

Ontario education minister places seventh school board under provincial control

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Ontario Education Minister Paul Calandra speaks at an announcement at a school in Ottawa, on Friday, Dec. 5, 2025. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Justin Tang

TORONTO - Ontario's education minister placed a seventh school board under supervision Wednesday in order to prevent dozens of teachers from being laid off, he says, and he is planning to soon take control of another board over financial concerns.

Paul Calandra announced that he has put Peel District School Board under supervision and is giving the York Catholic District School Board two weeks to make a case for avoiding the same fate.

The board in Peel Region, west of Toronto, was about to lay off 60 teachers, Calandra said. That would have affected about 1,400 students.

"Mid-way through the year, they were planning on laying off teachers and moving around classrooms and impacting students," he said in an interview.

"You can just imagine what that does in schools, and the chaos it causes for students, let alone parents who built a relationship, and obviously (affects) the teachers as well."

The Peel board now has two weeks to respond to Calandra's concerns and after that point he will make a decision on whether to end the supervision. But if it continues, he will at that time appoint a supervisor.

"I think they'll be hard pressed to convince me in 14 days that they will change what has been five years of, frankly, mismanagement and bad decision-making," Calandra said.

The board has also run a deficit for five consecutive years, calling into question its long-term financial sustainability, Calandra said. The York Catholic board has depleted its reserves, refused to submit a "realistic financial recovery plan" and has had seven directors of education in nine years, he said.

Critics have said that Calandra's moves to take over school boards and sideline trustees erodes local democracy, and they say boards are in dire financial shape because provincial funding is not keeping up with increasing needs or inflation.

The president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association said trustees give communities a real voice and when that is weakened, everyone loses.

"We remain ready to work with the government and all education partners to innovate, modernize, and strengthen Ontario's publicly funded education system, but it is getting more and more difficult to do so with each passing week as classroom-level decisions continue to be made at Queen's Park without local input," Kathleen Woodcock wrote in a statement.

Interim Liberal Leader John Fraser said Calandra's approach is wrong.

"This government is using takeovers to deflect from the fact that schools aren't safe places to learn," he wrote in a statement. "Class sizes are too big, special education has been starved, and we have a mental health crisis that's not being addressed."

Calandra has been signalling for months that he is planning on broader school board governance changes, including possibly all but eliminating the role of trustees. He said he expects to make a final decision "soon."

Trustees in the Catholic and French boards will always have a role in denominational issues, Calandra has said, but the English public system is another matter.

The province has taken control of six other school boards since Calandra became minister, citing their mismanagement.

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