



Michael (Mike) Foulds

A message from the OTF President

Dear colleagues,

As we settle into another exciting school year, I want to extend a warm and heartfelt welcome back to each of you and to acknowledge the monumental effort you put into your work each and every day. The start of a new academic year always brings with it a sense of renewal, opportunity, and anticipation, and this year is no exception. Take a moment to acknowledge not just the monumental effort you put into your work, but also the broader issues at play that have significantly impacted our education system. Unfortunately, it is also a reminder of the ongoing challenges that we face, particularly those exacerbated by the Ford government's underfunding and under-resourcing of the education system.

Since 2018, Ontario's education system has been strained under policies that have systematically undervalued and underfunded our publicly-funded schools. Teachers have witnessed firsthand the consequences of these decisions: larger class sizes, a lack of essential resources, an increase in violence in our schools, and an erosion of support services that are vital for students' well-being and success. These issues are not just abstract concerns; they impact daily classroom dynamics and the quality of education our students receive.

The Ford government's approach to education funding has been marked by a troubling pattern of cutbacks and diminishing investment. Despite the growing needs of our schools, we have seen a consistent trend of underfunding, with resources stretched thinner each year. This has led to overcrowded classrooms where individual attention is harder to provide, eroding the quality of education and the support teachers can reasonably offer. Additionally, special education programs and mental health services—crucial for many students—have been particularly hard hit, leaving gaps that teachers (who are not trained clinicians or service providers) are inappropriately expected to fill.

Beyond the financial implications, the lack of respect for teachers and the teaching profession under this administration has been deeply concerning. The rhetoric coming from the government often seems disconnected from the reality of what it means to teach in today's Ontario. Teachers are professionals who dedicate their lives to nurturing the minds and hearts of students yet the government's policies and publicly-pronounced platitudes have often failed to acknowledge the expertise and commitment that teachers and educators bring to their roles or even to acknowledge them at all.

Despite these challenges, you continue to show remarkable dedication. You create engaging lessons, provide emotional support, and strive to make a positive difference in each student's life. Your commitment in the face of adversity speaks volumes about your professionalism and passion for teaching. That said, it is crucial to recognize that while individual efforts are praise-worthy, systemic issues require systemic solutions. The education system needs support and investment from those in power. That is why OTF will continue to advocate for policies that reflect the true value of education and to hold the government accountable.

As you teach in your classrooms, know that your voice is vital. Continue to speak out about the challenges you face and the needs of your students. Engage with your communities and make it clear that public education is a priority that must be supported by adequate levels of funding.

In closing, I want to express my deepest gratitude for your ongoing dedication to education and your unwavering commitment to your students. Your passion and hard work are the driving force behind the success of our schools and the bright futures of the young people we serve. Let's continue to strive for the changes our schools and students so richly deserve.

Yours in education,

Mike

Michael (Mike) Foulds
President



"OTF member with their students" - OTF archives