

ETFO responds to Ford government's egregious overreach, forced return of police in schools

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TORONTO, ON – Below is a statement from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) following today's announcement from Ontario Minister of Education Paul Calandra:

"ETFO strongly opposes the Ford government's latest legislative proposal that grants the Minister of Education additional powers to more easily place elected school boards under supervision and that forces the presence of police officers in schools. This is not education reform; it's authoritarianism cloaked in the language of accountability, designed to deflect blame, suppress dissenting voices, and tighten political control over a public education system this government has failed to adequately fund.

The proposed changes would expand the minister's authority to initiate investigations and place boards under direct provincial supervision, taking power from democratically elected trustees and replacing community decision-making with directives from Queen's Park. At the same time, the legislation would force school boards to introduce or reintroduce School Resource Officer (SRO) programs despite their well-documented harm, particularly to Black, Indigenous, and other racialized students.

It is no coincidence that this announcement comes shortly after yet another [provincial budget](#) that fails to meaningfully invest in public education. Instead of addressing Ontario's growing class sizes, the escalating teacher recruitment and retention crisis, and [rising school violence](#) caused by [unmet student needs due to a lack of resources and supports](#) — not the absence of police — the Ford government is choosing to impose unnecessary measures to distract from the funding crisis it created, which has resulted in a cumulative funding gap in public education over the past seven years of approximately \$6.35 billion.

By turning school boards into scapegoats and bringing back police in schools without consultation, the Ford government is attacking both equity and democracy in one misguided stroke. It also places the decision-making power in the hands of police and government, completely eroding the power and voice of community.

ETFO has long opposed the use of SRO programs. Numerous Ontario school boards removed police from schools based on data, community feedback, and human rights concerns. In its recent report, [Dreams Delayed](#), the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) outlined its position on SROs saying, "Police in schools may subject Black and other racialized children, and particularly Black boys, to a higher level of surveillance that could ultimately significantly impact their mental health and education." They also stated that any decision regarding police involvement in schools should be made only after carefully considering existing research and in consultation with all local voices, including parents, students, community members and organizations."

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-2-

The decision to ignore the lived experiences of those affected, especially in light of the OHRC's recommendations, is regressive and harmful. Oppressed communities should be at the centre of systemic decisions that impact them most, and that is lacking from this unilateral decision. Forcing the return of police into schools ignores this reality and reverses progress made toward building safe and inclusive learning and working environments.

The Ford government's latest actions are not isolated; they are part of a broader, deliberate effort to Americanize Ontario's public education system. From school board takeovers and merit-based post-secondary policies to disrupting equity initiatives like school renaming, this government is borrowing directly from Trump-style politics that centralizes power, dismantles public education, and stokes division by supporting populist, conservative narratives that turn communities against each other.

ETFO will not stand for a government that attacks democracy, erases progress on equity, and undermines public education. We call on the PC government to reconsider this undemocratic legislation immediately and urge all Ontarians to stand up for local democracy, equity and inclusion, and the rights of students and educators to learn and work in safe and supportive environments that are free from unnecessary policing. The solution is meaningful, adequate investment."

[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).

-30-

ETFO Media Relations: Carla Pereira | 416-962-3836 ext. 2332 | cpereira@etfo.org