

Provincial code of conduct changes made after ETFO demands improvements to school safety

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TORONTO, ON – The following is a statement from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) responding to today's provincial government announcement that includes revisions to Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) 128 – The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct:

“During recent central bargaining between ETFO and the government, ETFO fought for improvements that would address increasing violence and disruption in schools – a key priority for our 83,000 members. As a result of our strong advocacy at the bargaining table, several new measures were agreed to in bargaining, including publicly facing school signage that communicates behaviour expectations for everyone, as well as a revision of PPM 128 to address behaviour, consequences, and safety.

Since the ratification of ETFO's central agreement in December 2023, representatives from ETFO, the provincial government, and the Ontario Public School Boards' Association met to revise PPM 128. During those meetings, ETFO proposed revisions to some of the very issues cited by the Education Minister today, e.g., social media use by students, and tobacco and vaping misuse. In addition, ETFO proposed strengthening school board codes of conduct to address increasing violence in schools by including several measures that the government failed to address today.

We will reserve judgment on whether the government has fulfilled its commitment to ETFO during bargaining until after we have had an opportunity to review the full range of changes to PPM 128. Despite our attempts to make improvements to school environments in a collaborative way with this government, ETFO was not given the opportunity to review the revisions before the Ford government released them. This is extremely disappointing, but true to form for a government that has, for years, consistently disregarded input from its education partners.

ETFO provided the following recommendations to the government to strengthen the Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct:

- In order to promote acceptable student behaviour, school board codes of conduct must clearly define unacceptable student behaviours, and schools/school boards must enforce consequences for non-compliance;
- Unacceptable student behaviours include bullying, cyberbullying, intimidation, harassment, racism, discriminatory behaviour, physical violence, sexual assault, shoving and pushing, profanity, disrespectful behaviour that shows disregard for a teacher's or other supervising adult's position, failing to follow directions, significant disruptions to the learning environment, misuse of technology and social media, and repeated use of tobacco or e-cigarettes (vaping);

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- School board codes of conduct should affirm that all members of the school community have a reasonable expectation of privacy, and so personal mobile devices should not be used to record and/or post photos, audio recordings or videos of others without their express consent;
- Schools must use proactive and preventative approaches to reduce the occurrence of unacceptable behaviour by students and other members of the school community;
- Unacceptable behaviour by students and other members of the school community will be responded to immediately by school administrators and school boards;
- Non-compliance with a school board's code of conduct should be addressed in a progressive manner through consequences that are appropriate for a student's age and stage of development. The consequences should be fair and equitable, and should respect the dignity of all involved. Consequences may include in-school or out-of-school suspensions;
- School boards must ensure their codes of conduct are compliant with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, which protects the safety of workers in schools and school board work sites. School board codes of conduct should also address consequences in a manner that does not disproportionately impact students based on the protected grounds reflected in Ontario's *Human Rights Code*; and
- All schools must post publicly facing signage in every school that communicates behaviour expectations for everyone.

Education is a shared responsibility, and decisions affecting our schools should be made through transparent and inclusive processes that prioritize the well-being of students and the professionalism of educators. It is only through respectful dialogue and true collaboration that we can develop policies that reflect the diverse needs of our school communities and uphold the highest standards of education.”

[ETFO](#) represents approximately 83,000 members, including public elementary teachers, occasional teachers, designated early childhood educators, education support personnel, and professional support personnel. Visit [BuildingBetterSchools.ca](https://www.buildingbetterschools.ca).

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