



Interaction

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Yves Durocher

A message from the OTF President

Dear Colleagues,

When I delivered remarks to the Board of Governors of the Ontario Teachers' Federation in mid-April, I took the opportunity to highlight what I believe is a threatening undercurrent in education across our province. As I begin my eighth month as OTF President, with just a short few months to go before I return to my classroom in September, I can confidently state that I've had hundreds of interactions with OTF members, retired teachers, heads of organizations, decision makers and politicians who make it clear that education is headed in the wrong direction in our province.

I'm sure this statement comes as no surprise, since Naomi Klein observed in her work *Shock Doctrine* that an ideologic government (such as the Conservatives in Ontario), will use a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, to push through policies that systematically exacerbate inequality, increase the concentration of capital, and further harm those who are already marginalized. The Ford Government and the Minister of Education appear to be following the "Disaster Capitalism" playbook to weaken publicly funded education. They see education spending as a drain on government funds, ignoring the economic benefits it brings.

Consider, for instance, that the Conference Board of Canada found that for every \$1.00 invested in education there is a return of \$1.30 to society. For proponents of a market economy without social safeguards, every dollar spent is a dollar lost.

This Government's penchant for virtual schooling, online courses, funding for for-profit tutoring, and support for private schools and learning pods, undermines publicly funded education. Despite claims of increased investment, independent sources like Statistics Canada and the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario predict a \$2 billion shortfall in education funding within three years. I think that's rather historic. One has to only look at the provincial budget to realize that we are fighting for the survival of the province's education system.

That's why, as teachers, we can't give up. That's why we need to put pressure on our partners, especially our employer associations, to join us in this fight to defend Ontario's school system. That's why we need to talk to our colleagues, our families and our neighbours so that they understand that the status quo will only exacerbate the economic and social problems we face.

That's what Ontario's teachers have always done, and it's what we plan to do today, tomorrow, and well into the future.

Yours in education.

Yves Durocher