

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson, Minister of Education
Ministry of Education
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Dear Minister Thompson,

As a parent of a child in the Ontario school system, I am very concerned about the changes to public education being proposed by your government, particularly the changes to average class size. You have spoken often about the need for a Parents' Bill of Rights in Ontario's public education system, but we also believe that we, the parents and guardians, have collective *responsibilities* to our public education system.

Your government ran on the platform 'For The People'. However, by targeting public education to theoretically balance the budget, it does not seem as if young people and children are included in the 'people' for whom your government claims to be working.

Due to the wide variety of needs present in most classrooms, the proposed larger class sizes are problematic. Larger classes will impact the teacher's ability to provide one on one learning, impact classroom management, and reduce access to resources in the classroom. It means a reduction in the variety of pathway courses offered. Subjects that include hands-on learning such as trades and technologies courses will be impacted, as these are very difficult to deliver above a certain class size. Credit recovery/rescue courses will be jeopardized, impacting some of our most vulnerable students. The current variety of courses will be reduced, especially in secondary schools. This variety is what keeps many students engaged in school, and we can all agree that our ideal outcome is for all Ontario students to finish high school. Extra-curricular activities will also be impacted, with less teachers and staff available to provide such an essential part of the Ontario school experience.

New E-learning requirements are another issue. There is no evidence to suggest that mandatory e-learning courses would lead to improved educational outcomes. Not all students have access to technology, or the self-discipline and experience to be successful in an e-learning course. Ontario graduation rates are slowly but surely moving up, but these initiatives will have a negative effect.

Moving the average class size funding in Ontario Secondary schools from 22 up to 28 students for every secondary teacher and e-learning funded at 35:1 will result in the cutting of over one quarter of current courses from the system, more in rural areas with already small schools.

Although developing resilience is important, compromising learning opportunities for students is not how I want this to be supported. Resiliency is best learned through supportive relationships, the teaching of coping skills, and reflection. These strategies are best delivered by experienced and knowledgeable educators and support staff – the very ones being negatively impacted by budget cuts.

The systems our children need require more, not less, funding. As parents, we will press your government on these issues as part of our responsibility to hold the education system accountable.

Sincerely,

CC:

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XXX MPP of XXX riding