



ETFO Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs 2019 Pre-Budget Hearings

January 2019



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**Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario
Fédération des enseignantes et des enseignants
de l'élémentaire de l'Ontario**

The union represents 83,000 elementary public school teachers, occasional teachers and education professionals across the province. Its Building Better Schools education agenda can be viewed at **BuildingBetterSchools.ca**.

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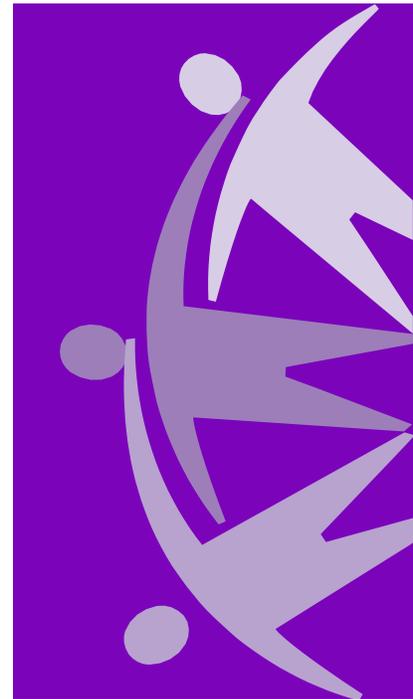


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INTRODUCTION

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) welcomes the opportunity to participate in the 2019 pre-budget consultations. ETFO represents 83,000 elementary public school teachers and education professionals across the province and is the largest teacher federation in Canada.

A year ago, ETFO's pre-budget submission focused on addressing the existing education funding shortfall, improving and increasing funding for special education so it would be based on actual student needs, making improvements to the Full-Day Kindergarten program, addressing workplace violence in schools, and other important education priorities. A year later, elementary educators are concerned not only with the lack of progress in these areas but with the steps backwards that the government has taken with regards to public education.

Minor improvements made through negotiations on class sizes for grades 4 to 8, a cap on Kindergarten class size, and additional funding for students with special needs have been overshadowed by cuts to specialized classroom programs, the elimination of subsidies for professional learning, and now the threat to cut \$1 billion from the public education budget.

ETFO is concerned about the current direction of the government regarding the funding of public programs including public education. Ontario's public program spending is currently lower than all other provinces and territories, as a percentage of GDP.¹ Despite this, the government has stated its intention to cut public spending; threatening crucial public services Ontarians rely on.

¹ Statistics Canada (2018). [Table 10-10-0017-01 Canadian government finance statistics for the provincial and territorial governments \(x 1,000,000\)](#), [Table 36-10-0221-01 Gross domestic product, income-based, provincial and territorial, annual \(x 1,000,000\)](#)

ETFO is looking to the 2019 Budget to respond to urgent classroom issues. Elementary educators continue to be challenged by disruptive student behaviour, students experiencing serious mental health issues, large class sizes, implementation issues related to Full-Day Kindergarten and test-driven classrooms. ETFO's *Building Better Schools* plan, updated in 2018, promotes several policies that, if adopted by the government, would go a long way to address these concerns. This submission reviews these policies in the context of current classroom challenges and the government's focus on student well-being.

Program Spending and Fiscal Outlook

Following the 2008-09 recession, Ontario's program spending did not keep up with inflation; much of the reduction was achieved through public sector salary freezes or actual compensation decreases, including cuts to sick leave benefits and unpaid days for teachers. While the 2018 Budget included increases to program funding, overall, recent increases have failed to keep up with inflation and population growth.

While Ontario is facing a fiscal deficit, it is significantly below the \$15 billion figure quoted widely by the government. In its latest report, the Financial Accountability Office (FAO) projects Ontario's deficit for 2018-19 to be \$12.3 billion.² This figure is \$1.2 billion lower than that contained in the government's *Fall Economic Statement*. As pointed out by the FAO, "Policy decisions by the current Ontario government will reduce revenues by \$2.1 billion in 2018-19, and by an average of \$3.7 billion over the next four years."³ These policy decisions seem to be aimed at reducing the tax burden on Ontarians, however the impact is not evenly distributed. Corporations and high-income

² Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario (2018). *Economic and Budget Outlook, Assessing Ontario's Medium-term Budget Plan*. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario.

