural needs.**

**3.20** These investments will help students manage their behaviours and realize academic success in the short and long term, while enabling teachers, education workers, and the rest of the school community to focus on making learning happen in a safe and secure environment. **To ensure comprehensive and inclusive supports the government should be encouraging and facilitating collaborative efforts between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services on a proactive, multi-faceted response that addresses the needs of both victims and perpetrators of school violence.**

### **3.21 Learning Recovery**

The Ford government's refusal to address COVID-19 and provide a safe and sustainable learning environment for Ontario students in the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years led to the longest pandemic-related in-person learning disruption in North America (Barrett et al. 2021).

**3.22** According to research conducted by the Ontario COVID-19 Science Table, the effects of pandemic-related school disruptions have been unequal, disproportionately and negatively impacting "low-income families in which racialized and Indigenous groups, newcomers, and people with disabilities are overrepresented." The science table further raises concerns that students' learning loss, if not immediately addressed, may impact this generations' future economic productivity and earning potential (Barrett et al. 2021).

- 3.23** For a robust learning recovery, the science table affirms the position of the World Bank and United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which calls on G20 countries to implement “explicit education recovery strategies, and for these strategies to be funded in addition to regular schooling budgets.” The science table concludes that a successful learning recovery program must address “the long-term mental health, health, and education problems arising from COVID-19-related school closures” (Barrett et al. 2021).
- 3.24** Any effective approach to learning recovery must be comprehensive, multi-year, and involve inclusive supports. Teachers will need opportunities to assess students, formally and informally, as guided by their professional judgement, to determine their learning needs. To do so, the government must take responsibility for providing school boards with resources for supports to fill learning gaps. These programs will need to be tiered, differentiated, and ongoing – we cannot expect that one-size-fits all solutions will work for all students, especially those with special education needs, or that full catch-up can occur while students are still dealing with the effects of the pandemic and the altered school environment. It also must be understood that funding could be required for additional teachers to support student learning, as well as to reduce class sizes, which, when smaller, have been amply shown to boost learning and achievement, particularly for vulnerable, equity-deserving, and Indigenous students (Schanzenbach 2014).
- 3.25** This is only the beginning. The Ford government cannot take a “wait-and-see” approach to learning recovery, as it did with its incomplete and inadequate 2021-22 back-to-school plan. As Catholic teachers have seen first-hand in the classroom, the government’s rushed planning, and lack thereof, only leads to massive confusion and disruption, negatively impacting student learning and mental health.
- 3.26** To address learning loss and support a robust recovery focused on student success, **the government must invest in reduced class sizes, so students can get the focused, individual attention from teachers they need and the stable learning environment they deserve; more professional services and supports, to address learning loss and mental health needs; and immediate, substantial investments in school infrastructure and technology.**

### 3.27 Equity in Education

Catholic teachers have always supported efforts to eliminate racism, discrimination, and all systemic barriers in our schools. We acknowledge the varied and systemic ways that inequalities are produced and re-produced in our social institutions, and we will continue to advocate for action to address inequities in our publicly funded education system and communities.

3.28 Action and investment to address these inequities are more pressing than ever, as the Ford government's refusal to address COVID-19 in our schools and communities has exacerbated and further widened Ontario's existing equity gaps (Bundale 2021).

### 3.29 *Addressing Discrimination and Inequality*

Black, racialized, and other equity-deserving students and their families, including those from socio-economically disadvantaged groups, as well as Indigenous students, have suffered extreme and disproportionate ill-effects from COVID-19.

Not only do individuals from these communities in Ontario account for a significantly higher proportion of COVID-19 cases, and a higher than per capita death rate from COVID-19 (Ontario Health and Wellesley Institute 2021), more than 30 per cent of racialized families report "greatly reduced" or "no income" as a result of COVID-19-related disruptions (Kopun 2020).

3.30 In addressing these longstanding, and now growing equity issues, it must be recognized that publicly funded education reforms alone cannot resolve these challenges. The root causes of disadvantage in Ontario can only be confronted and addressed through broader provincial, institutional, and societal reforms. In these areas, **the Ford government must prioritize poverty reduction, robust and affordable child care, and improved access to mental health resources, with the needed attention, action, and investment.**

3.31 As Catholic teachers, we see the devastating impact of child poverty in our classrooms, through the eyes of our students and their families. Even decisions around whether a family sends their child to school during the pandemic has implicit equity assumptions – namely, that the family has the financial means and work flexibility to choose for their child to remain at home, learning virtually. And while evidence indicates that the targeted poverty reduction efforts Ontario has

implemented since 2008 have been effective, they need to be bolstered, as more than a half a million children in the province still live in poverty (Oliveira, Robinson, and Tranjan 2021). The families of these children are forced to make difficult decisions on a daily basis, about how or whether to access basic necessities, like housing, child care, transportation, or food.

- 3.32** While these challenges are beyond what our publicly funded education system alone can resolve, there is still an important role that our schools must play in confronting and addressing these disparities. Unfortunately, the Ford government's actions to-date, or lack thereof, mirror the inadequate, underfunded, and ill-planned attempts to address wider systemic inequities. The Ford government may profess a commitment to equity, but its actual undertakings are performative at best.
- 3.33** With regard to education, the Learning Opportunities Grant is of pressing concern. As it stands, not all students in Ontario have access to the same education experience in our publicly funded system, with studies repeatedly showing that students from socio-economically disadvantaged families often start school already behind their classmates, as they lack the early learning opportunities afforded to more affluent families (Ferguson, Bovaird, and Mueller 2007).
- 3.34** **The Ford government must update the grant with improved investment, so that equity-deserving and Indigenous students are provided with greater access to resources, learning materials, and experiences.** All students in Ontario deserve a rich educational experience and learning environment, regardless of socio-economic background. And as we continue to contend with COVID-19, and look towards what is necessary for a robust learning recovery, **the Ford government must address the mental health needs of students, especially those from racialized and other equity-deserving communities, as they are among those who have suffered the most throughout the pandemic.**
- 3.35** Educators have been advocating for these important structural changes, but the Ford government has ignored our voices and expertise. In March 2021, Catholic teachers, joined by Ontario's other teacher unions, proposed a series of institutional reforms to address such inequities, which the Ford government rejected. These proposals would have supported Ontario educators' ongoing work to combat and disrupt systemic

racism in all its forms through professional development, focused on creating anti-racist teaching, learning spaces, and programs to embed equity and inclusive practices into everyday teaching. The Ford government's refusal to invest in these important initiatives is troubling, as Ontario needs teacher-led and supported action in our publicly funded education system to best address historic and systemic oppression (Brown, Dobrowolski, Littlewood, and Vinet-Roy 2021).

**3.36** At the school board-level, **the Ford government must also address the administrative structure in schools, with a focus on improving educators' working conditions, to attract and retain diverse talent; enhance professional development for school board officials, administrators, and all educators, so that they have the tools and resources to recognize and address systemic racism and other issues negatively impacting Indigenous and equity-deserving groups; and provide better resources to support the teacher-led and directed professional development that has already made progress in these areas.**

**3.37** *Destreaming*

Successful destreaming is another essential element in addressing these inequities. Unfortunately, the government's announcements to-date regarding destreaming amount to little more than exercises in performative anti-discrimination policy. By pursuing destreaming without providing additional supports for students, smaller class sizes so that teachers can provide greater individual attention and differentiated instruction, revamped curricula, implementation training for educators, or meaningful collaboration with educators, the government risks jeopardizing the success of any destreaming efforts (Coalition for Alternatives to Streaming in Education 2021).

**3.38** To make matters worse, by simply ending applied-level courses and forcing students into academic-level subjects, as the government announced in a memo to school boards, there are questions as whether the government is using destreaming as a means to make further funding cuts to education, and potentially increase class sizes. If the government is to take destreaming seriously, there are several considerations to bear in mind.

- 3.39** Destreaming should be part of a broader discourse on equity and inclusion, including wide-ranging educational reforms (Jakubowski et al. 2016; OECD 2010). This should involve a variety of supports, funded properly by the government, for students who are experiencing learning gaps in destreamed classes.
- 3.40** The government must also acknowledge that a transition toward destreaming will require appropriate teacher-led professional development opportunities, resources, release time, and other supports to ensure we are providing the best possible learning environment for all students. It will also be necessary to consider a range of associated factors that could undermine destreaming efforts, such as class size and composition, where research indicates that smaller class sizes better allow teachers to provide individual attention and differentiated instruction for all students (Fogliato 2017).
- 3.41** Ultimately, the success of any destreaming policy will depend in no small measure on the government's willingness to engage in immediate, meaningful, and consistent consultation with education stakeholders. Any endeavours to write curriculum, support documents, or policy should be done in collaboration with teachers, who are the frontline workers tasked with delivering curriculum, and teacher unions. At the same time, there must be a focused effort on expanding current societal attitudes toward ideal educational outcomes, as well as greater student and parental understanding of the full range of post-secondary pathways.
- 3.42** **The Ministry of Education must provide a robust suite of supports and community engagement to promote success. Mental health and wellness must be a key feature of this approach. This will require the hiring of additional resource teachers, educational assistants, special education supports, social workers, psychologists, guidance teachers, and culturally responsive counsellors.**
- 3.43** **The government must also provide funding for professional development, support resources, release time, and other supports needed to transition to full implementation.**

**3.44 The government must engage education partners in sustained, meaningful consultation and collaboration in developing destreaming policy and rewriting curriculum documents.**

### **3.45 Mental Health**

There are longstanding shortcomings in Ontario's mental health system, particularly as it pertains to children and youth. Studies indicate that almost 20 per cent of students in Grades 7 to 12 in Ontario report their mental health as fair or poor, and the majority say they do not know where to turn for assistance (MHASEF Research Team 2015; Boak et al. 2017; Statistics Canada 2020). A 2020 survey conducted by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health found that one-in-six Ontario students in Grade 7 to 12 had "seriously considered suicide," and one-in-five had experienced "critical psychological distress" (CAMH 2020). More than 28,000 children and youth are waiting to access mental health services, more than double the estimated figure from three years ago. Many of these children and youth are having to turn to emergency services through clinics and hospitals (CMHO 2020; MHASEF Research Team 2017).

**3.46** The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified and exacerbated these issues. In a recent study of 2,700 participants ranging in age from two to 18 years old, conducted by the Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids), researchers identified that heightened levels of depression and anxiety among children and youth seen at the start of the pandemic has persisted (SickKids 2021). The study concludes that the pandemic has contributed to a "sustained negative impact on the mental health of Ontario children, youth, and their families."

