



June 9, 2021

Ford government's survival more important than Ontarians' Charter rights

TORONTO, ON—The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), and Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) respond to reports that the Ford government plans to invoke the notwithstanding clause and annul Justice Edward M. Morgan's recent decision, striking down restrictions on third-party advertising during elections:

"The Ford government's decision to inappropriately use the notwithstanding clause to override the Charter to silence Ontarians' voices and legitimate criticism is outrageous. Their willingness to trample on Ontarians' Charter rights to ensure their own survival is an attack on democracy that should concern everyone.

The courts have clearly said that sections of Bill 254 violate freedom of expression and association, guaranteed by the Charter. Justice Morgan's decision validates our positions and sends a strong message to the Ford government that laws that silence dissenting voices and give undue advantage to the government have no place in a democracy.

By invoking this rarely used clause to bolster their position, it is clear the Progressive Conservatives of Ontario are gravely concerned that their critics' voices will be heard, and that voters will be reminded of their repeated failures leading up to the June 2022 election.

They are right to be concerned about their political futures. We will not be muted.

We will continue to hold this and future governments to account as we advocate for a publicly funded education system that is student-centred, equitable and adequately funded."

Harvey Bischof, President, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
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