³ *Ibid*

earners will disproportionately benefit from the elimination of the cap and trade program and the reversal of tax measures adopted in the 2018 Budget. In addition, the reduction in revenues contributed to the recent decision by Moody's to downgrade the province's credit rating to Aa3.⁴

The government has stated its intention to achieve four per cent savings in its public spending. If this is applied to the education system, it would mean reducing the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) by close to \$1 billion. A cut this deep would severely impact the ability of school boards to provide the inclusive high-quality publicly-funded education that Ontarians expect. ETFO is calling on the government to instead make investments so that Ontario can continue to benefit from its internationally-renowned public education system.

Supports for Students with Special Needs

Integrating students with special needs into Ontario classrooms requires more resources to support both the students and the classroom teacher in terms of training, human resources and material resources.

Currently, special education grants are based on a statistical model that estimates special education support based on demographic data rather than students' individual needs. The demographics are based on outdated census data. In his recent analysis of the statistical model, Ontario economist Hugh Mackenzie writes:

“First, the categories of exceptionality used are clinical rather than needs based.

There is no attempt in the model to assess the programming needs associated with the identified exceptionalities. In the model, each of the 14 categories of exceptionality is equally weighted. The model takes no account of differences in the

⁴ Moody's Investors Service. (2018). *Moody's downgrades Ontario to Aa3, changes outlook to stable*. Retrieved on December 18 from https://www.moodys.com/research/Moodys-downgrades-Ontario-to-Aa3-changes-outlook-to-stable--PR_392934#

level of programming resources that might be required for different categories of exceptionalty.”⁵

It is important that the special education model reflect the actual need for program support for students with special needs.

The provincial government must increase its funding for educational assistants, psychologists, behavioural therapists, school support counsellors, child and youth workers and speech-language pathologists. In its 2017 annual survey of elementary and secondary schools, People for Education, a non-profit advocacy organization, indicated that 61 per cent of elementary schools report having insufficient access to a psychologist to adequately support students and 13 per cent of elementary schools report that psychologist services are unavailable. 47 per cent of elementary schools report that child and youth worker services are not available.⁶ For elementary schools, an increase in the number of educational assistants is particularly important to address the current stresses in the classroom. Occasional teachers face additional challenges as they often need to support students without being intimately familiar with their particular needs, and without the benefit of an ongoing rapport with them. Occasional teachers would benefit from paid professional development to assist them to address behavioural issues and adopt teaching strategies that support students with a wide spectrum of special needs.

Elementary schools continue to struggle to provide adequate services for students with high-risk behaviours. These high-risk behaviours could harm the student or others, including classmates and staff. This harm includes both psychological and physical harm; it interferes with teaching and learning outcomes and diminishes health, safety and well-being. Recently, a number of ETFO

⁵ Hugh Mackenzie (2017). *Shortchanging Ontario Students: An Overview and Assessment of Education Funding in Ontario*. Toronto: Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario

⁶ People for Education (2017). *Competing Priorities* (Annual Report on Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools 2017). Toronto, ON: People for Education

locals have held community forums, many of which have focused on the growing incidence of classroom violence. These community meetings are contributing to public awareness of the issues involved and the need for more investment in supports for students with learning exceptionalities and those with mental health issues.

In 2018, the Ministry of Education announced pilot projects to assess two models for increasing supports for children with autism. One involves expanded Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) training for educational assistants; the other involves allowing external ABA instructors to use classroom space to work individually with students. The second approach is short-sighted and an unfortunate privatization of educational services. The government should focus its attention on increasing ABA training for school board staff, as well as increasing student access to paraprofessional services.

The well-being of educators and other school staff is also key to providing an optimal learning environment. The growing number of ETFO members who are away from the classroom on long-term disability is an important indicator of the extent to which school workplaces are highly stressful and educators are not receiving the supports they require. According to Ontario Teachers' Insurance Plan (OTIP) data, the rate of ETFO members filing claims for long-term disability has increased over the last four years from 1.36 per cent to 1.88 per cent of members enrolled in the plan. OTIP attributes the increase to the "additional pressure in the school environment." In addition, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) data indicates that education staff experience high levels of Lost Time Injuries (LTIs) due to workplace violence with educational assistants being the most affected group of education sector workers. According to June 2018 WSIB data summarized in the Public Services Health & Safety Association's 2017-18 Annual Report, educational assistants comprise 18% of all workplace violence LTIs in the public sector. In

the education sector, elementary teachers experience the second highest percentage of LTIs due to workplace violence – a rate three times as high as that for secondary teachers.⁷

ETFO has been working with both the Minister of Education and the Minister of Labour for several years to improve the school-level investigation and reporting of workplace violence, and occupational health and safety training for school staff and administrators. The Provincial Working Group on Health and Safety, which includes representation from provincial education employee and employer organizations, assisted the Ministry of Labour in the development of its guide titled *Workplace Violence in School Boards: A Guide to the Law*. This guide was released in March 2018. ETFO is hopeful the Working Group's recommendations will ultimately be implemented and help mitigate the incidence of school workplace violence.