**3.47** Sadly, the impact of mental health challenges have not been felt equally. Research shows that families who were already vulnerable prior to the pandemic – for example those with lower household income and parental education rates – have been "disproportionately impacted by economic hardship as a result of the pandemic, such as job loss and food insecurity" (SickKids 2021). These consequences have been accompanied by higher rates of child abuse, neglect, physical inactivity, and instances of anxiety and depression (Carpenter 2020; Pringle 2020). **The government must acknowledge the relationship between mental health and**

**equitable student outcomes. All mental health interventions should be culturally responsive and adaptable to meet the diverse needs of students.**

- 3.48** Parents and teachers have also expressed concerns about the amount of time young people are spending with electronic devices rather than peers. Researchers from SickKids found that “increased time on screens had a wide-ranging impact on the mental health of children and youth” (Fahmy 2021; McGinn 2020; SickKids 2021). The Ford government has only made this problem worse by expanding online learning, and promoting school boards’ adoption of the failed hybrid model.
- 3.49** The Ford government has not done nearly enough to address the mental health crisis facing school-aged children in Ontario. While the government contends it is building a modern, comprehensive mental health and addictions system, with planned investments of \$3.8 billion over 10 years, it is worth noting that the per-year planned funding is less than the annual amount promised by the previous government.
- 3.50** The government must also grapple with the realization that its actions – and inaction – have contributed to a deterioration of student mental health. Experts have highlighted that keeping schools open safely to in-person learning is a critical factor in promoting student well-being, as it enables teachers and education workers to provide the individual attention and holistic social, emotional, and academic supports necessary to best realize student success (CMHO 2021). However, the Ford government’s refusal to prioritize health and safety in schools throughout the pandemic led to Ontario suffering the longest school closures of any jurisdiction in North America, with detrimental consequences to student mental health and well-being (CMHO 2021; SickKids 2021).
- 3.51** As we look ahead to a post-pandemic world, and to support the mental health needs of students, Catholic teachers recommend that **the government immediately and dramatically enhance investments into mental health services in schools, and expand school-based resources, supports, and services. This should include funding to support ongoing mental health-related professional development opportunities for educators, as well as the hiring of additional mental health professionals, including social workers, psychologists,**

**guidance teachers, child and youth workers, and school mental health workers.**

- 3.52** Providing supports in schools, where children and youth already spend much of their time, can help reduce stigma, connect students to their communities, and deliver more responsive, cost-effective service. **Annual funding for Student Mental Health Ontario must be increased in a manner that reflects sustainability and long-term needs.**
- 3.53** Of course, geographic and demographic needs will need to be considered to ensure that no regions or populations are disadvantaged. For the most efficient and effective services, **there should be co-ordination between the Ministry of Education and other ministries, further exploration of the community hub model, and regular consultation with the representatives of frontline teachers and education workers.**
- 3.54** The government also has a duty to consider the mental health needs of teachers and education workers. According to research from the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF 2020), close to 70 per cent of teachers across the country are concerned for their own mental health and well-being, and 75 per cent say they are finding it increasingly difficult to meet their personal and professional expectations during the COVID-19 pandemic. The vast majority – including 99 per cent of OECTA members who completed the survey – do not feel they are being supported by the Ministry of Education as they cope with these struggles.
- 3.55** In addition to **targeting mental health resources specifically for teachers**, the government can learn from its failure to engage in genuine consultation with frontline workers, its pattern of last-minute decision-making, and the open antagonism they have shown with regard to synchronous learning and teachers' professional judgment. **The government should also ensure that school administrators are honouring teachers' contractual rights to access sick leave for mental health issues, including investigating the reasons for, and redressing, the shortage of qualified occasional teachers.**

### **3.56 Class Size**

The Ford government was widely criticized for refusing to reduce class sizes in the 2020-21 school year to facilitate proper physical distancing and prevent the spread of COVID-19, something medical experts at the Hospital for Sick Children said should be a “priority strategy” for reopening schools (Ogilvie and Mendleson 2020).

**3.57** Doubling-down on this reckless approach, at the start of the 2021-22 school year, the Ford government voted unanimously against a motion to cap class sizes at 15 students, to protect the health and safety of everyone in the school environment (Taylor 2021). As a result, parents have reported their children being in classes of 30 to 40 students (Tsekouras 2021). The government’s continued refusal to address the issue of class size not only poses risks to health and safety, but also denies students crucial interaction with educators.

**3.58** The benefits of smaller class sizes are well established. For example, after a thorough review of the research, Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach (2014) of the US National Education Policy Center concluded, “Class size is one of the most-studied education policies, and an extremely rigorous body of research demonstrates the importance of class size in positively influencing student achievement.” By contrast, no study currently exists that documents advantages for student learning that result from increasing class sizes.

**3.59** In the most comprehensive and well known study, the Tennessee STAR project, assessment results consistently favoured those students who had been in small classes, with carryover effects lasting throughout their academic careers (Finn et al. 2001; Krueger and Whitmore 2000; Mosteller 1995). Reductions in class size have also been associated with improvements in students’ psychological engagement with school, more positive reactions to teachers and peers, higher levels of interest and motivation, lower levels of boredom and anxiety, a greater sense of belonging, and more optimism and confidence (Dee and West 2011). There are also long-term socio-economic benefits associated with smaller class sizes, such as public savings in terms of lower health and welfare costs (Fredriksson, Öckert, and Oosterbeek 2011; Krueger 2003; Muennig and Woolf 2007).

- 3.60** While class size reductions are generally targeted toward primary students, these factors also point to the benefits of smaller classes for junior, intermediate, and secondary students, who are often dealing with a range of intellectual, social, and emotional challenges while struggling to develop “the skills of productive citizenry.” All students need the time and attention of a dedicated teacher, which can only be guaranteed if class sizes are manageable (Wasley 2002).
- 3.61** The Ford government has pointed to jurisdictions in Canada with higher class size averages than Ontario as counterevidence to the benefits of smaller class sizes. However, it is important to note that collective agreements in British Columbia, Alberta, and Quebec offset higher class size averages by ensuring additional supports/educators based on class composition. The fact is, reductions in class size since 2003 have resulted in Ontario achieving the highest four- and five-year graduation rates in the province’s history, and Ontario’s system of publicly funded education routinely ranks among the best in Canada and the world.
- 3.62** As the next provincial election draws near, Ontarians will certainly not forget that the government previously increased class sizes in Grades 4 to 12 – and sought even greater increases in class size averages for secondary students – even though this idea had been overwhelmingly rejected in the government’s public consultation (Rushowy 2020; Dhanraj 2019). These have been troubling examples of the Ford government clearly prioritizing financial savings over student well-being.
- 3.63** **As we look ahead with the goal of resetting post-pandemic, all students deserve the opportunity to interact with their peers in a safe and enriching environment, and to receive the individual attention they need to realize their full potential. It is more important than ever that the government commit to lowering class size averages in Ontario’s publicly funded schools.**
- 3.64** **Online/Hybrid Learning**  
Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government’s decision to implement mandatory e-learning for Ontario high school students generated a significant amount of controversy. At the time, our Association and other education experts warned that introducing mandatory e-learning would raise a number of issues with respect to student learning, access, equity, and privacy, as well as how

the program model would be administered (OECTA 2020; Parker 2020; Farhadi 2019).

- 3.65** Research conducted throughout the pandemic confirmed concerns expressed by OECTA and experts, including how online learning was having a disproportionate negative impact on “students of colour from low-income households,” and how the platform “is producing new geographies of inequality” in which only a minority of students succeed (Galperin and Aguilar 2020; Galperin, Wyatt, and Le 2020; OECTA 2020; Farhadi 2019; Jackson 2020). However, as the pandemic has worn on, several new and insidious developments have come to light.
- 3.66** The first issue concerns the government’s expansion of online learning as a means by which to pursue privatization. In July 2020, the government amended the Ontario Educational Communications Authority Act, which empowered the Minister of Education with greater authority over entities that provide distance learning education, such as TVO/TFO. At the time, the Association made clear that, in theory, this change could bring arms-length entities under the control of the government and allow for the expansion of distance or e-learning well beyond anything related to the COVID-19 emergency.
- 3.67** Subsequently, a confidential Ministry of Education Memo obtained by the *Globe and Mail* confirmed that the government was considering legislation that would make remote learning permanent for all grades in publicly funded schools, beyond the pandemic (Alphonso 2021a). The leaked documents proposed to make TVO/TFO responsible for developing content for online courses, as well as for maintaining the course catalogue that students would access centrally. Further, the documents proposed to task TVO/TFO with creating a “global development strategy to market Ontario online courses... [to] generate revenue.”
- 3.68** While legislation has not been pursued since this news emerged, any expansion of online learning and movement toward privatization would be disastrous. Students would lose out on the benefits of in-person learning, including vital interactions with teachers, education workers, and other students. Inequality would increase and learning gaps would widen, especially among students with special education needs, Indigenous students, or those from vulnerable and equity-deserving communities.

This would also lead to an erosion of Ontario's world-class publicly funded education system and represent a backward step toward realizing student success.

- 3.69** A second development that is eroding the student learning experience is the so-called hybrid model, where educators are required to deliver instruction to students in-person and online, simultaneously. The hybrid model was adopted originally by several Ontario school boards in 2020 as an “emergency response” to the COVID-19 pandemic, to meet the synchronous remote learning requirement under Policy/Program Memorandum 164 (Ministry of Education 2020). The movement to a hybrid model is the result of a lack of adequate funding from the government to allow school boards to establish online-only schools (Farhadi 2020).
- 3.70** Since its adoption, the reckless funding cuts pursued by the Ford government have forced an increasing number of school boards to turn to this fractured model of learning, to the detriment of students and teachers. When teachers are forced to split their attention between students in-class and online, it compromises the learning experience for everyone.
- 3.71** Research has clearly established in-person instruction as the ideal and most equitable model of learning for students (Cornelius-White 2007), as well as the negative impact online/hybrid learning has on student engagement (Maimaiti et al. 2021). The Minister of Education has admitted this publicly (OHRC 2020; TVO 2020).
- 3.72** At the same time, studies show that the hybrid model disadvantages many students, and has a disproportionately negative impact on students with special education needs, those with social and mental health concerns, Indigenous students, English as a second language learners, and equity-deserving students. It also leaves behind students without high-quality internet or technology. All of this can exacerbate issues of student mental health and well-being, which have increased as a result of the pandemic (Wong 2021; Farhadi 2020; Farhadi 2021; Jalaluddin 2021).
- 3.73** Regardless of whether students are in-person or learning from home, they deserve the full attention of a dedicated teacher. **The government must immediately end the failed hybrid model, and provide funding necessary for in-person and online-only schools during the pandemic.**

- 3.74** In a related matter, the pandemic has also laid bare ongoing and significant issues with delivery infrastructure. Reliable broadband access remains uneven across the province, with northern and rural areas facing significant gaps in service. This has been compounded by several internet outages, even in urban areas (McKay 2021).
- 3.75** As well, many families in Ontario cannot afford high speed internet, or the technology required to access online courses (Butler 2020; CBC 2019). Pursuing online learning without providing corresponding additional funding to ensure equitable access will have a negative impact on the student learning experience. While there are decided advantages to in-person learning, **the government must provide predictable and ongoing funding to ensure that every student who needs it has access to their own electronic device. In addition, any educator required to deliver instruction remotely must be issued the technology and/or devices required for the task by their school board.**
- 3.76** As the government begins to think about the education sector beyond the current pandemic emergency, it will be essential to provide students and teachers with appropriate resources and supports to facilitate achievement. This includes **providing teachers who demonstrate interest with teacher-led, teacher-directed professional development opportunities related to online learning.**
- 3.77** In addition, the government must cease the expansion of online learning, as well as the extension of service delivery to third party entities beyond the publicly funded education system. The government also should commit to studying the pandemic experience of online learning, to identify persistent structural gaps, and then address those gaps with adequate investments.
- 3.78 Special Education**  
For some time, schools across the province have been experiencing difficulty providing for all students' special education needs. It has been reported that more than 80 per cent of school boards are spending more on special education than they are allotted by the province, and some students are being asked to stay home because their school is unable to provide appropriate services and supports on a daily basis (McQuigge 2018; Rushowy and Ferguson 2015).

