

ETFO rejects education overhaul as an unprecedented rollback of local democracy

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TORONTO, ON - The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) is rejecting the provincial government's proposed education bill, the *Putting Student Achievement First Act*, which unnecessarily restructures school board governance and leadership roles, limits the core responsibilities of trustees, and unilaterally interferes with central and local bargaining.

"While the Ford government ultimately rejected Minister Calandra's initial plan to eliminate all democratically elected trustees — a reversal achieved through months of sustained advocacy by ETFO and its education partners — this legislation removes the essential powers trustees need to genuinely represent families and students," says ETFO President David Mastin. "Retaining trustees, except for some in the Toronto District School Board, is just another example of Premier Ford's unhealthy obsession with Toronto. This government should focus on what is in the best interests of students and not on political manoeuvres that weaken democratic oversight."

The proposed legislation removes trustees from the central bargaining tables and shifts local bargaining away from trustees to chief executive officers (CEOs). This upends decades of established labour relations and eliminates a core democratic safeguard. Trustees have been central-table partners since 2014, when the *School Boards' Collective Bargaining Act* created Ontario's two-tier bargaining model, and have held a statutory role in local bargaining since 1975 under Bill 100. That's decades of democratic responsibility and oversight now put at risk by the Ford government. ETFO will review the legislation to determine how these changes may impact central and local bargaining further.

In addition, by centralizing control over which learning resources can be used in classrooms and directing assessment practices, the Ford government is stripping educators of the professional judgement they rely on to meet students' needs. Replacing evidence-based practice with ministerial directives imposes a business-style management structure on public education, eroding the professional expertise that drives high-quality instruction. Schools are not businesses.

Adds Mastin, "Families deserve trustees who are democratically elected to make decisions, not CEOs with business credentials installed to manage public education like a corporate enterprise. The fallout from this government's poor decisions belongs to this government alone. Trustees are not elected to serve as a buffer for your reckless decision-making."

[ETFO](#) Federation 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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