



News Release

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INCREASING CLASS SIZES A BLOW TO STUDENT LEARNING, TEACHERS' BARGAINING RIGHTS

TORONTO - Today's announcement by Minister of Education Lisa Thompson was supposedly about modernizing classrooms, but in reality the government is continuing to move backward on publicly funded education and collective bargaining rights, says the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA). In particular, the intention to increase class sizes will lead to massive job losses and have a devastating impact on student learning and well-being.

Increasing class size averages in Grades 4 through 12 will result in the loss of approximately 5,000 teaching positions in Catholic schools. This means many schools will not be able to offer the same number and diversity of programs as they do today. Furthermore, some class sizes, including those in core subjects such as math, are likely to grow to more than 40 students.

"Smaller classes are one of the most important contributors to success for all teachers and students," says Liz Stuart, President of OECTA. "There is no doubt that increasing class sizes will make Ontario's intermediate and high school classrooms more crowded, more chaotic, and less productive. Teachers will not be able to provide the same level of attention to individual students, and students with special needs will not get the support they require to reach their full potential."

The government's intention to increase class sizes unilaterally is also a clear violation of teachers' collective bargaining rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Class size is inextricably linked to a range of workload and safety issues, and the government cannot interfere with teachers' rights to bring these matters to the bargaining table. "Our Association will use all means at our disposal to defend our right to collectively bargain these important workplace issues on behalf of our members," says Stuart.

The decision on class sizes is yet another example of the government going backward. "Just this week, Minister Thompson told members of our Association that Ontario's publicly funded education system is 'a beacon, a standard' around the world," says Stuart. "But the continued cuts to teachers' jobs and student supports will only undermine our success. Catholic teachers continue to urge the government to respond to the real needs of teachers and students, and to make the appropriate investments in Ontario's long-term health and prosperity."

- 30 -

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

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