- 3.79** There is also a geographic component to these issues. Only 72 per cent of rural elementary schools report having a full-time special education teacher, and the average ratio of students receiving special education support to special education teachers is 38:1 in elementary school and 77:1 in secondary school (People for Education 2019).
- 3.80** Across the province, because school boards are reluctant to go through the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) process, students often go far too long without their learning needs being acknowledged. Given the frequent disruptions to in-person learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the backlog of students waiting to begin the IPRC process has increased. Students do not get the proper interventions while they are awaiting identification, and it is more difficult to build new skills or change attitudes when identification finally happens (OECTA 2020). As such, additional resources will be required to ensure all students are able to begin the IPRC process in a timely manner.
- 3.81** The COVID-19 pandemic has had a unique impact on students with special education needs. Studies indicate that there has been a significant disruption to the education of these students (Gallagher-Mackay et al. 2021), and that they have faced particular challenges and anxieties, with advocates saying that students have not received the supports they need for either in-class or remote learning (OHRC 2020; Trick 2020). More broadly, while there is anecdotal evidence, there remains a lack of comprehensive data on the degree to which students with special education needs have had their learning disrupted by COVID-19.
- 3.82** If the Ford government is to address this issue, it will need to improve upon past performance. For example, the government previously drastically reduced a planned, long-needed increase to the Special Incidence Portion, which provides specialized staff and materials for high needs students. They also cut the Local Priorities Fund, only replacing it with the Supports for Students Fund after a lengthy struggle by OECTA and other education unions at the bargaining table. More recently, the government's fall economic statement made no mention whatsoever about additional funding to support students with special education needs.

- 3.83** The government has also put families of children with autism through an incredible ordeal, first announcing a widely condemned move from a needs-based support system to a fixed amount, then walking back this decision but delaying implementation of the new program, leaving more than 27,000 children on the waitlist for services (MacMillan 2021; Waberi 2020; Sharkey 2019). In March, the Ford government promised that by the end of 2021, there would be fewer than 8,000 children on the waitlist for needs-based autism programs. As of November, the list stands at more than 50,000 children, and counting (Turner 2021).
- 3.84** **As we look forward to a post-pandemic publicly funded education system, it is imperative that the government enhance support for students with special education needs, to successfully reintegrate them with their peers and mitigate any learning loss that will have occurred.**
- 3.85** **Infrastructure and Technology**  
The need for urgent and comprehensive upgrades to Ontario's publicly funded schools predates COVID-19. In 2021, news reports revealed that the repair backlog for schools exceeded \$16.8 billion (King, Rieti, and Swyers 2021). According to a report by economist Hugh Mackenzie, Ontario is now past the point where the physical condition of schools has deteriorated to such an extent that hundreds of schools need to be replaced entirely (Mackenzie 2017).
- 3.86** While the issue of school infrastructure is not a new problem, unfortunately the current government has done little to rectify the situation. In July 2020, the Minister of Education announced \$500 million toward refurbishing schools, as part of the government's 10-year, \$13 billion commitment. However, observers were quick to note that this was \$3 billion less than what the previous government had committed to spend over the same period (Benzie 2017), and well short of what is needed to keep pace with the repair backlog. The 2021 fall economic statement also revealed that the Ford government plans to reduce investments in school infrastructure by almost \$1 billion over the next two years.
- 3.87** Data also show a persistent lack of funding in technology, poor or uneven internet connectivity in schools, and insufficient access to technology-related professional development for teachers (People for Education 2019). A 2018 report by the Ontario

Auditor General found that students' access to classroom technology varied widely across the province, as did the age of equipment and software.

- 3.88** Since the 1970s, the physical construction of Ontario schools has been driven by economic and demographic considerations, rather than public health concerns (McQuigge 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed that school facilities are not well-positioned to respond to public health emergencies, with small, overcrowded classrooms and inadequate, dated, and substandard ventilation systems, where such systems exist. The government has partially recognized this situation, using a federal-provincial cost sharing program to earmark \$600 million for ventilation improvements, and promising standalone air-purifying (HEPA) units for classrooms without mechanical ventilation systems (Chidley-Hill 2021).
- 3.89** Unfortunately, as has been the case since the beginning of the pandemic, the government was not proactive and did not act quickly enough or use the time in which physical facilities were closed to ensure the necessary ventilation upgrades. As a result, in many school boards, major ventilation upgrades were not ready for the start of the 2021-22 school year and, to date, remain outstanding (Mojtehedzadeh, Warren 2021). And while HEPA units have provided a stopgap, they have not been delivered in sufficient numbers and cannot be relied upon as a long-term solution (Ranger 2022).
- 3.90** **The government must act proactively and make the necessary investments to ensure that all schools have ventilation systems that meet the health and safety standards set by the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers, effectively reducing the airborne spread of COVID-19.** To ensure that this process is transparent, the government must also institute a provincial standard for air quality measurements in schools, with publicly available metrics to indicate whether standards are being met.
- 3.91** Out-of-date and poorly maintained facilities, and technology that has not kept pace with students' educational needs, have an immediate and detrimental impact on the learning environment. Research has clearly established the relationship between school facility conditions, student academic achievement, and teacher effectiveness (Earthman 2002). Quite simply, no one should be forced to work or learn in buildings

with leaking roofs, poor ventilation, mold, and other dangers. **The government must provide immediate, stable, and sufficient annual funding for infrastructure and repairs, new technology, as well as services and supports for all students, including those with special education and mental health needs.**

### **3.92 Education Quality and Accountability Office**

Catholic teachers are concerned by the Ford government's decision to reinstate EQAO testing in Grades 3 and 6, and introduce revised math testing in Grade 9, for the 2021-22 school year. The COVID-19 pandemic is not over, and students are still suffering from the longest in-class learning disruption in North America. The government should be dedicating its attention and resources to the essential supports students and educators need for a robust learning recovery, not prematurely reintroducing EQAO testing and making overtures to "modernize it."

**3.93** The negative consequences of standardized testing on students' health, well-being, learning, and performance are well-known (Heissel et al. 2018; Kempf 2016; Segool et al. 2013). Looking specifically at Ontario, recent research from international education expert Andy Hargreaves (2020) found that any supposed benefits of EQAO for monitoring progress and stimulating higher expectations for achievement "have been outweighed by the harmful consequences for broad excellence, equity and wellbeing." He also found that teachers – the professionals who work directly with students in the classroom – were concerned about the effects of the testing not only on students' health, but also on learning and innovation.

**3.94** To make matters worse, province-wide standardized testing does not give an accurate reflection of student ability, because it only captures a moment in time and fails to account for the range of skills and factors that affect achievement. While some argue that standardized testing is necessary to provide essential information to improve student achievement and ensure the education system is accountable to taxpayers, the reality is that teachers already use our professional judgment to conduct assessments for, as, and of learning. We use the results of these assessments to modify our instruction and provide individual attention, as well as to complete provincial report cards (OTF 2017).

**3.95** The tide was already turning against EQAO testing before the COVID-19 crisis arrived. The previous government appointed a set of advisors to undertake a comprehensive study of Ontario's assessment regime. The advisors made a slew of recommendations, including phasing out the EQAO test in Grade 3 (Campbell et al. 2018). This report should have been the starting point for a wide-ranging discussion about how to move forward. Unfortunately, the Ford government appears to have discarded this advice, in favour of an ideology that views standardized testing as inherently useful. Where once the Chair of the EQAO was a part-time position, the government created a full-time job and appointed a defeated Progressive Conservative election candidate to the role. This is on top of the costly bureaucracy at the Ministry of Education that exists to deal with EQAO initiatives. The government has also expanded the mandate of the agency to conduct hastily devised, poorly considered assessments for pre-service teachers, despite the fact that the EQAO itself found that "the fundamental goal of these tests – to improve student learning – is often not met" (EQAO 2019; Alphonso 2019).

**3.96** Teachers are assessing students for, as, and of learning every day, and communicating these results to school boards and parents. Standardized testing is not a good use of education resources. Given how far EQAO has strayed from its original mandate, Charles Pascal, a former Deputy Minister of Education and Chair of EQAO, recently argued that the government should suspend EQAO testing (CBC 2020). **If the government still believes some sort of province-wide testing is necessary, they should at least move toward a random sampling model, as is used by PISA and others.** This would produce statistically valid results at a fraction of the current costs, while reducing the level of student anxiety and allowing most teachers and students to remain focused on genuine learning activities and more meaningful classroom assessments.

### **3.97 Full-day Kindergarten**

Parents, teachers, early childhood educators (ECEs), administrators, and researchers agree that Ontario's full-day Kindergarten (FDK) program is preparing children socially and academically, leading to better outcomes in later years (Alphonso 2017; Janmohamed 2014). Longitudinal research provides more evidence of self-regulatory and academic gains, with benefits being apparent in all academic areas at the end of

Kindergarten and remaining significantly greater to the end of the primary division (Pelletier and Corter 2019).

- 3.98** However, there are still some issues that are keeping the program from being fully effective for all students. For example, although the previous government took some action to address the problem, more still needs to be done to reduce the number of large and/or split Kindergarten and Grade 1 classes.
- 3.99** It is also imperative that we continue to respect and support the functioning of the teacher/ECE teams. When the FDK program was developed, the teacher/ECE teams were recommended based on pilot tests in Ontario and elsewhere, in which teams were found to add to the professional preparation and skillset of each team member (Pascal 2009). ECEs bring specialized knowledge about early childhood development, which proves valuable for fostering emotional regulation and social skills. Meanwhile, certified teachers bring high levels of skills and training related to teaching methods, planning, and assessment. We are able to structure the play-based curriculum in a way that optimizes learning, and to individualize instruction when necessary. We understand the whole child and are best equipped to prepare students and integrate them into the next stages of their learning.
- 3.100** Research has shown that Ontario's FDK staff teams are uniting around the mission to support children and families (Pelletier 2014). Moreover, the current dynamic enables the teacher and ECE "to capitalize on children's individual needs and inquiries. They have the time to know their students very well and to identify problems and intervene early before a child becomes too frustrated and discouraged to try" (McCuaig 2019). Rather than disrupting this effective dynamic, the government should provide sufficient resources to ensure that a certified teacher and an ECE are present in all FDK classrooms at all times during the instructional day.
- 3.101** Comments made by the Minister of Education, with respect to ongoing child care negotiations between the provincial and federal governments, unfortunately suggest that the Ford government only sees FDK as a potential component of a federally subsidized national child care plan and an area of budget savings. FDK is not child care. It is a ground-breaking, world-leading education initiative that must be provincially funded through the education budget. FDK cannot be used as a

bargaining chip with the federal government or viewed as a potential area to cut expenditures.

