



March 22, 2024

## Expanding on the 50-day rule decision

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The Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) stands by its position that Ontario's publicly funded schools require systemic solutions to systemic challenges. OTF asserts that framing an amendment to the 50-day rule as a solution belies the facts. Amending the 50-day rule is not the solution the Government suggests it is.

The Ministry's characterization of OTF's decision is disingenuous; it deflects attention from the root causes of the teacher recruitment and retention problem in Ontario. The fact is that retired teachers always have the choice to continue teaching beyond the 50-day rule limit; they only need to pause their pensions temporarily.

On March 4, 2024, OTF received a letter from the Minister of Education requesting support for an amendment to the 50-day rule, extending it to 95 days to allow some retired teachers and administrators to continue working without impacting their pension. This band-aid measure clearly has failed to solve the recruitment and retention problem that continues to plague schools in Ontario. Hiring unqualified individuals and re-employing retired teachers does nothing to solve a problem of the Government's making. The amendment distracts stakeholders from identifying underlying causes and pursuing robust solutions.

A pool of over 30,000 qualified, certified teachers in the province are not employed in Ontario school boards and classrooms. It's worth asking why. There is also a cohort of thousands of teacher candidates who, in a few short weeks, will also be among those available and eager to take on supply, short-term and long-term occasional, and permanent positions.

The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (The Plan) is intended to provide a secure income for pensioners in retirement. The Plan was never intended or designed to address labour market challenges. In the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years, OTF reluctantly agreed to support an amendment to the 50-day rule, extending re-employment limits to 95 days, as a temporary measure. This limited measure was intended to address unanticipated and unprecedented challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the announcement on the 18th of March, we have had numerous communications with retired members. A considerable number of those communications confirm what we have worried about since the 50-day rule was amended during the COVID-19 pandemic; there is an expectation this measure is the new normal and has become an incentive for some to take early retirement and seek re-employment.

In the 2022-2023 school year, having recognized that chronic ailments persisted in the system, OTF agreed to the same amendment on the condition that the Ministry agree to strike a Teacher Supply and Demand Action Table with various education stakeholders. The purpose of this Action Table is to explore the root causes of the recruitment and retention issue in Ontario schools and to land on recommendations leading to tangible solutions. The recommendations from the Action Table were to be implemented in the 2023-2024 school year.

Members matter and so does the work they do. OTF's decision to decline an amendment to the 50-day rule is born out of a desire to ensure that a temporary reprieve does not camouflage or exacerbate real causes. It is imperative that the Ministry does not conflate a temporary, band-aid measure with a permanent cure. Ontario's teachers deserve more support and practical solutions from this Government.