Recommendations:

1. That the funding model for special education be based on actual student need.
2. That funding be increased for educational assistants, psychologists, behavioural therapists, school support counsellors, child and youth workers and speech-language pathologists.
3. That occasional teachers receive paid professional development to assist them to address student behavioural issues and adopt teaching strategies that support students with a wide spectrum of special needs.
4. That funding be allocated for Health and Safety training for school staff and administrators during work time or on designated professional development days.

Technology in the Classroom

During the recently held education consultations the government highlighted its objective of improving instruction in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). In her 2018 Annual Report, the Ontario Auditor General found that students' access to classroom technology varied

⁷ Public Services Health & Safety Association (2018), *Intelligent Safety, Annual Report 2017–2018*. Toronto

across the province.⁸ Many classrooms do not have the computers and applications necessary to teach STEM and other subjects and often teachers must rely on students' personal devices as learning tools. While some schools are able to fill this technology gap through fundraising to pay for education resources, others cannot. This exacerbates the differences between schools in economically advantaged communities and those in less-affluent communities.

The government should provide additional, predictable and stable funding for the resources required to teach STEM subjects in order to ensure equitable and consistent programming across the system.

Recommendation:

5. That the government provide additional, predictable and stable per-pupil funding geared towards resources and materials required to teach STEM subjects.

Smaller Class Size: Important for Student Success and Well-being

Smaller classes improve student behaviour and peer relationships and increase student engagement and achievement in the early grades. Smaller classes mean educators have more opportunity to give students individual attention. These factors, in turn, contribute to increased graduation rates and the accompanying savings from fewer students staying on beyond the required four years of secondary school.

Grades 4 to 8 have the highest class sizes in the Kindergarten to Grade 12 system. There is no pedagogical rationale for this. In her 2017 Annual Report, the Ontario Auditor General notes the difference in class sizes and remarks, "It means that not all students will be benefitting from smaller

⁸ Ontario Auditor General (2018). *2018 Annual Report*, Vol. 1. pp. 547-574.
http://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en18/v1_312en18.pdf

class sizes.”⁹ The recently negotiated improvements to funding for grades 4-6 class size amended the funding formula to assist those school boards that had failed to meet the Ministry of Education requirement to have an overall board average of 24.5 students in grades 4-6 classrooms. This was a move in the right direction but it was not enough. ETFO believes there should be a class size cap of 24 students in grades 4-8.

Recommendation:

6. That grades 4 to 8 class size be capped at 24 students.

Realizing the Potential of Full-Day Kindergarten

Full-Day Kindergarten is an important initiative which, if adequately supported, could contribute significantly to supporting children with special needs and promoting student well-being. Recent Ontario research has found that the Full-Day Kindergarten program “has lasting benefits for children’s behaviour as well as their learning.” This research,¹⁰ which tracked two cohorts of children – one group enrolled in half-day programs and the other in full-day programs – found that children in the full-day program scored higher on reading, writing and number knowledge than those in the half-day program. They also remained ahead until the end of Grade 2, the highest grade included in the research study. Children in Full-Day Kindergarten also scored higher on self-regulation – “the capacity to respond to life’s stresses and return to a calm and alert state”¹¹ - which helps reduce the incidence of classroom violence.

⁹ Ontario Auditor General (2017). *2017 Annual Report*, Chapter 3, Section 3.08 - Ministry Funding and Oversight of School Boards.

¹⁰ Janette Pelletier (August 2, 2017). “Children gain learning boost from two-year, full day kindergarten,” *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/children-gain-learning-boost-from-two-year-full-day-kindergarten-79549>

¹¹ *Ibid*

To optimize the potential of Kindergarten, the Ministry of Education needs to address issues identified by the front-line educators and Ontario researchers monitoring the program. The issues include class size and physical space, deployment of designated early childhood educators (DECEs) in every Kindergarten classroom, professional learning to support the teacher and DECE team, preparation time for DECEs, and deeper, systemic support for the inquiry, play-based learning philosophy underlying the program.