**3.102** With the proper support, the investment in FDK will continue to pay dividends long into the future for students, families, the economy, and society. As we move toward a post-pandemic system of publicly funded education, **the government must continue to support and strengthen the FDK program so it can honour its original promise.**

### **3.103 Indigenous Education**

The tragic discovery of unmarked graves at residential school sites across Canada in 2021, highlights the immediate need for the government to provide resources, supports, and curriculum updates to properly acknowledge the devastation that this country's residential school system has inflicted on Indigenous communities.

**3.104** The 2015 report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission drew attention to a number of issues pertaining to Indigenous youth and education. While much of the focus has been on students attending on-reserve schools, it is important to note that in Ontario the majority of Indigenous students attend a provincially funded school. In fact, there are Indigenous students in almost every community: 92 per cent of elementary schools and 96 per cent of secondary schools have at least some Indigenous students (Gallagher-Mackay et al. 2013).

**3.105** By now, most Ontarians recognize the importance of integrating Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum. In a 2019 survey, 81 per cent of elementary schools and 95 per cent of secondary schools reported having offered at least one Indigenous learning opportunity, a substantial increase from 2014 (People for Education 2019). However, Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators still need support and resources to ensure they are properly reflecting Indigenous histories and knowledge in the classroom.

**3.106** This is why Catholic teachers and others across Ontario were so disappointed that one of the government's first actions upon taking office was to abruptly pause planned curriculum resource writing sessions. And while the government has announced curriculum changes for the 2022-23 school year, which will see expanded

Indigenous education in early grades, this important and essential learning for Ontario students is behind where it should be, had the Ford government prioritized Indigenous education.

- 3.107** There are also significant resource gaps in schools with high proportions of Indigenous students compared to other schools in the province, including lower than average access to guidance teachers, teacher-librarians, and music and physical education programs (Gallagher-Mackay et al. 2013). **These resource gaps must be overcome if we are going to address the achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.**
- 3.108** The previous government was making significant steps in this regard, increasing funding and collecting data on a voluntary basis in order to provide appropriate programs and supports. The new government should not turn its back on these efforts, especially as the need will only become more urgent, given that Indigenous children are the fastest-growing child population segment in Canada (UNICEF Canada 2018). Integrating Indigenous students into their school communities and enabling them to realize their full potential will reduce marginalization and pay significant social and economic dividends over the long term (Sharpe and Arsenault 2010).
- 3.109** In the years prior to the current government taking office, the Indigenous Education Grant had increased substantially, in response to a nationwide call for a renewed effort toward reconciliation. But this government has shown time and again that this is not an area of priority. After having been cut in the revised Grants for Student Needs for 2018-19, the grant has received only a modest increase over the past three years (Ministry of Education 2019, 2020a, 2021b).
- 3.110** And while the government did provide an additional \$2 million for Indigenous studies programs in the 2021-22 GSN, this is far below the investment necessary to redress current gaps within the Indigenous student population. Indigenous education is also an area that has been affected by the government's failure to recommit to the Local Priorities Fund. Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples is one of the most urgent and fundamental issues for Ontarians. Rather than looking for areas to trim and save costs, the government should be actively supporting progress.

### 3.111 Professional Development

Teachers are dedicated lifelong learners, who continually upgrade our knowledge and skills, often on our own time and at our own expense, to ensure that we keep abreast of what is current and effective in our classrooms. For instance, thousands of teachers have taken advantage of opportunities over the past few years to upgrade and refine our skills in math and technology (OCT 2017).

### 3.112 Unfortunately, the government has too often chosen to implement sweeping changes without providing teachers much-needed opportunities for professional learning.

The revised elementary math curriculum provides a case-in-point. When the revised curriculum was announced, the Association and others called on the government to provide the appropriate time, resources, and supports necessary for teachers to understand and master the material (OTF 2020). Ideally, this would have involved structured, teacher-led professional development, including ongoing opportunities to meet with peers to collaborate, share classroom experiences and challenges, and refine methods over a period of at least two years (Wong 2020). Instead, the government insisted on implementing the curriculum in the middle of a pandemic, providing teachers with little-to-no guidance or professional learning supports.

### 3.113 Recent announcements regarding destreaming have followed a similar pattern.

The Association has offered to provide its expertise to the government to ensure that destreaming efforts are accompanied by appropriate teacher-led professional development opportunities, resources, and other supports to ensure we are providing the best possible learning environment for all students. But once again, these efforts have been rebuffed, with the government instead choosing to implement half-baked plans that are oversimplified, underfunded, and rushed.

### 3.114 Empirical and anecdotal research show that students thrive in environments where teaching strategies can be adapted to meet individual students' needs (Morgan 2014). It is therefore necessary that teachers be provided with teacher-led professional development opportunities on topics such as differentiated instruction, applying an equity lens to curriculum delivery, and more.

### 3.115 As the government ponders any additional future changes to curriculum, **it is imperative that resources be provided for teacher-led, teacher-directed**

**professional development – the most efficient and effective form of professional learning.** This will ensure that teachers' knowledge remains relevant and up-to-date, based on the current, job-embedded experiences of our colleagues, and designed to address the needs of our students (CEA 2015; Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin 1995).

### **3.116 English Language Learners**

Currently, funding for English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Literacy Development (ELD) programs is based on census data and immigration statistics. While these figures provide an estimate, they do not accurately reflect English Language Learners' needs based on actual proficiency. This problem was noted 15 years ago by the Education Equality Task Force, which also condemned the inadequacy of the duration of supports, a sentiment echoed more recently by the Auditor General of Ontario (2017).

**3.117** The current funding formula also “fails to recognize the additional costs associated with higher densities of ESL needs in areas with high levels of immigration,” while a lack of oversight and transparency mechanisms means some school boards might not be spending the funds on programming for students who need support (Mackenzie 2017). For instance, English Language Learners often require additional supports to acclimate to a new school and culture, especially those who have recently arrived in Canada. These resources help English Language Learners connect to their schools and communities, which in turn contributes to their academic success.

**3.118** The COVID-19 pandemic poses specific challenges to English Language Learners. Reports out of the United States found that that transition to hybrid learning “made school difficult for many students, but even more for English [language] learners” (Bamer 2021). Many of these learners require additional supports or extra assistance in order to better understand class instructions. As well, teachers often depend on nonverbal gestures to understand these students. The move to the hybrid learning model has made this more difficult; reports from Ontario and elsewhere indicate that English Language Learners are not receiving the supports they require, which has raised concerns that these learners may suffer from additional learning loss once the pandemic is over (Kim 2020; Alphonso 2020). **Smaller class sizes and investing**

**more in English language supports, including properly trained teachers, will ensure students are able to interact with their peers, achieve academic success, and ultimately contribute within our society.**

### **3.119 Adult and Continuing Education**

Adult and continuing education programs are funded at roughly two-thirds the level of regular day school credit programs, which has previously been calculated to result in annual underfunding of \$112 million (Mackenzie 2015). Since coming into office, the Ford government has repeatedly cut the adult and continuing education budgets, only recently increasing funding allocations by \$17 million in the 2021-22 projections.

**3.120** At the same time, funding allocations from Special Purpose Grants are directed only toward students in the regular day school program, even though in many cases adult and continuing education programs are being delivered to new immigrants or students who have been marginalized from the regular day school credit program. As a result, adult or continuing education students who have significant needs are often dealing with large class sizes, different classes being delivered in the same room, and a lack of early intervention processes, while teachers are often employed from contract to contract, with substandard salaries, working conditions, and rights.

**3.121** The COVID-19 crisis has made the situation more precarious for adult and continuing education learners, many of whom are encountering additional barriers to participating in or completing their educational goals (James and Thériault 2020). The government should recognize that adult and continuing education is invaluable to the socio-economic well-being and social mobility of communities, especially as we emerge from the pandemic. **Funding is required so that school boards can provide the necessary supports to improve language skill assessment. At the same time, adult learners require additional and specific mental health supports to improve chances for successful completion of their respective programs.**

**3.122** Across Canada, one in five working age adults lack basic literacy and numeracy skills (Drewes and Meredith 2015). Research has shown that raising literacy skill levels would yield an annual rate of return of 251 per cent, with savings of \$542 million

across the country on social assistance alone (Murray and Shillington 2011). Furthermore, by improving basic language proficiency, fostering notions of citizenship and social engagement, and encouraging healthier lifestyles and relationships, we can reduce the need for later interventions in these areas and enhance the well-being of our democracy and society. Proper funding for adult and continuing education programs will undoubtedly provide value for money in the short and long term.

### **3.123 Publicly Funded Catholic Education**

Publicly funded Catholic schools have made significant contributions to the overall excellence of Ontario's world-renowned education system. In addition to teaching literacy, math, science, and other skills, we are developing students' character and commitment to the common good, encouraging them to be discerning believers, creative and holistic thinkers, self-directed learners, caring family members, and responsible citizens. There are almost 575,000 students attending publicly funded Catholic schools in Ontario, including many non-Catholic students whose parents have chosen the system's high standards and well-rounded methods for their children.

**3.124** There is a common misconception that merging Ontario's school systems could save a significant amount of money, but history and scholarship suggests the opposite is true. Dr. John Wiens, former Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, put the matter succinctly: "If it's about money, I think there is actually no evidence to show at all that anybody has saved money by [consolidating boards]" (CBC 2016). In Alberta, a study of the restructuring of the school system in the late 1990s found that the implementation costs associated with the mergers exceeded any resulting savings (Pysyk 2000). Ontario's experience with school board amalgamation in the late 1990s led to hundreds of millions of dollars in costs for transition and restructuring. Even conservative organizations like the Fraser Institute have found that amalgamating large organizations almost always results in high transition costs and limited long-term savings (Miljan and Spicer 2015).

**3.125** At the same time, there are opportunities to make more efficient use of education resources, by using provincially funded buildings in more collaborative ways and incentivizing inter-ministerial and municipal co-operation. One potential avenue is

shared facilities, specifically for co-terminus boards. In its 2014-15 Pre-Budget Consultation Summary, the previous government noted that “co-locating the schools of coterminous boards in the same facility was an idea with fairly broad support” (Ministry of Education 2014). Naturally, this would have to be done while protecting each school system’s unique framework and structures, but there are significant opportunities to make efficient use of resources while ensuring that more communities have access to important public services.

**3.126** There are several successful examples of such arrangements in Ontario. The Humberwood Centre houses Holy Child Catholic School, Humberwood Downs public school, a branch of the Toronto Public Library, the Humberwood Community Centre, as well as the 280-space Macaulay Child Development Centre. In Brantford, St. Basil's Catholic Elementary School and Walter Gretzky Elementary School each have a wing in the 90,000-square-foot shared facility. These sorts of shared facilities can be helpful in maximizing cost efficiency, specifically in rural areas where enrolment declines have raised the specter of school closures.

