



PETL MEDIA STATEMENT

“We Can’t Teach in This Heat”: Peel Educators Urge Immediate and Long-Term Action to Protect Students and Staff

For Immediate Release – June 25, 2025

MISSISSAUGA, ON – As temperatures continue to soar across Peel Region, elementary teachers are sounding the alarm: many classrooms are simply too hot to be safe.

Despite the Peel District School Board (PDSB) implementing “Hot Weather Measures” – like keeping blinds closed, providing some portable fans, cycling classes through a very limited number of ‘cooling stations’, encouraging water breaks, and adjusting outdoor schedules – educators say these stopgap half-measures aren’t nearly enough to meet the need. Teachers and education workers are doing everything they can, but the heat is relentless, and the impact on students and education workers is growing.

“My students were listless by 9:30 a.m. I brought two fans from home, but it barely made a difference. One student had to lie down because she felt faint. This isn’t sustainable.” – *Elementary teacher in Peel*

The reality is that this issue, like so many issues being faced by education workers on a daily basis (among others, a lack of resources to properly and equitably support students, and increasing levels of workplace violence), is the direct result of a pattern of deliberate underfunding by the Doug Ford Conservative government. The Peel Elementary Teachers’ Local remains deeply concerned that the PDSB receives hundreds of dollars less per student than comparable districts, contributing to the planned loss of nearly 300 specialized education staff and leaving up to 70% of Educational Assistant and Early Childhood Educator absences unfilled by qualified workers. This is part of a broader \$868 million annual provincial funding shortfall in our region, directly impacting the quality and equity of education we can provide.

The Facts

- Of more than 215 public elementary schools and worksites in Peel, **only a very small fraction have full air conditioning**. Portables and older buildings often rely on windows (many of which only open a few inches) and fans (that barely serve to circulate hot, humid air) alone.
- Teachers report daily symptoms of **heat stress** in students, including headaches, nausea, difficulty concentrating, and emotional distress.

- Educators themselves are experiencing **burnout**, as they juggle managing classrooms and acting as first responders to heat-related health issues.
- The PDSB's hot weather protocols are well-intentioned, but **underfunded infrastructure** limits what schools can do.

What is Needed

When students are too hot, they can't focus. When teachers are overheated, it impacts their ability to support students and deliver lessons. This is not just a facilities and infrastructure issue – it's an issue of equity and health and safety.

Peel educators are asking: Would you want your child trying to learn in a classroom that feels like a sauna?

We are calling on the PDSB, local trustees, and the Ontario Ministry of Education to:

1. **Fund and install full mechanical cooling** in all schools and portables.
2. **Prioritize building retrofits** like insulation, shaded windows, and cool roof systems.
3. **Establish a clear timeline and accountability** for climate-resilient upgrades.
4. **Engage with educators and parents** to understand the real daily impact of classroom heat.

In addition, we call on the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development to immediately **implement an upper or maximum workplace temperature limit** in the Occupational Health and Safety Act, above which it would be considered unsafe to work.

A Call to Trustees and the Public

To the elected trustees of the PDSB: We invite you to visit classrooms during these heat waves that are becoming increasingly commonplace. See what our students and members (*your* constituents and stakeholders) are facing first-hand. Your leadership is crucial to ensuring real change. Your silence on this issue provides cover for this provincial government to continue to defund and ignore this health and safety issue specifically, and public education generally.

To parents and community members: Your voices matter. Reach out to your trustees. Share your concerns. We all want and deserve safe and supportive learning environments for our children.

To local media: Thank you for helping us tell this story. Please continue to shine a light on this issue.

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