Although the Kindergarten program is funded to have an average class size of 26 and an average staff-child ratio of 1:13, there continue to be classes with 30 or more students. Educators in Kindergarten classrooms face significant challenges including the lack of adequate space to set up activity centres to support the play-based program. They also have to manage classroom behaviour when many of the students are experiencing formalized learning environments for the first time. In many cases students have learning or behavioural issues that have yet to be formally diagnosed and supported. Overcrowded classrooms limit the ability to take full advantage of the play-based program and create stressful, overly noisy and dangerous work environments. It is not a coincidence that, among ETFO members, Kindergarten educators have the highest long-term disability claim rate. Reducing class size would significantly improve the Kindergarten learning and working conditions. ETFO supports implementing a Kindergarten class size cap of 26 students. Negotiated class size caps of 30 students in 2017-18, and 29 students in 2018-19 are a first step towards this goal.

Funding shortfalls affect Kindergarten classrooms in other ways. Classes with 15 or fewer students typically are not assigned a DECE and therefore do not benefit from the early childhood development expertise of early childhood educators. Even where a DECE is assigned to a classroom, the lack of funding for lunchroom supervisors and other non-teaching staff results in

school principals often assigning DECEs significant supervision responsibilities outside of their classroom - commonly as much as 500 minutes per week. Joint planning time is a fundamental aspect of creating an effective and collaborative professional team, but the education funding formula does not fund preparation time for these educators. Consequently, the DECE supervision assignments make it virtually impossible to schedule joint planning time for the educator team in the Kindergarten classroom; it also means when the principal assigns the DECE outside of the Kindergarten room, the teacher is left on their own.

The intent of the Full-Day Kindergarten program was to have a DECE and teacher in the classroom to support the philosophy of the play-based program. Senior Kindergarten/Grade 1 split classes are not in line with this objective and should be avoided. Sufficient funding should be allocated accordingly.

Recommendations:

7. That Full-Day Kindergarten class size be capped at 26 students.
8. That, in addition to a teacher, all Kindergarten classes be staffed with a designated early childhood educator.
9. That funding be allocated for 30 minutes of preparation time per day for designated early childhood educators.
10. That funding be allocated for professional development during work time to support the full-day Kindergarten teacher-designated early childhood educator team and to support joint planning time.
11. That funding be allocated to avoid Senior Kindergarten/Grade 1 split classes.
12. That funding be provided for non-teaching staff to perform supervision duties such as lunchroom supervision.

Educating the Whole Child

Elementary students would have a more enriched educational program and be more likely to display consistent positive behaviour if they had more opportunities to learn through the arts and

outdoor experiential learning, as well as be supported by teacher-librarians and teachers who are specialists in the arts, health and physical education, and guidance.

Research confirms that the knowledge and expertise of teacher-librarians and specialist teachers make an important contribution to the quality of elementary education, both in terms of academic success and students' broader emotional, physical, cognitive, personal and social development. A recent extensive literature review on specialist teachers, including teacher-librarians, commissioned by ETFO concluded: "Overall, the literature surrounding specialist teachers in a range of content areas appears to support the claim that specialist teachers can positively impact student achievement and contribute to student success at the elementary level."¹²

The number of specialist teachers at the elementary level has dropped significantly since 1998 when the current funding model was introduced. A decade ago, ETFO negotiated additional funding for specialist teachers that contributed to a modest increase in their numbers. In 2005-06, the government invested an additional \$39 million to support approximately 600 additional specialist teachers. By 2008-09, the investment grew to \$146 million that supported an estimated 2,000 additional specialist teachers allocated across both public and Catholic elementary schools.¹³

People for Education has systematically documented the decline of student access to teacher-librarians and specialist teachers. In its 2017 annual report,¹⁴ People for Education reported:

- 52 per cent of elementary schools had at least one teacher–librarian, either full- or part-time, a decline from 60 per cent in 2008, and an all-time low in the 20-year history of the People for Education Annual Survey;
- 40 per cent of elementary schools have neither a specialist music teacher, nor an itinerant music instructor; and

¹²Katina Pollock and Michael Mindzak (2015). *Specialist Teachers - A Review of the Literature prepared for the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario*. Toronto.

¹³ Ontario Ministry of Education. *Education Funding Technical Papers, 2005-06, 2008-09*.

¹⁴ People for Education (2017). *Competing Priorities* (Annual Report on Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools 2017). Toronto, ON: People for Education.

- Elementary schools in the Greater Toronto Area are 2.5 times more likely to have a music teacher than those in eastern and northern Ontario.

