

In a survey of ETFO members across the province, one message came through loud and clear: smaller class sizes are an urgent priority.

#### smaller classes **BIG DIFFERENCE**

- ETFO is calling for class size limits that improve student learning by delivering more opportunities for individualized support.
- Smaller classes create safer, calmer, and more inclusive classroom environments, reducing violence in schools.
- They also support stronger relationships and better collaboration between students and educators.

#### Protecting Educators, Supporting Public Education

- Large classes lead to burnout and drive educators out of the profession.
- Smaller classes boost job satisfaction, which is critical to addressing Ontario's recruitment and retention crisis.

#### We Win Together

- Our success will depend on strong member engagement and public support.
- Through collective action – mobilizing, advocating, and organizing – we can get positive results.

#### etfocb.ca

- Learn more about ETFO collective bargaining and the class size campaign at **etfocb.ca**.

**In 2026, we're bringing this fight back to the bargaining table with renewed urgency and collective strength.**



Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO)  
136 Isabella Street, Toronto, Ontario M4Y 0B5  
416-962-3836 • 1-888-838-3836

**smaller classes **BIG DIFFERENCE****





- Educators have identified adequate funding and smaller classes as the most important factors affecting their ability to meet individual student needs.
- Smaller classes create safer, calmer, and more inclusive classroom environments that improve student behaviour, encourage peer relationships, and increase student engagement, especially in the early grades. Investing in smaller classes reduce behaviours that can lead to incidents of violence.
- Class size is also an issue in Ontario’s Full-Day Kindergarten classes. This successful program that pairs a teacher and an early childhood educator in a classroom teaching team has become a model for other jurisdictions and a fundamental part of our world-class education system, but there are still issues that must be addressed.
- The impacts of class size have been extensively studied. A 2021 Canadian review of worldwide research concludes: “in general, research suggests that students in classes in the early grades benefit greatly from enrollment in classes with fewer than 20 students ... Teachers in smaller classes report greater engagement with learning activities and better relations with students and parents, as well as spending less time on administrative and disciplinary processes.” A 2018 study of the California class size reduction program – the largest in U.S. history dating back to the late 1990s – found smaller classes in public schools reduced private school attendance and improved the quality of education through the enrolment of former private school students and the additional funding that followed them.
- These benefits need to be extended to grades 4 to 8. Currently, Primary grades are funded with a hard cap of 20 students per class in 90 per cent of classes, with up to 23 in the remainder. Secondary grades are funded for an average class size of 23. By comparison, funding for grades 4 to 8 supports a class size average of 24.5 but the lack of a hard cap in grades 4-8 has resulted in huge variation in individual class sizes, including some of the largest classes in the system – often of more than 30 students.
- As Ontario seeks to address existing learning gaps, reducing class sizes is a critical first step.
- The Kindergarten program is funded for an average class size of 26 with an average staff-to-child ratio of 1:13. However, many classes have more than 30 students.
- Ontario-based research demonstrates that previous provincial investments in smaller Primary (grades 1-3) classes enable teachers to provide more individual attention to students and use a greater variety of instructional strategies.
- ETFO members consistently raise concerns about the challenges of setting up activity-based programs for that many young children and managing classroom behaviour with students who may be experiencing formalized learning environments for the first time. Overcrowded, noisy classrooms or open “pods” limit educators’ ability to implement all of the instructional approaches that are foundational in Kindergarten and create stressful work and learning environments.



**smaller  
classes BIG  
DIFFERENCE**