**3.127** In addition to co-location, Ontarians can also benefit from shared services agreements. A feasibility study of 11 Ontario school boards revealed that shared services in areas such as energy and transportation could produce ongoing annual savings of \$3 to 8 million per year, which would represent a 13 to 28 per cent savings on these boards’ annual total expenditures (Deloitte 2012). Ultimately, **exploring options for shared services agreements and co-locating schools is a far more effective approach than board amalgamation, not only in meeting the needs of students and communities, but also in making efficient use of school space.**

#### **4. A FAIR AND JUST SOCIETY**

**4.01** Catholic teachers are dedicated to realizing a fair and just society in Ontario, and as such we take a broad view of our responsibility to make this province a better place. Ontario has more than enough capacity to build a society in which everyone has genuine opportunities to participate and succeed, but achieving this goal will require the Ford government to shift its attitudes and make bold investments in infrastructure, public services, and citizens.

- 4.02** Since the pandemic began, we have seen a disproportionate and dramatic negative impact on women, racialized, and other equity-deserving communities, as well as Indigenous peoples, which cannot be ignored. From frontline work, to job loss, to child care challenges, much of the pain and the burden of COVID-19 has fallen on the backs of these communities. Systemic inequities, combined with the pandemic, have further highlighted issues of poverty, and especially those of child poverty.
- 4.03** Poverty should not plague a province as rich and prosperous as Ontario. The resources exist. What is lacking is the vision and political willingness to listen to, collaborate with, and serve our communities in need.
- 4.04** For a better Ontario for all Ontarians, **the Ford government must rethink its cuts and refusal to invest in the public services proven to promote the health and prosperity of all Ontarians.** Services which have become only that much more essential in addressing the impacts of COVID-19.
- 4.05 Early Childhood Education and Care**  
Research confirms the importance of the early years in a child’s life in the development of cognitive and non-cognitive skills (Cleveland 2021). And it has long been known that affordable, accessible, high quality early childhood education and care increases equity in outcomes at school and creates a strong foundation for lifelong learning (McCuaig, Bertrand, and Shanker 2012).
- 4.06** It also improves labour force participation, particularly among women, which helps to boost household incomes and reduce poverty. According to one analysis, every public dollar spent expanding enrolment in early childhood education and care yields close to six dollars in economic benefits (Alexander et al. 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic has provided a stark reminder of the consequences of a lack of publicly funded, licenced child care, and renewed impetus to build a more robust public system as soon as possible (CCN 2020).
- 4.07** Since coming to office, the Ford government has demonstrated a callous disregard, bordering on hostility toward publicly funded early childhood education and care. Over the past four years, the government has cut millions of dollars in child care funding, loosened child care regulations, and refused to provide pandemic pay to

child care workers (Ferns 2022). What is more, under the Ford government, Ontario now holds the dubious distinction of being the only province in Canada that has refused to sign-on to the federal child care plan.

- 4.08** Even before the pandemic began, a fragile, market-based, underfunded system provided licensed spaces for only 23 per cent of Ontario children up to age 12, with median parent fees in the thousands of dollars per month (Ministry of Education 2020).
- 4.09** When the public health emergency forced most centres to close, many families had to scramble to find care – with the additional care burden in the home falling predominantly on women (Dunham 2020). Meanwhile, 70 per cent of licenced centres across the country had to lay off all or part of their workforce, and many are uncertain as to whether they will ever be able to reopen (Friendly et al. 2020).
- 4.10** The situation is taking a significant toll on early childhood education and care workers. A May 2021 survey led by the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care found that 89 per cent of early childhood educators and child care workers reported an increase in job-related stress. And more than one-in-10 workers are actively looking to leave the sector (Powell, Ferns, and Burrell 2021). The survey findings were clear that without significant investment, the sector would soon face an impending workforce crisis that would force programs to close.
- 4.11** The Ford government’s ideological aversion to publicly funded early childhood education and care is inexplicable. Affordable, accessible, high quality child care can play a threefold role in a recovery from the COVID-19 emergency. As economist Armine Yalnizyan (2020) puts it, “Beyond simply facilitating women’s return to work – and, indeed, being a source of employment – the decision to ensure child care is affordable high-quality early learning, accessible to all families, will maximize the future of the next generation of Canadian children, lowering public spending and increasing revenues for governments and society. We may choose to act, or not; but we will reap what we sow.”
- 4.12** It was only in the face of overwhelming public pressure that the Ford government finally announced in January 2022 that educators, including early childhood

education and care workers, would be prioritized for vaccination, and promised additional N95 masks would be provided. It should not take years of advocacy for the government to finally offer the bare minimum.

**4.13** Regrettably, the government does not seem inclined to want to improve their approach. The Ford government's 2020 review of child care in the province focused on increasing the role of unlicensed care, increasing child-to-staff ratios for some age groups, increasing the role of unqualified staff, and reducing administrative burdens (Ministry of Education 2020). Despite this, **Catholic teachers continue to call on the government to commit to an affordable, high quality, publicly funded, and universally accessible system of child care – the most efficient, effective, and equitable option for all Ontarians.**

#### **4.14 Opportunity for All**

Since the pandemic began almost two years ago, millions of Ontarians, through no fault of their own, have lost work, had their hours or wages cut, seen once stable employment become precarious, or been forced to make difficult choices due to health concerns or family care responsibilities.

**4.15** For many Ontarians who rely on the province's social safety net for basic necessities, such as food, housing, and transportation, "problems that existed pre-COVID-19 have simply become crises," says Wayne Lewchuk, professor emeritus at McMaster's School of Labour Studies and Department of Economics (Chandler 2021).

**4.16** While nobody would have wished for or anticipated the suffering caused by COVID-19, the social and economic policies that have left Ontarians vulnerable were not arrived at by accident. As the Ontario Federation of Labour (2021) has noted, the deregulation of health and safety standards, the rollback of workers' rights and protections, the erosion of progressive taxation, the retrenchment of welfare state programs, the privatization and underfunding of public services, and the disregard of equity-deserving groups – much of which the Ford government has participated in – have all led us to this point.

**4.17** As is so often the case in periods of downturn or uncertainty, women, racialized workers, Indigenous peoples, and other equity-deserving groups, have faced the full

brunt of the crises. Women, already disadvantaged in the labour market — with an average annual employment income that is 73 per cent of non-racialized men's in Canada (Statistics Canada 2021) — saw their labour force participation rate fall to its lowest level in 30 years (Dessanti 2020).

- 4.18** For racialized workers, especially racialized women — who, pre-COVID-19, were already disadvantaged by an average annual employment income in Canada that is only 58 per cent of non-racialized men's — COVID-19 and its economic impact have been catastrophic (Block and Galabuzi 2018). Not only have racialized communities seen a significantly higher proportion of COVID-19 cases (Ontario Health and Wellesley Institute 2021), the unemployment rate gap between racialized and non-racialized workers has widened, with racialized workers more likely to be employed in the information, recreation, entertainment, and retail sectors that account for 80 per cent of the pandemic-related job losses in Canada (Alook, Block, and Galabuzi 2021).
- 4.19** These negative impacts, especially those affecting the most vulnerable in our society, have further highlighted the challenges this province faces with regards to child poverty. Despite a pre-pandemic reduction in child poverty in the previous ten years, more than a half a million children in Ontario still live in poverty (Oliveira, Robinson, and Tranjan 2021) and racialized children experience a higher poverty rate than non-racialized children (Statistics Canada 2016).
- 4.20** Ontario is a wealthy and prosperous province. That so many children still live in poverty is an embarrassment, as the government has the tools and knowledge to reduce it. To do this, **the Ford government must be laser-focused on creating decent jobs with higher wages, improving employment standards, ensuring better and more affordable access to education and training, and bolstering the province's social safety net.** As the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives concludes in its recent report on poverty in Ontario, "There should be no poverty in the midst of plenty." (Oliveira, Robinson, and Tranjan 2021).
- 4.21** The inadequacy of Ontario's social safety net, a situation further exposed by COVID-19, demands a prompt and thorough re-examination of the province's social policy framework and the role of programs and services in promoting health and prosperity.

As part of this re-assessment, **the Ford government must revisit its Poverty Reduction Strategy, which aims to transform how critical social assistance is delivered through Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).**

- 4.22** While the province claims that its plan will help reduce poverty, the program’s objectives are firmly, and mistakenly, focused on employment metrics. Specifically, the plan aims to move the most number of people into jobs, and off social assistance, whatever the cost. This metric creates a perverse incentive, which will see socio-economically disadvantaged Ontarians moved into precarious or short-term employment regardless of whether it will help them in the long-term (Cooper and Stallker 2022).
- 4.23** To assist in this, as it races towards 2024 — a self-imposed deadline to institute the changes in its Poverty Reduction Strategy — the Ford government has hired an American firm, FedCap (Taekema 2020), to replace services previously offered by Employment Ontario (Cooper and Stallker 2022).
- 4.24** “In Canada, poverty and disability are largely synonymous: poverty can lead to disability and disability can lead to poverty,” says the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (Council of Canadians with Disabilities 2021). The Ford government’s plan for OW and the ODSP ignores this reality and the concerns of disabled and other Ontarians who are unable to work (Amin 2021). The plan focuses too much on employment numbers, rather than what is really needed: raising rates and investing in the critical supports that will result in a real poverty reduction.
- 4.25** In examining OW and the ODSP, it is important to recognize that the benefits provided by these programs have been frozen by the Ford government since 2018 (Amin 2021), with OW providing \$733 a month for a single person and the ODSP providing single recipients with up to \$1,169 a month. These rates have remained unchanged, despite the fact that the average length of time a recipient relies on OW has doubled from 1.5 to three years over the past decade (Office of the Auditor General of Ontario 2018).