In its 2018 report,¹⁵ People for Education reported:

- 46 per cent of elementary schools have a specialist music teacher, full- or part-time;
- Only 8 per cent of elementary schools with grades 7 and 8 have specialist drama teachers; and
- 39 per cent of elementary schools have a Health and Physical Education (H&PE) full-time teacher.

The Ontario education grants still leave elementary students significantly short-changed in terms of their access to quality programs in the arts and health and physical education, and support from teacher-librarians. The shortfall is greater in smaller and more remote schools that have less access to specialist teachers and programs because the funding is based on per-pupil grants rather than grants per school.

Teacher-librarians play a critical role in developing student literacy, supporting teachers' classroom instruction, and making the library the technological hub of the school. Studies conducted by People for Education document the extent to which trained teacher-librarians have a positive effect on student literacy achievement and on children's enjoyment of reading. It is ETFO policy that all elementary students have access to a teacher-librarian. In recent years, many school boards have replaced teacher-librarians with library-technicians, who are not teachers and are not trained to support teachers' classroom instruction. The per-pupil allocation of teacher-librarians has not changed since the funding formula was introduced.

School libraries cannot fulfill their role of assisting teachers meet the learning expectations of the provincial curriculum without up-to-date resources and technology. The education funding formula must be amended to provide dedicated resource funding to support school libraries.

¹⁵ People for Education (2018). *The new basics for public education*. Toronto, ON: People for Education

In the context of the Ministry's focus on student well-being, including addressing mental health issues, the lack of guidance counsellors in elementary schools is a barrier to meeting the needs of students. In a 2016 report focusing on guidance counsellors, People for Education reported, "In 2016, 83% of all elementary schools report having no full- or part-time guidance counsellors, and only 2% report having a full-time guidance counsellor."¹⁶ The government should ensure greater student access to guidance counsellors in elementary schools. Not doing so is shortsighted.

Recommendations:

13. That the education funding model be amended to provide all elementary schools with specialist teachers in the arts, guidance and health and physical education.
14. That the education funding model be amended to provide dedicated funding to support school library learning resources and technology.

English Language Learners

Children who enter Ontario schools without language proficiency in either English or French require more support to ensure they progress well academically, socially and emotionally. The number of children who speak neither English nor French when they register for school has increased significantly. As reported by the 2017 People for Education annual survey of public schools, 63 per cent of English elementary schools have English Language Learners (ELLs)¹⁷ as compared to 43 per cent in 2002-03. These students face significant challenges in catching up to their peers and schools do not have adequate resources to support them. The challenge of meeting students' needs has intensified as Ontario schools have welcomed Syrian refugees into their classrooms. Many of these students have experienced trauma and been unable to attend school for a

¹⁶ People for Education (2016). Hamlin, D., Hagen Cameron, D. & Watkins, E. (2016). *Ontario's guidance counsellors: Spread thinly in an environment of growing expectations*. People for Education. Toronto: March 7, 2016.

¹⁷ People for Education (2017). *Competing Priorities* (Annual Report on Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools 2017). Toronto, ON: People for Education

considerable period of time – if at all. Funding should be allocated based on students achieving a standard level of language proficiency and not based on the number of years they have been in Canada.

Students who enter English-language schools without English as a first language should also have the opportunity to benefit from French Immersion programs. These students often need additional support to be successful in the immersion program and additional supports should be provided to ELL students enrolled in these classes.

There is no direct accountability for school boards to spend their second-language grants on the intended programs. All too often, the overall shortfalls in the funding formula have led to school boards using their second language grants for other purposes and short-changing ELL students.

Recommendations:

15. That funding for English Language Learners (ELLs) programs and English-as-Second-Language (ESL) teachers be expanded to meet the language acquisition needs of ELLs.
16. That ELLs enrolled in French immersion programs receive additional resources and support.
17. That school boards be required to spend the ESL funding as specified in the grants.

Education Funding Shortfalls

Ontario's education funding formula needs to be fully reviewed and reformed. The basic shortfalls introduced by the Mike Harris Progressive Conservative government in 1998 were not addressed by successive Liberal governments. It is important to acknowledge that the previous government increased education funding, but that additional funding went to new initiatives, including the cap on primary class size and Full-Day Kindergarten. The problems of the 1998 funding model that have not been adequately addressed include: funding for English and French As-a-Second-Language programming; funding for basic school-level facilities and services such as libraries, guidance,

music, art and physical education; funding to support local priorities; and funding for school operations and maintenance. The latter issue has received considerable attention over the past few years and was the subject of a research report that documents a backlog in maintenance and repairs of school facilities amounting to \$15.9 billion.¹⁸

In his 2017 review of the provincial education funding formula¹⁹, Hugh Mackenzie reported that among Canadian provinces, Ontario ranks fifth in per-pupil funding—behind Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Going beyond our borders, a comparison of per-student spending, from Statistics Canada, puts Ontario in 45th place out of 61 state and provincial jurisdictions in Canada and the United States.

