Ontario's Education Unions Call for an Early Start to Bargaining to Best Support Students and Families

TORONTO – L'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO), Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), Ontario School Board Council of Unions (CUPE-OSBCU), and Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) have issued the following joint statement calling on the Ford government and Minister of Education Paul Calandra to start the bargaining process as soon as possible, to best support students, families, teachers, and education workers.

"Ontario's students are our future. The bargaining process is an opportunity to work together, collaboratively and meaningfully, to secure that future – and to build on the success of our world-class publicly funded education system.

To ensure that our students have the resources and supports they need to thrive, Ontario's teachers and education workers urge the government to come to the bargaining table as soon as possible.

Ontario's teachers and education workers bring frontline experience and practical knowledge from classrooms and schools across the province. Bargaining is an opportunity to discuss the issues in our schools, bring forward new ideas, and develop practical solutions to ensure the best possible learning and working environment, for students, teachers, and education workers alike.

It's an opportunity we cannot afford to let pass – to start the process early and work together to invest in smaller class sizes, to proactively address the growing teacher and educator recruitment and retention crisis, and to ensure that all students, teachers, and education workers have the resources and supports they need to succeed.

Our schools cannot continue to do more with less.

Chronic underfunding and understaffing are having a devastating impact on students. We see this reality every day in our schools, through overcrowded classrooms, a growing shortage of qualified and certified teachers and education workers, inadequate supports for students with Special Education needs, rising incidents of violence, and a lack of basic school supplies, like paper, pencils, and textbooks.

Minister Calandra has the authority to issue a regulation allowing bargaining to begin up to 180 days before the current agreements expire on August 31. Exercising this authority would allow discussions to begin as early as March and would demonstrate that the Minister shares our commitment to stability and student success.

Ontario's teachers and education workers are ready to go. We are united. And we are committed to championing the voices of parents, students, teachers, and education workers at the bargaining table.

Ontario's future is in our classrooms. Let's start the bargaining process, so that we can work together to invest in the resources and supports that students need to learn, grow, and thrive. We cannot afford to do anything less."

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