- 4.26** Neither of these programs has kept up with inflation, which has also dramatically increased during the pandemic, reaching 4.7 per cent in November 2021 (Statistics Canada 2021). And research indicates that COVID-19 has only made things harder for Ontarians relying on social assistance. According to a McMaster University study, Ontarians receiving OW and ODSP, struggled to pay for basic necessities, including shelter and food, at a higher rate than those receiving the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit, which paid \$2,000 a month, substantially more than either Ontario program (Chandler 2021).
- 4.27** The last increase to these programs was in 2018. And even then, the Ford government halved the planned three per cent bump scheduled by the previous government, despite indicating during the campaign period that it had no such plans (Ferguson and Monsebraaten 2018). When asked about the reduction at the time, then Minister of Children, Community, and Social Services, Lisa MacLeod, called the halved figure “compassionate” (Chandler 2021).
- 4.28** OW and the ODSP must provide a living income that does not leave Ontarians below the poverty line. Unfortunately, the Ford government’s view of these programs still seems to align with Minister MacLeod’s 2018 comment: those that rely on social assistance should be content with what they get.
- 4.29** To provide Ontarians that are unable to work with dignity and respect, **the Ford government must recognize that Ontario’s social assistance rates are below what they should be, and do not provide sufficient income for basic necessities. The Ford government must dramatically increase the OW and ODSP amounts for all recipients to 1994 levels, adjusted for inflation, where the rates previously peaked before declining (Oliveira, Robinson, and Tranjan 2021).** OW and ODSP recipients, their families, and their children should not have to endure crushing poverty in a province as wealthy as Ontario because of the barriers to employment that they face.
- 4.30** To fully address poverty in Ontario, **improvements to OW and the ODSP must be accompanied by other measures that expand the social safety net, improve employment standards, and create better, high paying jobs.**

- 4.31** For instance, **the Ford government must revisit its cancellation of the Basic Income pilot.** When cancelled, the pilot was working, providing those in the program with much-needed stability and the quality-of-life improvements many recipients cited as necessary to take the next steps toward improving their skills to find better employment. The Ford government's decision to end the program in the middle of the three-year pilot in 2018 was cruel to those it had so greatly benefited (Ferguson and Monsebraaten 2018). It also denied policymakers crucial evidence about the long-term success of such initiatives.
- 4.32** **The Ford government must also update Ontario's *Employment Standards Act*, to make it easier to unionize, as a sure way to improve wages and working conditions; stop the practice of classifying employees as "independent contractors;" establish an equal pay for equal work provision; and institute a transparent employment pay law as part of a strategy to reduce the pay gaps suffered by women, racialized, and other equity-deserving groups, as well as Indigenous peoples. Additionally, to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in the short term, and protect communities and respect the dignity and rights of workers over the long run, the Ford government must legislate 10 permanent, employer-provided, paid sick leave days for all Ontario workers.**
- 4.33** In discussing poverty and Ontarians' livelihoods, the potential economic consequences of climate change cannot be ignored. A strong, progressive climate change action plan, focusing on leveraging green technology to de-carbonize Ontario will require significant investment, and change to the province's economic and labour systems. But, if implemented with a forward vision, a green Ontario, with a green economy, has added benefits beyond environmental concerns. A green economy has the potential to create tens of thousands of high paying, green jobs, to promote electrification over fossil fuels, retrofit existing buildings, and to build public transit.
- 4.34** **The Ford government must develop and properly invest in a climate change action plan that prioritizes transitioning to a low-carbon economy, while creating good jobs, with the necessary job training supports for workers in transition and a pathway for the equity-deserving communities that need decent work most.**

## **5. CONCLUSION**

**5.01** COVID-19 has exacerbated Ontario's shortcomings, especially its failure to protect and support our most vulnerable citizens. The Ford government has met this challenge with a whimper, a response to the crisis that at best kicks the proverbial can down the road, and at worst harms many Ontarians' well-being by cutting public services when they need them most.

**5.02** The 2022 budget is an opportunity for this government to build a better, fairer, and more prosperous Ontario. To show leadership and abandon its failed track record of reckless cuts to public services. To support a robust COVID-19 recovery. To invest in publicly funded education and child care. And to repair and strengthen the province's social safety net.

**5.03** Ontario is a rich province. Resources are not the issue. Political will and vision are. There is the potential to do more and better, and now is the time to do it, to make the investments necessary to ensure that Ontario's essential public services are stronger, more adaptable, and better equipped to serve all Ontarians.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**6.01** That the government engage in regular, open, and constructive dialogue with teachers and education workers, and to heed the advice of those on the frontlines of publicly funded education.

**6.02** That the government prioritize access to booster shots for all teachers and education workers across the entire province, not just those in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

**6.03** That the government ensure PCR and rapid antigen tests are widely available to everyone in schools; case counts are reinstated and joined by a comprehensive COVID-19 testing and tracing program; a sustainable plan is put in place to address potential staff absences due to COVID-19-related illness and/or isolation; all teachers and education workers are immediately supplied with non-fit-tested N95 masks, and

continue to be supplied with N95 masks as needed; and students are provided with the best possible masks, with improved guidelines to ensure masking compliance.

- 6.04** That the government reduce class sizes to promote physical distancing.
- 6.05** That the government add COVID-19 to the list of designated diseases in *Ontario Regulation 261/13 Designated Diseases* under the *Immunization of School Pupils Act* (ISPA), requiring students to be vaccinated against COVID-19, and coupled with a robust public campaign promoting the importance of student vaccination.
- 6.06** That the government improve ventilation and install HEPA filters in all classrooms and public areas in schools. This must include publicly available metrics and standards, including information on risk control programs and measures, in recognition and acceptance of the fact that the virus is airborne. Ventilation standards should be based on metrics outlined by the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE).
- 6.07** That the government provide resources and supports for more child and youth workers, social workers, psychologists, and other professional services to help students deal with their social, emotional, and behavioural needs.
- 6.08** That the government encourage and facilitate collaborative efforts between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services on a proactive, multi-faceted response that addresses the needs of both victims and perpetrators of school violence.
- 6.09** That the government invest in reduced class sizes, so students can get the focused, individual attention from teachers they need and the stable learning environment they deserve; more professional services and supports, to address learning loss and mental health needs; and immediate, substantial investments in school infrastructure and technology.
- 6.10** That the government prioritize poverty reduction, robust and affordable child care, and improved access to mental health resources, with the needed attention, action, and investment.

- 6.11** That the government update the grant with improved investment, so that equity-deserving and Indigenous students are provided with greater access to resources, learning materials, and experiences.
- 6.12** That the government address the mental health needs of students, especially those from racialized and other equity-deserving communities, as they are among those who have suffered the most throughout the pandemic.
- 6.13** That the government address the administrative structure in schools, with a focus on improving educators' working conditions, to attract and retain diverse talent; enhance professional development for school board officials, administrators, and all educators, so that they have the tools and resources to recognize and address systemic racism and other issues negatively impacting Indigenous and equity-deserving groups; and provide better resources to support the teacher-led and directed professional development that has already made progress in these areas.
- 6.14** That the Ministry of Education provide a robust suite of supports and community engagement to promote success. Mental health and wellness must be a key feature of this approach. This will require the hiring of additional resource teachers, educational assistants, special education supports, social workers, psychologists, guidance teachers, and culturally responsive counsellors.
- 6.15** That the government provide funding for professional development, support resources, release time, and other supports needed to transition to full implementation.
- 6.16** That the government engage education partners in sustained, meaningful consultation and collaboration in developing destreaming policy and rewriting curriculum documents.
- 6.17** That the government acknowledge the relationship between mental health and equitable student outcomes. All mental health interventions should be culturally responsive and adaptable to meet the diverse needs of students.

- 6.18** That the government immediately and dramatically enhance investments into mental health services in schools, and expand school-based resources, supports, and services. This should include funding to support ongoing mental health-related professional development opportunities for educators, as well as the hiring of additional mental health professionals, including social workers, psychologists, guidance teachers, child and youth workers, and school mental health workers.
- 6.19** That the government increase the annual funding for Student Mental Health Ontario in a manner that reflects sustainability and long-term needs.
- 6.20** That the government co-ordinate between the Ministry of Education and other ministries, further exploration of the community hub model, and regular consultation with the representatives of frontline teachers and education workers.
- 6.21** In addition to targeting mental health resources specifically for teachers, the government should also ensure that school administrators are honouring teachers' contractual rights to access sick leave for mental health issues, including investigating the reasons for, and redressing, the shortage of qualified occasional teachers.
- 6.22** That the government immediately end the failed hybrid model, and provide funding necessary for in-person and online-only schools during the pandemic.
- 6.23** That the government provide predictable and ongoing funding to ensure that every student who needs it has access to their own electronic device. In addition, any educator required to deliver instruction remotely must be issued the technology and/or devices required for the task by their school board.
- 6.24** That the government provide teachers who demonstrate interest with teacher-led, teacher-directed professional development opportunities related to online learning.
- 6.25** That the government enhance support for students with special education needs, to successfully reintegrate them with their peers and mitigate any learning loss that will have occurred.

- 6.26** That the government provide immediate, stable, and sufficient annual funding for infrastructure and repairs, new technology, as well as services and supports for all students, including those with special education and mental health needs.
- 6.27** That if the government still believes some sort of province-wide testing is necessary, they should at least move toward a random sampling model, as is used by PISA and others.
- 6.28** That the government continue to support and strengthen the FDK program so it can honour its original promise.
- 6.29** That the government provide sufficient resources to address the achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.
- 6.30** That the government provide resources for teacher-led, teacher-directed professional development – the most efficient and effective form of professional learning.
- 6.31** That the government lower class sizes and invest in English language supports, including properly trained teachers, to ensure students are able to interact with their peers, achieve academic success, and ultimately contribute within our society.
- 6.32** That the government provide funding so that school boards can provide the necessary supports to improve language skill assessment. At the same time, adult learners require additional and specific mental health supports to improve chances for successful completion of their respective programs.
- 6.33** That the government explore options for shared services agreements and co-locating schools is a far more effective approach than board amalgamation, not only in meeting the needs of students and communities, but also in making efficient use of school space.
- 6.34** That the government rethink its cuts and refusal to invest in the public services proven to promote the health and prosperity of all Ontarians.

- 6.35** That the government commit to an affordable, high quality, publicly funded, and universally accessible system of child care – the most efficient, effective, and equitable option for all Ontarians.
- 6.36** That the government be laser-focused on creating decent jobs with higher wages, improving employment standards, ensuring better and more affordable access to education and training, and bolstering the province’s social safety net.
- 6.37** That the government revisit its Poverty Reduction Strategy, which aims to transform how critical social assistance is delivered through Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).
- 6.38** That the government recognize that Ontario’s social assistance rates are below what they should be, and do not provide sufficient income for basic necessities.
- 6.39** That the government dramatically increase the OW and ODSP amounts for all recipients to 1994 levels, adjusted for inflation, where the rates previously peaked before declining.
- 6.40** That the government make improvements to OW and the ODSP, accompanied by other measures that expand the social safety net, improve employment standards, and create better, high paying jobs.
- 6.41** That the government revisit its cancellation of the Basic Income pilot.
- 6.42** That the government update Ontario’s *Employment Standards Act*, to make it easier to unionize, as a sure way to improve wages and working conditions; stop the practice of classifying employees as “independent contractors;” establish an equal pay for equal work provision; and institute a transparent employment pay law as part of a strategy to reduce the pay gaps suffered by women, racialized, and other equity-deserving groups, as well as Indigenous peoples.
- 6.43** That the government legislate 10 permanent, employer-provided, paid sick leave days for all Ontario workers.

- 6.44** That the government develop and properly invest in a climate change action plan that prioritizes transitioning to a low-carbon economy, while creating good jobs, with the necessary job training supports for workers in transition and a pathway for the equity-deserving communities that need decent work most.

## 7. WORKS CITED

Aguilar, Bryann. (2021). "Ontario to stop collecting COVID-19 numbers from school boards, suspend reporting of cases." *CTV News* (December 31).

Alook, Angele, Block, Sheila, and Galabuzi, Grace-Edward. (2021). *A Disproportionate Burden: COVID-19 labour market impacts on Indigenous and racialized workers in Canada*. Ottawa. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3nHel6i>.

Alphonso, Caroline. (2021). "The kids are not all right: Educators worry about absences as COVID-19 challenges continue for parents, students." *Globe and Mail* (May 4).

