



MEDIA RELEASE

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Bill 157 requires more consultation and study to ensure clear guidelines for student safety

(Toronto) – Today the Ontario government announced the passing of Bill 157, the *Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act*. The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation commends Premier Dalton McGuinty and Education Minister Kathleen Wynne for their commitment to the health and welfare of students. However, OSSTF/FEESO is concerned that the bill requires further consultation and collaborative study in order for it to effectively provide the protection students deserve.

Bill 157 aims to ensure that all serious incidents that occur at school are properly reported and that parents are kept aware of such incidents. It also requires that disrespectful and unacceptable behavior among students is responded to appropriately. OSSTF/FEESO supports these objectives but believes that the act, if it is not followed by the appropriate accompanying regulations, will fail to adequately address some important issues. More consultation is required to ensure that ensuing regulations are developed to address a number of concerns.

The Federation is concerned with the lack of any procedural clarity or training. The act does not give any clear sense of a hierarchy of responsibility leaving education workers to wonder what takes precedence, their assigned duty or an incident outside of their classroom. The act also fails to set out which staff members will require what training and who will provide that training. At the moment, teachers and education professionals have varying degrees of training to respond to youth violence.

OSSTF/FEESO believes that it is crucial for student discipline to have consistent and strong administration in the school at all times. Far too often external meetings take principals and vice principals out of the school leaving teachers and support staff supervising students who are having difficulty. In the absence of administrators, it is absolutely necessary that a pool of recently retired and very experienced administrators be called upon in order to reduce the stop-gap appointment of a teacher to “act” in lieu of the proper authority.

Across the province, many OSSTF/FEESO bargaining units and their boards have already reached collective agreements that effectively deal with the issue of absent administrators. No part of the *Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act* should override these successful agreements.

Although OSSTF/FEESO agrees with direction and spirit of the newly passed Bill 157, there needs to be more thorough and comprehensive consultation in order to have a fuller understanding of how the act will be implemented. We look forward to continuing to work closely with the Ministry in order to ensure the success of Bill 157.

OSSTF/FEESO, founded in 1919, has 60,000 members across Ontario. They include public high school teachers, occasional teachers, educational assistants, continuing education teachers and instructors, psychologists, secretaries, speech-language pathologists, social workers, plant support personnel, attendance counsellors, and many others in education.

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