

News Release

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Ford Government's Education Plans Deeply Flawed, Highlight Baffling Approach to Policymaking

The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) has issued the following statement from President Barb Dobrowolski in response to Education Minister Stephen Lecce's announcement of changes to literacy and math instruction, and the Ford Conservative government's introduction of the ironically-named *Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act*.

"Yesterday's announcement by Education Minister Lecce and today's proposed legislation are yet further examples of the Ford government's flawed approach to education policymaking and its baffling, almost stubborn refusal to grasp how to support our world-class publicly funded education system and best realize student success.

Catholic teachers are disappointed that, once again, the Ford government is attempting to deceive Ontarians, by announcing big-sounding plans that – when stripped of Minister Lecce's 'spin' – fall well short of what students need and deserve. With yesterday's announcement and today's proposed legislation, it is clear that the government cannot bring itself to do the one thing that would make the biggest impact: properly invest in Ontario's publicly funded education system.

Instead, the Ford Conservative government is taking Ontario education in exactly the wrong direction – with proposed changes to literacy education that cherry-pick evidence, ignore the complexities of learning, and undermine teachers' professional judgment; and a 'plan' for math education that amounts to less than 50 cents per student, per day, and proposes to hire one educator for every 6,650 students. All the while, the government continues to ram through major curriculum changes without the proper time and resources in place to ensure a smooth transition and maximize student success. It is clear this government wants to check off a box and say they have done something, rather than ensuring they do the right thing, and do it well.

Each aspect of the government's proposed changes raises far more questions than answers. But first among these questions is: what would possess a government – that claims to take their responsibilities seriously – to shut-out the entire education community, and quietly craft and introduce broad and sweeping changes without ever consulting frontline educators, or making any meaningful effort to gain their input, expertise, or feedback?

Collaboration is the hallmark of strong policymaking. It is both frustrating and insulting that Catholic teachers, and all educators, would hear about the government's plans for the first time through social media leaks and press conferences.

A government who truly shared a commitment to improving the learning environment for students would make significant, sustained investments in publicly funded education, to ensure timely, equitable access to a robust suite of in-class resources and supports, tailored to meet students' individual needs – and by addressing related issues, such as the need to reduce class sizes. Over the past several days, Minister Lecce has said many words, but offered almost nothing of value.

We will continue to monitor developments as more detailed information becomes available. In the meantime, Catholic teachers once again are urging the government to pause this flawed plan, and instead work collaboratively and meaningfully with frontline educators, to ensure that government policy addresses students' unique circumstances, and gives them what they need to thrive."

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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