

Hon. Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
5th Floor, 438 University Ave.
Toronto ON M7A 2A5

July 5, 2021

Dear Minister Lecce,

We write to you today on behalf of the over 6,000 teacher candidates who risk losing their employment because of the continued problems related to your government's implementation of the Math Proficiency Test.

In meeting with the Ontario Teacher Candidates Council, as well as hearing from our own constituents and teacher candidates across the province, it is clear that these problems could have wide reaching impacts on the education system, not just on this group of teachers themselves.

Risk of losing teachers risks jeopardizing a safe return to schools

With the test deadline once again pushed back to December, teacher candidates are at risk of losing their employment mid-way through the academic year. As we push to have a safe, smooth return to schools, staffing resources are critical to ensuring smaller, safer class sizes and more support for our students. We cannot afford to be losing qualified teachers because this test was imposed on them in the last days of securing their teaching credentials.

For students who have been through disruption after disruption because of school closures and reorganization, losing a teacher part way through the year would have additional negative impacts.

Concerns with French translation of the materials

The French translations of the MPT are reportedly so poor that 35% of francophone applicants are failing it. We do not have to remind you that there is a significant shortage of francophone teachers in Ontario. The recent report of the working group showed that significant interventions are needed in order to remedy this, and the lateness of the government's plan has put us further behind other jurisdictions.

The problems with the French version of the MPT threaten to take even more qualified francophone teachers out of the system. That is unacceptable. The OTCC has also raised this with the Minister of Francophone Affairs.

Transparency and evidence for the MPT

As you know from the hearings on Bill 48, there is little evidence to show that a one-time test of this kind will have any measurable outcome on student learning. In fact, many experts pointed to the negative outcomes of such a test. One of the only studies available also showed that this strategy for testing would not meet the government's stated goals. It is troubling to see, as reported in the Globe and Mail, that the report was

removed from the EQAO website. A recent Freedom of Information request seems to confirm that the EQAO Chair (a failed PC Party candidate) directed that the report come down. In the interest of transparency, did your office direct the EQAO Chair to take this action?

Additional costs to applicants

Taking the MPT multiple times, as many teacher candidates have been forced to do, will soon come with a fee to be paid for each subsequent attempt. This, on top of the fees associated with applying and reapplying for certification at the College of Teachers is adding financial hardship to these candidates.

Minister, teacher candidates are passionate about their vocation. They have made sacrifices, worked their way through their education degrees and are ready to continue their work supporting our next generation of learners. Indeed, at a time when our system was in desperate need of additional teachers during the pandemic, many stepped forward, working in classrooms and online. They deserve our thanks and our respect.

But this ill-conceived, poorly implemented test was imposed on them long after they had time to take requisite math courses in university. They are facing undue hardship because of your government's failure to approach this thoughtfully. We ask that you give this cohort an exemption out of respect for them, and for the benefit of our kids who need their support now more than ever.

Thank you in advance for your urgent attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Marit Stiles, MPP
Official Opposition Critic for Education



Laura Mae Lindo, MPP
Official Opposition Critic for Colleges and Universities

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Guy Bourgouin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Guy Bourgouin, MPP
Official Opposition Critic for Francophone Affairs