

August 1, 2023

## **Joint Statement: Ford Conservative government policy fails students, undermines collective bargaining, and threatens to contravene collective agreements**

**For Immediate Release – August 1, 2023**

TORONTO, ON – The Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO) and Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association (OECTA), the unions representing more than 125,000 teachers and education workers in publicly funded schools across Ontario, have released the following statement in response to the new Policy/Program Memorandum 168 – Reading Instruction and Early Reading Screening (PPM 168), which was released Friday without notice by the Ford Conservative government.

Minister of Education Stephen Lecce has repeatedly claimed that “stability is critical to Ontario students,” but his government continues to introduce sweeping changes without providing the necessary time and resources for proper implementation. These changes will violate collective agreements when the new requirements mandated through policy memorandum are implemented, ignoring the collective bargaining rights of the professionals who care for and teach students across Ontario.

This issue has been a topic of discussion during the current round of bargaining. By arbitrarily introducing this new policy, the government has once again circumvented the collective bargaining process rather than engaging in meaningful discussions and good faith bargaining with the professionals who know and understand the students in their care.

The Ford Conservative government and Minister Lecce do not appear to be genuinely interested in doing what is best for students, nor do they seem concerned about stability in education. If they were, they would value the professionalism of all educators, respect collective bargaining rights, and ensure that adequate resources and time are available to all students and educators.

The chronic underfunding of public education from this government continues to short-change students. Implementing a screener for early reading without providing the necessary resources, training, and other supports will leave vulnerable students behind, and will do nothing to truly address the issue of early literacy.

The government must keep these issues where they belong: at the bargaining table. We once again call on the Ford Conservative government to drop the “spin,” and instead work collaboratively and meaningfully with frontline educators and to make the real, sustained investments in publicly funded education needed, so that all students have the learning environment they deserve.

For more information, please contact any of the following media relations representatives:

ETFO—Meagan Perry at 416-435-9234, or via email at [mperry@etfo.org](mailto:mperry@etfo.org)

OECTA—Mark Tagliaferri at 416-277-8328, or via email at [m.tagliaferri@catholicteachers.ca](mailto:m.tagliaferri@catholicteachers.ca)