



Statement – Addressing Staff Shortages in Ontario Schools

November 2, 2023

Staff shortages in Ontario's publicly funded schools, in all employee groups, continue to be a daily challenge. The Ontario Principals' Council (OPC), representing 5,400 principals and vice-principals in public elementary and secondary schools, is extremely concerned about the shortages and the negative impact they have on learning and safety for our students and our schools. Short-term solutions have not resolved the problem. This crisis must be addressed immediately, with long-term and sustainable solutions.

A recent survey of over 900 OPC Members reported that

- shortages are occurring daily
- some staff positions are unfilled every day
- most schools have as many or more staff shortages than they had a year ago
- shortages are highest for Educational Assistants (EAs)
- to deal with staff shortages, classes are being cancelled or combined, schools are using unqualified adults and parent volunteers, and EAs – who should be working with students with special needs – are being moved into classrooms.

While we remain committed to creating safe environments where all students can learn, it is increasingly difficult to accomplish this. Staff shortages have a negative impact on student learning, safety and engagement, and have led to an increase in mental health issues, stress, burnout and illness for staff.

The recommendations contained in the 2021 [Working Group on the Shortage of Teachers in the French Education System](#) would also be relevant for English-language schools. And the Teacher Retention Action Table established by the ministry must be replicated for other employee groups in our sector.

The Ministry of Education needs to step in immediately to deal with this crisis, since it controls the funding and resources for most solutions. We also look forward to working with school boards and other education stakeholders on the immediate implementation of recommendations in key areas, including

Recruitment

- Focus on attracting and retaining permanent staff.
- Hire more EAs.
- Return to a one-year Teacher College degree.

- Allow staff to move between school boards without an impact on their seniority.
- Minimize the time between hiring and onboarding of staff.
- Hire occasional staff on a long-term contract and assign them to daily absences as needs arise.

Supports

- Provide immediate funding for additional supervision.
- Provide paid training to non-staff adults or parent volunteers.
- Lengthen the implementation period of ministry/board initiatives.
- Prioritize supports to those who require sick days to manage the number of absences.
- Ensure there are sufficient mental health supports in every school.

Incentives

- Ensure better working conditions and salaries for EAs.
- Keep the 95-day rule to return to education without pension penalty in place.
- Offer increased compensation or incentives in areas of the province experiencing significant shortages.

Civil and Respectful Discourse

- Encourage a more civil and respectful public discourse related to educators.
- Ensure the Parent Code of Conduct is enforced by school boards and the government.
- Bring together representatives from the sector to determine the current extent of the issue for each employee group and develop further recommendations for addressing it.

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