The last comprehensive review of the Ontario education funding formula was by the Education Equality Task Force headed by Dr. Mordecai Rozanski in 2002. In her 2017 Annual Report, Ontario's Auditor General concluded that the funding benchmarks in the funding formula are out of date and that there should be a full external review of education funding.²⁰ ETFO supports these conclusions.

Recommendation:

18. That the government establish a comprehensive external review of the provincial education funding formula.

¹⁸ Hugh Mackenzie (2017). *Ontario's Deteriorating Schools: The fix is not in*. Toronto: Campaign for Public Education.

¹⁹ Hugh Mackenzie (2017). *Shortchanging Ontario Students: An Overview and Assessment of Education Funding in Ontario*. Toronto: Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.

²⁰ Ontario Auditor General (2017). *2017 Annual Report*, Chapter 3, Section 3.08 - Ministry Funding and Oversight of School Boards.

The Case for Transforming Student Assessment

In September 2018, the government launched province-wide education consultations. One of the topics raised by the government for discussion was improving student assessment. Like other organizations in the education sector, ETFO made the case for transforming student assessment.

ETFO has consistently raised concerns about how EQAO assessments, first administered in 1997, have negatively affected elementary classrooms by promoting an overly-narrow focus on literacy and numeracy to the detriment of a more holistic program and by creating a test-driven school culture through the myriad of diagnostic assessments that the Ministry of Education and school boards have imposed on classrooms as part of the drive to improve provincial test results. The tests and the required preparation for the tests consume considerable classroom time and create stress for students and their teachers. This is particularly concerning for students in Grade 3. Other jurisdictions such as England²¹, Singapore²² and New Zealand²³ are moving away from mandatory standardized testing at an early age to avoid a negative impact on students. Given that EQAO assessments provide no data that can be used to inform daily instruction and student learning throughout the year it seems unnecessary to continue the Grade 3 assessment.

EQAO assessments also fail to measure more complex skills required for problem solving and innovation, lead to “teaching to the test,” demotivate students and are misused to rank schools.

²¹ Adams R. (September 14, 2017) “Sats for seven-year-olds in England to be scrapped” *The Guardian (UK)*, Retrieved November 11, 2018, from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/sep/14/sats-for-seven-year-olds-in-england-to-be-scrapped>

²² *Opening Address by Mr. Ong Ye Kung, Minister for Education, at the Schools Work Plan Seminar* (2018), Ministry of Education. Singapore. Retrieved December 5, 2018, from <https://www.moe.gov.sg/news/speeches/opening-address-by-mr-ong-ye-kung--minister-for-education--at-the-schools-work-plan-seminar>

²³ *National Standards Removed* (2017), Ministry of Education. New Zealand. Retrieved December 5, 2018 from <https://education.govt.nz/news/national-standards-removed/>

ETFO believes EQAO's \$36 million budget would be better spent if the funds were reallocated to front-line education.

The most effective assessment of student progress is the teacher's daily assessment. Teachers strive to balance their instruction with assessment strategies that provide students with immediate feedback about their own progress and helps them to work more productively on their own and with other students. Teachers use this ongoing assessment to reflect upon their instruction, improve their teaching strategies and respond to individual student needs and learning styles.

This view is supported by a majority of Ontarians. According to ETFO's recent poll, over two-thirds (68 per cent) of Ontarians agree that EQAO testing does not accurately measure student success and that teachers' classroom assessment should take higher priority.²⁴ Large-scale assessments such as EQAO are "an intrusive measure of a very narrow span of a student's potential that overlook the full breadth of the growth and learning of a student, something more richly reflected by the differentiated approach of his/her own teachers."²⁵

Recommendations:

19. That EQAO assessments be cancelled and the funds reallocated towards front-line education programs.
20. That, if system-wide assessments are to be maintained, Grade 3 tests be cancelled to relieve the stress placed on students at such an early age.
21. That teachers' professional judgement be respected, and more emphasis be placed on the role of ongoing teacher assessment of student progress.

²⁴ Stratcom (2018). *An Opinion Survey of Ontarians' Views on Public Education*. Toronto: Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.