Alphonso, Caroline. (2021a). "Ontario considers move to make remote learning permanent for all boards going forward." *Globe and Mail* (March 24).

Alphonso, Caroline. (2020). "Educators worry gap may grow for disadvantaged students stuck at home." *Globe and Mail* (April 10).

Alphonso, Caroline. (2019). "Teacher math tests don't boost student scores, agency finds." *Globe and Mail* (August 29).

Alphonso, Caroline. (2017). "Ontario children gain learning benefits from full-day kindergarten: study." *Globe and Mail* (August 9).

Amin, Faiza. (2021). "Concerns expressed as province transforms social assistance program." *CityNews*. Toronto.

Auditor General of Ontario. (2019). *2019 Annual Report*. Toronto: Office of the Auditor General of Ontario. Available at: <https://bit.ly/38FBajJ>

Auditor General of Ontario. (2018). *2018 Annual Report*. Toronto: Office of the Auditor General of Ontario. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3GZcnWe>

Auditor General of Ontario. (2017). *2017 Annual Report*. Toronto: Office of the Auditor General of Ontario. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3bA1FJ2>

Bamer, Erin. (2021). "Pandemic leads to projected learning losses among English language learners." *York Dispatch* (July 2).

Barrett, Kali, Born, Karen B., Dhuey, Elizabeth, Gallagher-Mackay, Kelly, Maltsev, Antonina, McCready, Lance, Perkhun, Anna, Sander, Beate, Srivastava, Prachi, Steiner, Robert, and Underwood, Kathryn. (2021). *COVID-19 and Education Disruption in Ontario: Emerging Evidence on Impacts*. Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table.

Benzie, Robert. (2022). "Why did Doug Ford flip-flop on closing schools? Here's the inside story." *Toronto Star* (January 6).

Benzie, Robert. (2017). "Ontario Education Minister Mitzie Hunter can't say how many hundreds of schools will close." *Toronto Star* (March 7).

Block, Sheila and Galabuzi, Grace-Edward. (2018). *Persistent inequality: Ontario's colour coded labour market*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Ontario Office.

Boak, Angela, Hayley A. Hamilton, Edward M. Adlaf, Joanna L. Henderson, and Robert E. Mann. (2017). *The mental health and well-being of Ontario students, 1991-2017: Detailed findings from the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) (CAMH Research Document Series No. 47)*. Toronto: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

Brown, Karen, Dobrowolski, Barb, Littlewood, Karen, and Vinet-Roy, Ann. (2021). *Ontario's teacher unions respond to government's refusal to fund proposal to combat systemic racism*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3lva1Pp>

Bruckert C., Santor, D., & Mario, B. (2021). *In harm's way: The epidemic of violence against education support workers in Ontario*. Ottawa, ON: University of Ottawa.

Bundale, Brett. (2021). "All the jobs lost in 2020 among workers with wages below Canadian average: report." *CTV News*. (February 20).

Butler, Colin. (2021). "Pandemic making it clear Ontario's rural students are at the back of the virtual class." *CBC News* (January 11).

Campbell, Carol, Ann Lieberman, Ana Yashkina, Sharon Alexander, and Joelle Rodway. (2018a). *Research Report: Teacher Learning & Leadership Program 2017-18*. Toronto: OTF.

Canadian Education Association (CEA). (2015). *The Facts on Education: What is Effective Teacher Professional Development?* Toronto: Canadian Education Association.

Canadian Teachers' Federation. (2020). *Teacher Mental Health Check-in Survey*. Ottawa: Canadian Teachers' Federation.

Carpenter, Elissa. (2020). "National study says 'our children are not alright' under mounting stress of pandemic." *CBC News* (September 1).

CBC News. (2020). "EQAO is broken, and the Ford government can't be trusted to fix it: former EQAO chair." *CBC News* (January 13).

CBC News. (2016). "No big bucks to be saved by merging school divisions: expert." *CBC News* (November 18).

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. (2020). "Suicidal ideation at record levels among Ontario students." Toronto: CAMH (November 23).

Chandler, Justin. (2021). "The cost of living is rising. So why aren't social-assistance rates?" *TVO*. (October 29).

Chidley-Hill, John. (2021). "Schools improve ventilation ahead of new year but parents still not breathing easy." *CTV News*. (September 8).

Children's Mental Health Ontario. (2021). "Children's Health Coalition Statement." *CMHO* (April 6).

Children's Mental Health Ontario. (2020). *Kids Can't Wait: 2020 Report on Wait Lists and Wait Times for Child and Youth Mental Health Care*. Toronto: CMHO. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3KHq9zo>

Coalition for Alternatives to Streaming in Education. (2021). "CASE Fact Sheet and Recommendations." Available at: <https://bit.ly/3Iol6Ik>

Cooper, Colleen and Stalker, Carol. (2022). "Basic Income Guarantee is the best way to improve lives." *Hamilton Spectator*. (January 14).

Cornelius-White, Jeffery. (2007). "Learner-Centered Teacher-Student Relationships Are Effective: A Meta-Analysis." *Review of Educational Research*, no. 77: 113-43.

Crawley, Mike. (2021). "The inside story of Doug Ford's COVID-19 climbdowns." *CBC News* (April 22).

Council of Canadians with Disabilities. (2021). "Poverty." *Social Policy*.

D'Mello, Colin. (2021). "How public opinion polling might affect Doug Ford's back to school decision." *CTV News* (June 2).

Darling-Hammond, Linda, and Milbrey McLaughlin. (1995). "Policies that Support Professional Development in an Era of Reform." *Phi Delta Kappan* 76, no. 8: 597-604.

Dee, Thomas, and Martin West. (2011). "The Non-Cognitive Returns to Class Size." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 33, no. 1: 23-46.

Deloitte. (2012). *The Case for Shared Services in Ontario's School Board Sector: A Feasibility Study Based on Eleven School Boards*. Toronto: Deloitte & Touche LLP.

Dhanraj, Travis. (2019). "Government consultation shows parents overwhelmingly reject class size increase: sources." *Global News* (December 1).

Drewes, Torben, and Tyler Meredith. (2015). "If at First You Don't Succeed: Toward an Adult Education and Training Strategy for Canada." *IRPP Study* No. 54.

Dessanti, Claudia. (2020). *The She-covery Project: Confronting the Gendered Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Ontario*. Toronto: Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

Earthman, Glen I. (2002). "School Facility Conditions and Student Achievement." *Williams Watch Series* (October).

Employment and Social Development Canada. (2022). *Major wage settlements by sector and year*. Ottawa: Government of Canada. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3fSjLXD>

EQAO (2019). *Literature Review of the Empirical Evidence on the Connection Between Compulsory Teacher Competency Testing and Student Outcomes*. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario.

Fahmy, Gabrielle. (2021). "The kids may not be all right, according to Montreal study on mental health during COVID-19." *CTV News* (January 7).

Farhadi, B. (2021) "Failed Screen Test: Hybrid learning and the misuse of online education in Ontario." *Behind the Numbers, The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives* (September 9).

- Farhadi, Beyhan. (2020) "Concurrent classrooms are a failed response to COVID-19 pressures." *Behind the Numbers, The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives* (November 5).
- Farhadi, Beyhan. (2019) "In Doug Ford's e-learning gamble, high school students will lose." *The Conversation* (October 17).
- Ferguson, H. Bruce, Sarah Bovaird, and MP Mueller. (2007). *Paediatrics & Child Health*. 12, no. 8: 701-706.
- Ferguson, Rob and Monsebraaten, Laurie. (2018). "Ontario government scraps basic income pilot project, limits welfare increase to 1.5 per cent." *Toronto Star*. (July 31).
- Ferns, Carolyn. (2022). "Ford government's inaction on child care is dangerous." *Toronto Star*. (January 10).
- Financial Accountability Office of Ontario. (2021). *Ministry of Education: Spending Plan Review*. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario.
- Fogliato, Patricia. (2017). "De-streaming in the TDSB: Creating a level playing field?" Toronto: University of Toronto. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2JGP1ML>.
- Frankish, Kevin [@KevinFrankish]. (2022). *I asked the #EducationMinister if he consulted with school boards, teachers & parents for advice on #BackToSchool. I don't think he did but I think he thinks he did. Listen & you decide. Hear more later on my show*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3KEnwhx>
- Fredriksson, Peter, Björn Öckert, and Hessel Oosterbeek. (2011). "Long-Term Effects of Class Size." *IZA Discussion Paper No. 5879*.
- Gallagher-Mackay, Kelly. (2020). "Kids are falling behind in school due to the pandemic – and it's a huge problem." *Globe and Mail* (November 8).
- Gallagher-Mackay, Kelly, Annie Kidder, and Suzanne Methot. (2013). *First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education: Overcoming Gaps in Provincially Funded Schools*. Toronto: People for Education.
- Galpern, Hernan, and Stephen Aguilar. (2020). "How remote learning is making educational inequities worse." *The Conversation* (December 8).
- Hargreaves, Andy. (2020). "Large-scale assessments and their effects: The case of mid-stakes tests in Ontario." *Journal of Educational Change* (May 11).
- Heissel, Jennifer, Emma Adam, Jennifer Doleac, David Figlio, and Monathan Meer. (2018). "Testing, Stress, and Performance: How Students Respond Physiologically to High-Stakes Testing." Northwestern Institute for Policy Research Working Paper 18- 31.
- Herhalt, Chris. (2021). "Ontario government maintains overall education spending has increased through the pandemic, but is allocated differently." *CP24* (November 5).
- Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids). (2021). "SickKids releases new research on how COVID-19 pandemic has impacted child and youth mental, physical health." Toronto: SickKids. Available at: <https://bit.ly/344RkD3>
- Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids). (2020.) *COVID-19: Guidance for School Reopening*. Toronto: SickKids. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3KCpgl8>

