

**THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE AND THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
REPORT TO THE
TORONTO & YORK REGION GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2016**

“A Safe School Environment for All”

Every student has a right to an education as stated in our *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, *The Education Act*, and in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Every student has a right to attend a school which ensures a safe environment free from violence. Every employee has a right to work in a safe environment free from violence. Meeting the individual educational needs of all students while ensuring their safety at school has become a significant challenge.

Amendments to the *Education Act* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* have been established and enacted and focus on creating a safe school environment for all. Such legislation includes:

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| Bill 212 | – | Safe Schools Act |
| Bill 157 | – | Keeping our Kids Safe at Schools Act |
| Bill 168 | - | Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to violence and harassment in the workplace and other issues, and |
| Bill 13 | – | Accepting Schools Act |

Reported violent incidents, due to student behaviour, continue to increase. Violent incidents are exacerbated by spatial or environmental constraints that create unsafe learning environments. Large class sizes and/or classes that are complex or diverse in composition with large numbers of second language learners, and students with special needs, without the staff and resources to meet the needs are creating unsafe environments to learn and work. Students, education workers and teachers are victims or witnesses to violent acts that result in physical injury and emotional distress. This is occurring in all Boards, at all grade levels (K-12) across the province.

Passing laws to ensure safety in our schools without providing sufficient funding for the required supports/programs, and training, is simply not enough. Insufficient funding has placed students, education workers and teachers in high risk situations. The Public and Catholic School Boards of Toronto and York Region have been negatively impacted by the “redistribution” or “realignment” of special education funding. In order for these school boards to meet these new fiscal realities, trustees have made cuts to the number of jobs for education workers and teachers and cuts and reductions to appropriate individualized programs for at risk students, and students with special needs.

Yet, the Ontario education legislation requires that a safe school environment must be maintained while addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and at risk students. The Ontario Government has a responsibility to ensure adherence to the Safe Schools Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which is only possible given sufficient funding to local school boards.

The Education Committee and the Executive Board recommends that Labour Council:

- 1) Continue to lobby local school trustees, local school boards and the Ontario Ministry of Education for sufficient, protected and directed funding for resources, jobs and workplace training dedicated to ensuring safe schools, special education to meet student needs, and urgent health and safety needs are addressed.
- 2) Continue to lobby local school trustees, local school boards, and the Ontario government to determine sufficient funding by including consideration of the complexity of class composition and the need to reduce class size so as to improve the safety of the working environment and the quality of the learning environment.
- 3) Continue to lobby the Ontario government for sufficient funding for the urgent repair or renovation of critical infrastructure deficiencies, especially those prioritized in joint health and safety committee reports that must to be addressed to ensure safe schools and workplaces, as well as to enhance the quality of the learning environments for students and staff.