

PEEL EDUCATION WORKERS UNITED MEDIA RELEASE

Over 300 Educators Laid Off in the PDSB as Ford Conservatives Use Supervision to Push Through Cuts

For Immediate Release – March 13, 2026

MISSISSAUGA, ON – Unions representing more than 23,000 education workers across the Peel District School Board (PDSB) are denouncing the board's decision to cut over 300 educator positions, one of the largest workforce reductions in the board's history. The cuts will directly impact classrooms and the students who rely on public schools every day.

In February, Education Minister Paul Calandra appointed himself temporary supervisor of the PDSB, claiming he was protecting students from staffing disruptions. The reality? It was collective action by workers, through the Peel Education Workers United *Fund the Frontlines* campaign, that prevented the most damaging disruptions prior to supervision.

"This is not a normal staffing cycle," said OSSTF District 19 Occasional Teacher Bargaining Unit President Allison Walker. "It is a manufactured crisis that is the direct result of an intentionally underfunded system by the Ford Conservatives."

Last week, Calandra appointed Heather Watt as Supervisor of the PDSB. Education workers note that Watt has no education-specific qualifications or experience. Her prior experience as a staffer in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care involved leading a pandemic response that disproportionately underserved Peel families. It would appear that she is back to continue down the same path.

Now more than 300 teachers – 159 secondary and 172 elementary – have been declared 'Surplus to Region' and issued layoff notices. The Ford government is using provincial supervision as cover for slash and burn staffing cuts, going well beyond the projected drop in enrollment.

"Calandra ostensibly took over our school board under the guise of halting previously announced staffing cuts," said Nadia Goode, President of the Peel Elementary Teachers' Local. "Now, under his watch, more than 300 educators are being laid off. It's shameful."

Education workers say the cuts will be felt most sharply by the most vulnerable students who rely on additional school support, including Special Education, Guidance, ESL, Library, and other front-line student services.

"This is detrimental to students with special needs," said Melody Hurtubise, President of OPSEU Local 2100, the union representing Educational Assistants and Early Childhood Educators in the PDSB. "By taking away special education supports, including contact rooms and specialized programming, this government will further harm Peel families already struggling with Ford's defunding of health care, social services, and the autism wait list."

For education workers, what is happening in Peel signals a broader warning about the direction of public education funding across Ontario.

“Peel is the canary in the education-funding coal mine,” said Aloysius Okafor, President of the Peel Elementary Occasional Teachers’ Local. “This government is choosing to gut classrooms as a first step. Teachers don’t want a \$750 special charge card. They want adequate staffing to support their students.”

Education workers say the province’s approach also undermines local democratic oversight in a community with complex and evolving student needs. “By sidelining local trustees who understand these realities, the Ford government is sending a clear message to families in Peel: provincial supervision will weaken the quality of public education,” said Nicola Allison, President of the OSSTF District 19 Teacher Bargaining Unit.

Education workers are calling on Doug Ford to reverse these damaging cuts, properly fund the front lines of public education in Peel, and restore democratically-elected trustees so students can learn in stable, safe, supportive, and properly staffed schools.

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Peel Education Workers United is comprised of the unions representing every one of the more than 23,000 unionized workers in the Peel District School Board.

For more information, contact:

CUPE 1628

Evelyn Blackwell
evelyn.blackwell@cupe1628.ca

CUPE 2544

Eddie Pereira
eddie.pereira@cupe2544.ca

OPSEU 272

Fatima Bacchus
local272president@gmail.com

OPSEU 283

Kiran Sawhney
local283president@gmail.com

OPSEU 292

Greg Carnovale
president@opseu292.org

OPSEU 2100

Melody Hurtubise
president@opseu2100.ca

OPSEU 2103

Antoinette Hylton
local2103president@gmail.com

OSSTF D19 OTBU

Allison Walker
awalker@osstfd19.ca

OSSTF D19 PSSP

Daniela Merenda
president@peelpssp.ca

OSSTF D19 TBU

Nicola Allison
nallison@osstfd19.ca

PEOT

Aloysius Okafor
aokafor@peot.ca

PETL

Nadia Goode
nadiag@etfopeel.com