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## **PETL STATEMENT ON THE FORD GOVERNMENT'S PLANS TO RE-INSTATE DANGEROUS & HARMFUL SRO PROGRAMS THROUGH BILL 33**

Teachers and education workers across the Region of Peel are overwhelmed, under-supported, and increasingly left to manage serious behaviour issues on their own. Many are experiencing physical injury and verbal abuse, leaving educators anxious, sleepless, and burned out – forced to navigate situations that should never fall solely on their shoulders. These incidents are often met with silence or vague reassurances, rather than real and tangible action, clear consequences, and consistent support.

These things are happening despite educators' best efforts and attempts to care for their students. They're happening because the structures that are supposed to support safe, respectful learning environments have broken down. Progressive discipline – when properly implemented – is not permissive. It sets clear expectations, enforces real boundaries, ensures accountability and personal responsibility, and keeps students connected to school, where they belong. But instead of being backed up, educators are too often left to 'just manage' without meaningful consequences, administrative follow-through, or support in the early years when intervention matters most.

The result? Escalation. Exhaustion. Rising levels of workplace violence for workers.

And, of course, the all-too-familiar calls from conservative forces in our society for 'get tough' responses that have not only been proven not to work, but have also been shown, time and again, to cause irreparable harm of their own. In the case of public education, this often results in growing calls from some in our communities to increase the presence of police in our schools – not because it's the right solution, but because so many feel there's no other option.

Let us be clear: **the policing of our students is not the answer.**

Peel's School Resource Officer (SRO) program was ended after powerful student and community advocacy revealed the harm it was causing – particularly for Black, Indigenous, and racialized youth. Students shared experiences of constant surveillance, being treated like suspects, being questioned and harassed for information, and being handcuffed for behaviour that should have been addressed with care, not criminalization. Research confirms that this experience is not unique. Studies show that the presence of police in schools leads to increased suspensions, arrests, and student disengagement, while doing nothing to improve academic outcomes or school safety for any group of students.

What *actually* works is not a mystery. We need early and effective intervention, especially in the primary grades. We need tangible, proportionate consequences that hold students accountable and help them learn. We need administrators who actively support educators through action. We need smaller class sizes, more child and youth workers, social workers, and trained and caring adults to help address the roots of conflict and dysregulation before they escalate to violent and otherwise anti-social behaviour. In other words, we need a fully and properly funded public education system – the kind of system that students deserve and that affirms the fact that our schools are the foundational institution of a safe and caring society.

We can uphold equity and still maintain high standards. We can be compassionate and still expect accountability. What we cannot keep doing is looking the other way while educators are harmed, students go unsupported, and public confidence in safety wanes. The current crisis is not the result of too little control or too little punishment – it's the result of too little leadership, too little resourcing, and too much convenient avoidance of responsibility.

In 2020, this union took bold and proud positions on the issues of [discontinuing the PDSB's SRO program](#), specifically, and [defunding the police](#), generally. These are positions that we continue to stand proudly behind, as we look to fight back against the Ford's government's latest plans to force the police back into our elementary schools through Bill 33.

We expect and demand that the PDSB's publicly elected trustees will speak up and speak out against this bankrupt and dangerous conservative ideology of forcing police into our schools. We don't need or want police – equipped with weapons of violence and intimidation – walking our hallways and causing harm to our students. What we need and want are resources and supports. Yes, those things cost money. And as publicly elected trustees, your constituents expect you to fight for the funding necessary to provide them.

Policing is not a fix. It never has been, and it never will be. It is a dangerous and cynical response to a system that has failed to act. **If we want safe, respectful, and thriving schools, we must invest in the solutions that actually work – and trust educators to lead them.**