²⁵ Ontario Teachers' Federation (2017). *More than dots on a chart*. Toronto: Ontario Teachers' Federation.

The Importance of a Sustainable Child Care System

The current demand for affordable child care is high in Ontario. While the government has identified this need, the policy solutions proposed in Bill 66, *Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, 2018*, are not only inadequate but would jeopardize the quality of child care and the safety of children.

Rather than increasing the ratio of children to child care provider both at unlicensed home-based daycares and licensed child care centres, which will adversely impact the quality of care and safety of children, the government should provide adequate funding to create additional licensed not-for-profit child care spaces.

The government should increase the funding allocated to support new child care spaces and increase investment in child care subsidies or adopt the original Quebec model for child care that made child care spaces universally available for \$7 and, later, \$10 per day. In addition, the amendments to the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* and the *Education Act* proposed in Bill 66 should be withdrawn.

Recommendations:

22. That the government significantly increase its funding for child care subsidies or adopt a directly-funded child care model similar to the original Quebec \$7 per day model.
23. That proposed amendments to the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* and the *Education Act* in Bill 66 be withdrawn.

Narrowing the Income Gap

The adoption of Bill 47 that resulted in the roll back of labour reforms enacted by the previous government dealt a heavy blow to workers across the province. The elimination of the planned increase to the minimum wage to \$15 originally scheduled for January 1, 2019, has had and will continue to have a significant impact on low-income Ontarians and their families and contributes to a widening income gap between low- and middle-income Ontarians and the province's highest

income earners. In his analysis of the benefits of a \$15 hourly minimum wage, economist David Macdonald concludes:

“Increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour will improve the working lives of residents who are in precarious low-wage work. It will have the largest impact in industries where precarious work is prevalent, among workers whose employment situations are precarious (part-time and temporary workers), among populations that are more likely to be in precarious work (women, people with a disability, and recent immigrants.)”²⁶

ETFO urges that the government reconsider its position with regards to the minimum wage and immediately increase it to \$15 an hour.

Ontario should no longer rely on its low corporate income tax rates as a strategy for economic growth. In 2012, former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney drew attention to the more than half a trillion dollars that corporations had hoarded rather than invested in research and technology or job creation. He referred to the stockpiled funds as “dead money.” A recent Canadian report concludes: “There is no statistically significant relationship between corporate income tax (CIT) regime and growth.”²⁷ It further concludes there is evidence the CIT rate reductions actually contribute to slower growth because it encourages firms to spend less in order to expand their earnings share and corporate size.

The decision by the government to cancel tax measures that were set to take place in the next fiscal year have added to the provincial deficit and have disproportionately benefitted high-income

²⁶ David Macdonald (2017). *Ontario Needs a Raise: Who Benefits From a \$15 Minimum Wage?* Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

²⁷ Jordan Brennan (2015). *Do Corporate Income Tax Rate Reductions Accelerate Growth?* Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

earners, further adding to Ontario's income gap. ETFO is looking to the Ontario government, through the 2019 Budget, to introduce a more balanced approach to addressing its revenue challenges. A balanced approach must include substantive tax reform.

Income inequality in Ontario is persistent. In a recent report, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found that “the stark reality of racialized poverty in Ontario has also not changed much since 2006. The data show persistent racialized poverty even as the proportion of the Ontario population that is racialized grows.”²⁸ The report further concludes that the “employment and income gap between racialized and non-racialized workers remains firmly in place.”²⁹ For Ontario to continue to be economically competitive, and to become a more just and fair society it must tackle this persistent income inequality.

Recommendations:

24. That the government introduce personal and corporate income tax measures in the 2019 Budget to address the growing income gap in Ontario and increase the government's fiscal capacity to invest in the economy.
25. That the government reconsider its position and immediately increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

Funding Equity Programs

Programs that support vulnerable students are an important step to addressing the systemic barriers facing Ontarians from racialized communities, including income inequality. Funding should be allocated to compensate school boards that provide enhanced programming for schools located in disadvantaged communities.

²⁸ Block S. and Galabuzi G.E. (2018). *Persistent Inequality: Ontario's Colour-coded Labour Market*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

The government’s recently announced cuts to the Education Programs – Other (EPO) grants take Ontario in the wrong direction. These cuts will impact programs that include support for mental health in schools, Indigenous education initiatives and anti-poverty programs. ETFO joins the call for the reinstatement of these funds.

Recommendations:

26. That the government provide compensatory grants for school boards to provide enhanced programming for schools in disadvantaged communities.
27. That the government reinstate the funding cut from the Education Programs – Other (EPO) grants, including funding for Indigenous education initiatives.

