

ETFO bringing class size fight to bargaining table

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TORONTO, ON – In the spring, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) surveyed its 84,000 members to gather input to determine the Federation's next round of central bargaining priorities for both the Teacher/Occasional Teacher Table and the Education Worker Table. Class size emerged as a unifying issue for members across the province, validating the issue as a focus during the next round of bargaining.

"For years, educators have called for smaller class sizes that better support student learning. In 2026, ETFO is bringing this fight back to the bargaining table with renewed urgency and collective strength," says ETFO President Karen Brown. "We've seen how overcrowded classrooms limit what's possible: how they stretch educators too thin, reduce opportunities for individualized support, and make it harder to create the kind of calm, safe, and inclusive spaces our students deserve."

Currently, Primary grades (1 to 3) are funded for an average class size of 20. By comparison, funding for Junior grades (4 to 8) supports a class size average of 24.5. Unlike in the Primary grades, there are currently no caps on class size for grades 4 to 8. This has resulted in the largest class sizes, often with 30+ students of varying needs. ETFO is calling on the Ministry of Education to amend the *Education Act* to cap the number of students in grades 4 to 8 at 24 and 26 students in Kindergarten.

Adds Brown, "Smaller classes are not a luxury; they are foundational to a high-quality public education system, and key to addressing the growing challenges we face every day. They improve student learning by delivering more opportunities for individualized support, reducing violence in schools, and supporting stronger relationships and better collaboration between students and educators. Smaller classes also reduce educator burnout, and boost job satisfaction and retention."

As the Federation prepares for the 2026 round of bargaining, ETFO is laying the groundwork for bold, focused action. A new, far-reaching public campaign, *smaller classes, BIG DIFFERENCE*, will reflect what members have told us: that reducing class sizes must be a top priority. It's how we ensure that every student, in every corner of this province, gets the attention and support they need to thrive.

With fewer students in each class, educators can focus on supporting individual learners, particularly those with special education needs. Lower class sizes and adequate staffing levels are essential to the inclusion model, as outlined in ETFO's recent position paper, [Promises Unfulfilled: Addressing the Special Education Crisis in Ontario](#). Every child, including those with disabilities, deserves to have their learning needs met.

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Additional information on ETFO collective bargaining and the class size campaign is available at etfocb.ca.

[ETFO](#) represents approximately 84,000 members, including public elementary teachers, occasional teachers, designated early childhood educators, education support personnel, and professional support personnel. Visit BuildingBetterSchools.ca.

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