

PROVINCIAL BARGAINING UPDATE



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MORE INFORMATION ON GOVERNMENT'S EDUCATION REFORMS

Last week, we sent information about a wide-reaching announcement made by the Minister of Education, particularly regarding planned changes to class size averages in junior/intermediate and secondary grades. Below is information on two other important issues raised in the announcement.

E-Learning

Starting in 2020-21, secondary students will be required to take a minimum of four e-learning credits out of the 30 credits required to achieve an Ontario Secondary School Diploma. The government says some exceptions will be made on an individual basis, but it is unclear what the criteria will be.

It is estimated that when fully implemented, this change will result in a 13 per cent reduction in the number of class-delivered credits. Furthermore, Ministry officials have

indicated that the e-learning classes will be funded at a student-to-teacher ratio of 35:1. This means hundreds more teaching positions in Catholic schools are likely to be lost. The announcement also says the government will “centralize the delivery of all e-learning courses,” but it is unclear how this will affect teachers.

In addition to the job losses, the Association has great concerns about how this plan will affect student learning. For one, it is difficult to see how this fits with the government’s professed agenda of boosting student achievement – teachers and other education experts know that not all students are suited to e-learning, and failure rates are generally higher for online courses than for those delivered in the classroom. It will also be harder to integrate Catholic values and foster community-building when teachers and students are not together.

Local Priorities Fund

In the 2017-19 extension agreement, the Association negotiated the hiring of 335 teachers at the elementary and secondary levels through a newly created Local Priorities Fund. The positions were allocated through discussions between school boards and local OECTA units, but all were meant to be directed toward Indigenous education, special education, or to help other at-risk students.

The government has announced the funding will not extend beyond this school year. This means hundreds of teachers who work with vulnerable students will be lost at a time when other student supports are being cut, and more students with autism and other special education needs are being integrated into schools.

Taking Action

It is clear that the government is making important education decisions based solely on cost, rather than in response to the real needs of Ontario’s teachers and students.

The Association firmly believes that issues affecting teachers’ jobs and working conditions should be negotiated through collective bargaining. While we seek clarification on the details and implications of the planned changes, we will continue to urge the government

to listen to teachers' perspectives and discuss these issues at the proper time and venue. More information will be provided to members as it becomes available.

Teachers are also encouraged to share your views on the announced reforms directly with the government. Email Minister of Education Lisa Thompson and let her know how the planned cuts will impact your school and classroom. As always, remember to keep your comments professional.