A Single Secular School System for Ontario

Ontario today is much different demographically than it was at Confederation in 1867 when rights for Catholic and Protestant schools were enshrined in the Constitution.

Given the diversity of Ontario’s population, our school system should be playing a key role in fostering mutual understanding and social cohesion. This goal is best achieved through an education system where students of all backgrounds learn together and see themselves reflected in the faces of their teachers, and where curriculum is developed based on the whole population, not on the beliefs of one religion.

ETFO believes the public and Catholic school systems should be merged to create one public school system for English language students and another for French language students. The 2018 ETFO poll indicates that 56 per cent of Ontarians agree with this position.

Recommendation:

28. That the government establish one publicly funded education system in Ontario for each of Canada’s official languages.

CONCLUSION

Ontario currently faces fiscal challenges resulting from a reduction in revenues; not from overspending. Ontario is currently last when it comes to public spending as a share of GDP among Canadian provinces and territories. The province's revenue problem needs to be addressed by introducing appropriate and progressive corporate and income tax measures that would raise additional funds to support Ontario's public services.

Ontarians expect their government to make the necessary investments to continue to enhance the province's high-quality public education system. ETFO has identified a number of policies and funding areas that the 2019 provincial budget should address, both within the education sector and at the community level.

Ontario's educators, educational assistants and professional support personnel are experiencing considerable challenges related to classroom violence. These challenges include coping with the growing incidence of children with mental health issues and those with learning exceptionalities that require additional resources and support. Educators are looking to the government to provide sufficient funding and supports to ensure students and school staff are learning and working in safe and healthy environments.

Ontario's education system needs investment. ETFO looks forward to working with the government and other stakeholders to continue to improve Ontario's publicly funded public education system.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the funding model for special education be based on actual student needs.
2. That funding be increased for educational assistants, psychologists, behavioural therapists, school support counsellors, child and youth workers and speech-language pathologists.
3. That occasional teachers receive training to assist them address student behavioural issues and adopt teaching strategies that support students with a wide spectrum of special needs.
4. That funding be allocated for Health and Safety training for school staff and administrators during work time or on designated professional development days.
5. That the government provide additional, predictable and stable per-pupil funding geared towards resources and materials required to teach STEM subjects.
6. That grades 4 to 8 class size be capped at 24 students.
7. That full-day Kindergarten class size be capped at 26 students.
8. That, in addition to a teacher, all Kindergarten classes be staffed with a designated early childhood educator.
9. That funding be allocated for 30 minutes of preparation time per day for designated early childhood educators.
10. That funding be allocated for professional development during work time to support the full-day Kindergarten teacher-designated early childhood educator team and to support joint planning time.
11. That funding be allocated to avoid Senior Kindergarten/Grade 1 split classes.
12. That funding be provided for non-teaching staff to perform supervision duties such as lunchroom supervision.
13. That the education funding model be amended to provide all elementary schools with specialist teachers in the arts, guidance and health and physical education.
14. That the education funding model be amended to provide dedicated funding to support school library learning resources and technology.
15. That funding for English Language Learners (ELLs) programs and English-as-Second-Language (ESL) teachers be expanded to meet the language acquisition needs of English-language learners.
16. That ELL students enrolled in French immersion programs receive additional resources and support.
17. That school boards be required to spend the ESL funding as specified in the grants.

18. That the government establish a comprehensive external review of the provincial education funding formula.
19. That EQAO assessments be cancelled and the funds reallocated towards front-line education programs.
20. That, if system-wide assessments are to be maintained, Grade 3 tests be cancelled to relieve the stress place on students at such an early age.
21. That teachers' professional judgement be respected, and more emphasis be placed on the role of ongoing teacher assessment of student progress.
22. That the government significantly increase its funding for child care subsidies or adopt a directly-funded child care model similar to the original Quebec \$7 per day model.
23. That proposed amendments to the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* and the *Education Act* proposed in Bill 66 be withdrawn.
24. That the government introduce personal and corporate income tax measures in the 2019 Budget to address the growing income gap in Ontario and increase the government's fiscal capacity to invest in the economy.
25. That the government reconsider its position and immediately increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour.
26. That the government provide compensatory grants for school boards to provide enhanced programming for schools in disadvantaged communities.
27. That the government reinstate the funding cut from the Education Programs – Other (EPO) grants including funding for Indigenous education initiatives.
28. That the government establish one publicly funded education system in Ontario for each of Canada's official languages.

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