- Hristova, Bobby. (2021). "Students, parents, educators fraying nerves over back-to-school safety." *CBC News* (December 30).
- Jackson, James. (2020). "Worries emerge as pandemic leads to surge in screen time." *Guelph Mercury Tribune* (December 25).
- Jakubowski, Maciej, Harry Anthony Patrinos, Emilio Ernesto Porta, and Jerzy Wisniewski. (2016). "The effect of delaying tracking in secondary school: evidence from the 1999 education reform in Poland." *Education Economics* 24, no. 16: 557-572.
- Jalaluddin, Uzma. (2021). "Hybrid learning isn't working in GTA schools. These teachers and students explain why." *Toronto Star* (October 5).
- Janmohamed, Zeenat, Kerry McCuaig, Emis Akbari, Romona Gananathan, and Jennifer Watkins. (2014). *Schools at the Centre: Findings from Case Studies Exploring Seamless Early Learning in Ontario*. Toronto: Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development – Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- James, Nalita, and Virginie Thériault. (2020). "Adult education in times of the COVID-19 pandemic: Inequalities, changes, and resilience." *Studies in the Education of Adults*, vol. 52, issue 2: 129-33.
- Kempf, Arlo. (2016). *The Pedagogy of Standardized Testing: The Radical Impacts of Standardization in the US and Canada*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Kim, Juliana. (2020). "With Remote Learning, a 12-Year-Old Knows Her English Is Slipping Away." *New York Times* (December 29).
- King, Angelina, Rieti, John, and Swyers, Katie. (2021). "TDSB repair backlog piling up with no solution in sight — see where your school ranks." *CBC News*. (September 9).
- Kopun, Francine. (2020). "Racialized children hit hardest by COVID-19 lockdown, survey confirms." *Toronto Star*. (September 28).
- Krueger, Alan, and Diane Whitmore. (2000). "The Effect of Attending a Small Class in the Early Grades on College-Test Taking and Middle School Test Results: Evidence from Project STAR." *National Bureau of Economic Research No. 7656*.
- Krueger, Alan. (2003). "Economic Considerations and Class Size." *The Economic Journal* 113, no. 485: F34-64.
- MacMillan, Sarah. (2021). "Families worry new Ontario Autism Program won't be truly needs-based." *CBC News* (January 6).
- Mackenzie, Hugh. (2017). *Ontario's deteriorating schools: the fix is not in*. Toronto: The Campaign for Public Education. Available at: <https://bit.ly/38DVx0s>
- Mackenzie, Hugh. (2015). *Harris-era Hangovers: Toronto School Trustees' Inherited Funding Shortfall*. Toronto: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Ontario Office.
- Maimaiti, Gulipari, Jia, Chengyuan, and Hew, Khe Foon. (2021) "Student disengagement in web-based videoconferencing supported online learning: an activity theory perspective." *Interactive Learning Environments*: 1-20.
- Maunder, Robert G., Heeney, Natalie D., Strudwick, Gillian, Shin, Hwayeon Danielle, O'Neill, Braden, Young, Nancy, Jeffs, Lianne P., Barrett, Kali, Bodmer, Nicolas S., Born,

- Karen B., Hopkins, Jessica, Jüni, Peter, Perkhun, Anna, Price, David J., Razak, Fahad, Mushquash, Christopher J., and Mah, Linda. (2021). Burnout in hospital-based healthcare workers during COVID-19. *Science Briefs of the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table*. 2021; 2(46). Available at: <https://bit.ly/33J1Ksp>
- McArthur-Gupta, Aimee. (2019). *The Economic Case for Investing in Education*. The Conference Board of Canada.
- McGinn, Dave. (2020). "All that excess screen time parents were told not to worry about at the start of COVID-19? It's time to worry." *Globe and Mail* (October 29).
- McKay, Julia. (2021). "Internet outages affect online classes in Ontario." *The Bellville Intelligencer* (January 5).
- McQuigge, Michelle. (2018). "Ontario students with special needs increasingly asked to stay home: report." *The Globe and Mail* (June 2018).
- MHASEF Research Team. (2017). *The Mental Health of Children and Youth in Ontario: 2017 Scorecard*. Toronto: Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences.
- MHASEF Research Team. (2015). *The Mental Health of Children and Youth in Ontario: A Baseline Scorecard*. Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences.
- Miljan, Lydia, and Zachery Spicer. (2015). *Municipal Amalgamation in Ontario*. Vancouver: Fraser Institute.
- Ministry of Education. (2020). *Policy/Program Memorandum 164*. Toronto: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education. (2014). *Consultation Summary: School Board Efficiencies and Modernization*. Toronto: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Finance. (2021). *2021 Ontario Budget*. Toronto: Ministry of Finance.
- Ministry of Finance. (2021a). *The 2021 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review: Build Ontario*. Toronto: Ministry of Finance.
- Mojtehdzadeh, and Warren, Sara May. (2021). "Many major school ventilation upgrades won't be ready by September. Here's what you need to know about the precautions in place." *Toronto Star*. (August 13).
- Monsebraaten, Laurie. (2018). "From 'barely surviving' to thriving: Ontario basic income recipients report less stress, better health." *Toronto Star*. (February 24).
- Morgan, Hani. (2014). "Maximizing Student Success with Differentiated Learning." *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 87:1, 34-38.
- Mosteller, Frederick. (1995). "The Tennessee study of class size in the early school grades." *The Future of Children* 5, no. 2: 113-127.
- Muennig, Peter, and Steven H. Woolf. (2007). "Health and Economic Benefits of Reducing the Number of Students per Classroom in US Primary Schools." *American Journal of Public Health* 97, no. 11: 2020-2027.
- Murray, T. Scott, and Richard Shillington. (2011). *From Poverty to Prosperity: Literacy's Impact on Canada's Economic Success*. Ottawa: Canadian Literacy and Learning Network.

Ogilvie, Megan, and Mendleson, Rachel. (2020). "Class sizes vital to curbing spread of COVID-19 in schools, SickKids experts say." *Toronto Star* (August 7).

Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). (2017). *2017 Annual Report: Setting the Standard for Great Teaching*. Toronto: OCT.

Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA). (2021). *OECTA Position Paper on Destreaming*. Toronto: OECTA.

OECTA. (2020). *OECTA Submission to the Ontario Human Rights Commission Right to Read Inquiry*. Toronto: OECTA.

OECTA. (2017a). *Workplace Violence and Harassment Against Teachers: Results of a Comprehensive Members Survey*. Toronto: OECTA.

OECTA. (2017b). *Safer Schools for All: Addressing Violence and Harassment Against Teachers*. Toronto: OECTA.

Oliveira, Tania, Robinson, Randy, and Tranjan, Ricardo. (2021). *Poverty in the Midst of Plenty: A report card on child and family poverty in Ontario*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Ontario Office. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3Ikdfou>

Ontario Federation of Labour. (2021). *Our Future, Our Fight*.

Ontario Health and Wellesley Institute. (2021). *Report: Tracking COVID 19 Through Race-Based Data*.

Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC). (2020). *Letter to the Minister of Education, school leaders on respecting the rights of students with disabilities*. Toronto: Ontario Human Rights Commission.

Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF). (2020). *A Measured Response to Implementation: Feedback on the proposed revised mathematics curriculum (Grades 1-8)*. Toronto: OTF.

OTF. (2017). *More than Dots on a Chart: Setting a New Course for Assessment in Ontario*. Toronto: OTF.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2010). "Finland: Slow and Steady Reform for Consistently High Results." *Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education: Lessons from PISA for the United States*. Paris: OECD

Pascal, Charles. (2009). *With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario – Report to the Premier by the Special Advisory on Early Learning*. Toronto: Ministry of Education.

Parker, Lana. (2020). "Mandatory e-learning is a problem for Ontario high schools." *The Conversation* (March 3).

Pelletier, Janette, and James Corter. (2019). "A longitudinal comparison of learning outcomes in full-day and half-day kindergarten." *The Journal of Educational Research* (January 3).

Pelletier, Janette. (2014). "Ontario's Full-Day Kindergarten: A Bold Public Policy Initiative." *Public Sector Digest* (June).

- People for Education. (2019). *2019 Annual report on schools: What makes a school?* Toronto: People for Education.
- Powell, Alana; Ferns, Carolyn; Burrell Shevaun. (2021). *Forgotten on the frontline. A survey report on Ontario's early years and child care workforce.* Toronto: Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario & the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care.
- PressProgress. (2021). "Doug Ford's Government Wants TVO to 'Commercialize' Online Learning Content Designed for Ontario Schools." *PressProgress* (May 14).
- Pringle, Josh. (2020). "Ottawa public school teachers burnt out, some students report declining mental health since school began: Survey." *CTV News* (October 28).
- Psyk, David. (2000). *Restructuring Alberta School Systems (PhD Thesis)*. Edmonton: University of Alberta.
- Ranger, Michael. (2022). "Teachers, school boards sound alarm over Ontario's back to school plan." *CityNews* (January 13).
- RBC. (2021). *Canadian Federal and Provincial Fiscal Tables*. Toronto: RBC. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3GRwC8p>
- Rodriguez, Jeremiah. (2021). "Locking up public spaces hits lower-income, racialized people harder: experts." *CTV News*. (April 29).
- Rushowy, Kristin. (2020). "'Virtually no' support for larger class sizes, according to reports the Ford government has refused to release." *Toronto Star* (February 26).
- Rushowy, Kristin, and Rob Ferguson. (2015). "Special ed cuts to hit most Ontario boards." *Toronto Star* (March 12).
- Schanzenbach, Diane Whitmore. (2014). *Does Class Size Matter?* Boulder, CO: National Education Policy Center.
- Schleicher, Andreas. (2018). *Valuing our Teachers and Raising their Status: How Communities Can Help*. Paris: OECD.
- Science M, Thampi N, Bitnun A, et al. (2021). "School Operation for the 2021-2022 Academic Year in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Science Briefs of the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table*. 2(38). Available at: <https://bit.ly/3FSDxwJ>
- Segool, Natasha, John Carlson, Anisa Goforth, Nathan von der Embse, Justin Barterian. (2013). "Heightened test anxiety among young children: elementary school students' anxious responses to high-stakes testing." *Psychology and Schools* 50, no. 5: 489-499.
- Sharkey, Jackie. (2019) "Families of children with autism under 'severe stress': Report." *CBC News* (June 2019).
- Sharpe, Andrew, and Jean-Francois Arsenault. (2010). *Investing in Aboriginal Education in Canada: An Economic Perspective*. Ottawa: Centre for the Study of Living Standards.
- St. George, Donna, Strauss, Valerie, Mckler, Laura, Heim, Joe, and Natanson, Hannah. (2021). "How the pandemic is reshaping education." *Washington Post* (March 15).

Statistics Canada. (2021). *Consumer Price Index, by geography, monthly, percentage change, not seasonally adjusted, provinces, Whitehorse and Yellowknife*. Ottawa: Government of Canada.

Statistics Canada. (2021a). "Income of individuals by age group, sex and income source, Canada, provinces and selected census metropolitan areas." *Statistics Canada Table 11-10-0239-01*.

Statistics Canada. (2016). *Statistics Canada 2016 Census*.

Taekema, Dan. (2020). "Hamilton-Niagara part of government pilot project to contract out employment services." *CBC News*. (February 18).

Taylor, Casey. (2020). "NDP motion to force class size cap fails." *CityNews* (September 17).

Trick, Sarah. (2020). "The government's school-reopening plan ignores kids with disabilities, say critics." *TVO* (September 2).

Tsekouras, Phil. (2021). "Some Ontario parents say there are 30 to 40 students in their children's classroom." *CTV News* (September 9).

Turner, Logan. (2021). "Parents losing trust in Ontario government as autism program wait list grows." *CBC News* (November 16).

TVO. (2020). "Is Ontario's Back-to-School Plan Enough?" *TVO* (September 8).

Waberi, Osobe. (2021). "Ontario government's autism program not enough, families and critics say." *Canadian Press* (August 7).

Wherry, Aaron. (2020). "One country, two pandemics: what COVID-19 reveals about inequality in Canada." *CBC News* (June 13).

Wong, Jessica. (2021). "High schoolers, educators decry split focus of hybrid learning model." *CBC News* (October 24).

Wong, Jessica. (2020). "New math curriculum an added challenge for Ontario elementary schools this fall." *CBC News* (August 20).