



PUBLIC EDUCATION in ONTARIO

Please note that education in Ontario is very complicated issue, far more than what this summary can provide. At time of writing, teachers have been without a contract since August 31, 2019.

In the November 2019, Ontario Council survey of members, Education was the third issue, after Health Care and Climate Change.

PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING:

For an understanding of the financial situation concerning the Ministry of Education (including child care and the newly proposed Child Care Tax Credit (CARE), please see the **Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, Expenditure Estimates 2019-2020, Ministry of Education, Fall 2019**¹ (a very detailed analysis of public education funding)

Issues listed:

- The projected growth in Ministry spending is well below the core education drivers – school-age population and price inflation. Over the next five years, ministry spending is to be 1.0% but projected drivers to be 2.7%. Growth rate in school-age population will double between 2018-2023.
- Ontario public schools will lose approximately 10,000 teachers over the next five years due to the increase in class sizes.

March 15, 2019 - the Province announced that funded average class sizes for secondary students would increase from 22 to 28 students per teacher, while funded average class sizes for students in grades 4 to 8 would increase from 23.84 to 24.50 students per teacher

August 2019 – no changes to class sizes for students in kindergarten to Grade 3 while one additional student will be added per class in Grades 4 to 8; High school class sizes will average 22.5 students for the 2019-20 school year – which is about the same as last year – but that number is set to grow to 28 over the next four years

CLASS SIZES:

“Class Size Reduction” was a major American educational policy began by President Clinton in 1998 “as one of the most important investment we can make in our children’s future.”

Since that time studies have shown various conclusions concerning class sizes².

¹ Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, Expenditure Estimates 2019-2020, Ministry of Education, Fall 2019 [https://fao-on.org/en/Blog/Publications/expenditure-estimates-education-2019](https://fao.on.org/en/Blog/Publications/expenditure-estimates-education-2019)

² Christopher Jepsen and Steven Rivkin, *Class Reduction and Student Achievement: The Potential Tradeoff between Teacher Quality and Class Size* http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~mcmillan/papers/jepsen_rivkin.pdf; Colin A. Jones *The Right Size for Learning: Class Sizes in Massachusetts*, Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center <http://massbudget.org/reports/pdf/Class%20Size%20Final%20Public.pdf>; Canadian Education Association. *Class Size Reduction: What the Literature Suggests about What works*. 2008

Jennifer Buckingham (2003) in an Australian study: “the large majority of studies have found no significant effects of class size on student achievement, while the remainder have shown small benefits, usually only when classes have less than 20 students; class size has less effect when teachers are competent ...**the single most important influence on student achievement is teacher quality**”³.

The question is then what creates this “teacher quality” in the classroom? More individualized learning? Better class control? More time for preparation? More Educational Assistants? Etc.

As well, “class size” does not mean the actual number in a classroom, but also the variations in courses and programmes that can be offered. In the Spring, a number of school boards noted cancellations⁴.

ONLINE LEARNING:

CFUW does not have policy to cover this issue.

POTENTIAL CLUB ACTION:

Advocacy and inquiry: when the issue is controversial, when there is no clear direction either from CFUW policy or research, ask questions, use inquiry to start a conversation, to get information, ask them to explain in a non-judgemental way - "help me understand" how this is good/works for our province.

Do ensure that questions adhere to CFUW’s mission and purpose.

GENERAL CFUW POLICY ON EDUCATION:

Public Funding of Public Education, 2002

RESOLVED, that the Canadian Federation of University Women Ontario Council re-affirm its stated purpose of assisting:

- In achieving and maintaining high standards of public education;
- Supporting publicly funded public education with equal access for all ...

RESOLVED: that the Canadian Federation of University Women Ontario Council urge the provincial government

- To provide high-quality public education in Ontario, with funding to meet the individual intellectual, emotional, psychological and physical learning needs of each student in Ontario; and
- Affirm Public Education as a key priority

<https://www.edcan.ca/wp-content/uploads/cea-2008-class-size-literature.pdf>

and many others.

³ Buckingham, J. Class Size and Teacher Quality. *Educational Research for Policy and Practice* 2, 71–86 (2003)

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1024403823803#citeas>

⁴ Ontario’s new class size means Toronto, York school boards forced to cut STEM classes, July 8, 2019 <https://www.thespec.com/news-story/9491844-ontario-s-new-class-size-means-toronto-york-school-boards-forced-to-cut-stem-classes/>

Education – Capping Class Size in the Primary Grades, 2000

RESOLVED, that the Canadian Federation of University Women/Ontario Council urge the Ontario government to establish a policy of capping the number of students in the primary grades (Grades K-3) at 22 students, and the school boards be given adequate funding to staff the primary grades at this class size.

Educational Funding, 1999

RESOLVED, that the Canadian Federation of University Women/Ontario Council urge the Ontario government to ensure the annual budget includes sufficient funding to provide high-quality public education, taking into account the costs of:

- resources – including textbooks and learning materials, libraries and library staffing;
- special education programs and staffing for both gifted and challenged education students;
- training and professional development for teachers to ensure proper development, preparation and implementation of curriculum
- provision of programs that require critical thinking skills and include a balance between the humanities and hard sciences.

Educational Policy based on Research, 1996

RESOLVED, that the Canadian Federation of University Women/Ontario Council strongly urge the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training to establish educational policy and direction based upon balanced, thorough and in-depth research.

RESOURCES:

People For Education <https://peopleforeducation.ca/>

Allison, D.J., *Secondary School Class Sizes and Student Performance in Canada*, Fraser Institute <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/secondary-school-class-sizes-and-student-performance-in-canada.pdf>

Kidder, Annie Executive Director, People for Education. *How many teachers are we losing and who is right about class size?* May 2, 2019 <https://peopleforeducation.ca/our-work/how-many-teachers-are-we-losing-and-who-is-right-about-class-size/>