

PARENT UPDATE



NEWS FOR MARCH 2022

Teachers' working conditions are our students' learning conditions.

Ministry of Education's back- to-school plan fails: Look at the numbers



The Minister of Education and his government have repeatedly told the people of Toronto and Ontario that the school reopening plan that they implemented in January was the best in the country. However, one quick look at the numbers reveals a different picture. During the week of January 31–February 4, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) reported that over 540 elementary teacher jobs were unfilled.

Ryan Bird, Government, Public & Community Relations with the TDSB, said to CTV News that, "We're using all the strategies we can to make sure that students remain to be supervised whether its deploying staff from within in the school and we redeploy we can deploy central administrators and teachers and in cases we may have to use emergency replacements."

It is important to note that Bird only mentions supervision, he does not discuss teaching. In fact, the TDSB is relying on unqualified but well-meaning community members to supervise some students. The effect of this has been those classes, at all grade levels, have become holding tanks rather than places of learning.

The Minister of Education has said that they will expedite new teachers and students in Teacher Education Programs finding work in our schools, but this is too little and too late. The Ministry of Education-run regulatory body, the Ontario College of Teachers, is still processing applications from eight months ago! Our students deserve better.

We need rapid actions tests. We need them now!

The Ministry of Education and its leadership have not taken the steps required to keep our schools safe and open,

like giving families enough Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs). Due to widespread outrage, the Premier and Minister of Education finally decided to give families two tests for the rest of the school year.

The Minister of Education blamed the lack of tests on high demand. However, the next week Prime Minister Trudeau was able to procure 140 million more tests that are now being distributed to Ontario and other provinces. In fact, if you want to buy a test, they are even available in stores!

The issue is not that RATs are in high demand. Rather, it is this government's refusal to do anything that costs money or requires planning to keep the people of Ontario safe from Omicron.

Ontario is the only province in Canada without \$10/day child care

Recently Nunavut signed a deal with the federal government to cut child care costs by 50 per cent by the end of the year, and to implement a \$10/day child care program within five years. It is estimated that the average family in Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut, will SAVE about \$14,000 a year. This leaves Ontario as the only province to not have reached a similar deal and will only make life harder for Torontonians who pay the highest child care rates in Canada.

The Government of Ontario and the Ministry of Education is not reportedly accepting the current deal because they want to help its friends in the private child care sector by making private child cares eligible for these funds in-



stead of expanding publicly-funded licensed child cares.

Even worse, the Minister of Education and the Premier have not been able to come to a deal because they want the federal government to pay for Ontario's Full-Day Kindergarten program as part of the deal. This is the same program that they have previously tried to defund, even though experts show that full-day kindergarten results in better educational outcomes for students. After three and a half years on the job, the Minister of Education clearly still does not understand that full-day kindergarten is early education, not child care.

Take Action

The Ontario government is currently developing its budget, please call your MPP and tell them about the need to:

1. Provide funding to the TDSB to be able to provide appropriate PPE for staff and students and;
2. Ensure a regular supply of Rapid Antigen Tests be made available to schools to be sent home to ensure regular testing prior to attending school and;
3. Update the funding formula from 1998 to 2022 to meet current student needs, provide specialty teachers, and repair schools.

[Find your MPP's contact information.](#)