

For immediate release

Ontario Teachers' Federation concerned by recent provincial government announcements

TORONTO, November 20, 2018 — The Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) was dismayed to learn of the Ford government's recent decisions to dismantle three independent offices of the Legislative Assembly. The French Language Services Commissioner, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario and the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth did report to the Legislature, rather than to the government, a status similar to an Auditor General or Ombudsman and each one fulfilled an important role on behalf of Ontario's citizens.

"In its quest to seek 'efficiencies,' the Government has sacrificed the voice of its citizens, particularly those who benefit from the additional attention, support and services of arms-length advocacy and oversight agencies," stated Diane Dewing, OTF President. "It is a rebuke to a compassionate Ontario. The lives of all Ontarians are diminished by these actions."

The French Language Services Commissioner of Ontario acted as the representative for Franco-Ontarians to ensure that the *French Language Services Act* (FLSA) is followed, so that every citizen of Ontario could obtain the government services he or she needs in French. Ontario is home to the largest French-speaking minority community in Canada; Franco-Ontarians represent over four percent of Ontario's population. "The elimination of this Office erodes adherence to the FLSA and diminishes the voice of Ontario's French-language citizens," stated Dewing.

The Environmental Commissioner monitored the government's compliance with provincial environmental laws, including Ontario's Environmental Bill of Rights and recommends policies that strengthen government progress towards its environmental, climate and energy conservation goals and responsibilities. "In light of the unassailable evidence and clarion call for action contained in the most recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the axing of this Office is both perplexing and deeply concerning," added Dewing.

Since 2007, the Provincial Child Advocate has worked tirelessly to provide children and youth, including Indigenous youth and young people with special needs, with safe spaces to voice their needs, with opportunities to be agents of change in their own lives and tools to advocate for systemic change. "The loss of the Office represents a blow to Ontario's youngest and neediest citizens and denies them a meaningful avenue to strive for a better future," concluded Dewing.

The Ontario Teachers' Federation is the advocate for the teaching profession in Ontario and for its 160,000 teachers. OTF members are full-time, part-time and occasional teachers in all the publicly funded schools in the province—elementary, secondary, public, Catholic and francophone.

- 30 -

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