

February 11, 2021

Hon. Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
5th Floor, 438 University Ave,
Toronto, ON

Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister of Education
5th Floor, 438 University Ave,
Toronto, ON

Dear Minister Lecce and Deputy Minister Naylor,

Re: Appointing an Education Advisory Table

We understand that you and your staff are currently dealing with many complex issues and decisions and that you are meeting with many education stakeholders individually. We are writing to request that you convene an Education Advisory Table or Task Force with all key stakeholders to ensure that you are getting the best and most extensive educational advice possible.

All of us who are part of Ontario's kindergarten to grade 12 education system agree with your government that in-person instruction is the ideal model to support students' learning. And we believe that our schools are the key to providing all children and young people with an equitable chance for success.

We are living in extraordinary times, and in these times, it is more important than ever that we bring together as much wisdom and experience as possible to support effective decision-making.

All parts of Ontario's education system; educators, staff and trustees in school boards, education workers, principals and vice-principals, early childhood educators, public health nurses working with schools, our parents and our students will all feel more confident if it is clear that education decisions are being made with advice from a range of stakeholders, based on the best evidence, and with a goal of long-term success.

Education stakeholders understand that the COVID-19 pandemic has created many unknowns. None of us can know with absolute certainty whether there will be a sudden increase in cases, or whether the variants of concern will begin to spread rapidly. And we understand that in some cases, policymakers must make decisions connected to issues over which they have no control.

However, as you well know, it is vital that we have robust short- and long-term plans in place. By bringing together an advisory table, which meets regularly, and that informs policy before it is implemented, the government, policy-makers and education stakeholders will be able to hear multiple viewpoints with unique expertise, build an understanding of each other's perspectives, and ensure that the province is getting the best possible advice.

At a minimum, the table should include leaders from all the major education organizations, including:

Teachers' federations	School Mental Health Ontario
Principals' Councils	Public Health
The Council of Directors of Education	Provincially recognized parent organizations
Trustees' associations	Education NGOs
Supervisory Officers' Associations	First Nations, Métis and Inuit orgs
Unions representing support staff	Chiefs of Ontario
Deans of education	Early childhood education experts
Students' organizations	

School boards have already begun planning their policies and budgets for the coming year, and students and parents are hoping for a little more certainty in the coming months.

Developing coherent, comprehensive plans requires the best possible advice. To achieve this, we, the undersigned, hope you convene the Education Advisory Table as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Julie Béchard, Directrice générale,

Parents partenaires en éducation (PPE)

Harvey Bischoff, President, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation

Annalisa Crudo-Perri, Executive Director, Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education

Fred Hahn, President, Canadian Union of Public Employees Ontario

Sam Hammond, President, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario

Annie Kidder, Executive Director, People for Education

Pierre Léonard, Directeur général et secrétaire-trésorier, Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens

Justine Mackay, President, OSTA-AECO

Alana Powell, *Executive Coordinator*, Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario

Liz Stuart, President, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association

Laura Walton, President, Ontario School Board Council of Unions



For follow-up inquiries, please contact Annie Kidder, Executive Director, People for Education at info@peopleforeducation.ca.