

# INTERACTION

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE OTF PRESIDENT



Dear Colleagues,

Bill 33 is now law. Ostensibly called the *Supporting Children and Students Act*, it was marketed as a modernization effort, but its substance reveals a sweeping consolidation of power that threatens democratic governance in education and diverts attention from the real challenges facing students.

Along with OTF, education unions across the province including AEFO, ETFO, OECTA, OSSTF and CUPE—have been unequivocal in their assessment: the legislation centralizes authority in the hands of the Minister of Education while doing little to address the chronic issues of overcrowded classrooms, inadequate special education supports, or the long-standing underfunding of public schools. Their shared concern is that the bill reframes political control as student support, camouflage its intent behind reassuring language.

At the heart of the problem is Bill 33's erosion of local democratic oversight. Educators warn that the legislation dramatically expands ministerial intervention and sidelines school boards from decisions historically rooted in community needs. For them, the threat is not abstract—once local control is overridden, meaningful community representation may be difficult to restore. Elected

trustees, who answer to voters, risk being replaced by government-appointed supervisors who answer only to the provincial government.

This shift in governance is not a mere administrative adjustment; it fundamentally alters how education is shaped in Ontario. Those closest to students—families, trustees, teachers—would have reduced ability to influence decisions that directly impact their communities. Education workers have emphasized that such measures weaken democratic participation and make it easier for the government to deflect responsibility for problems it has contributed to through years of underinvestment.

The concerns extend beyond K–12 education. The Ontario chapter of the Canadian Federation of Students joined by other post-secondary labour groups, has raised alarms about the bill's implications for universities and colleges. New rules around admissions, student organizations, and campus fees are seen as intrusions on institutional autonomy and student self-governance, potentially worsening the funding crisis that already plagues the sector.

Advocacy groups focused on vulnerable students also see danger in Bill 33. The Ontario Autism Coalition has criticized the government's refusal to permit meaningful

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public engagement during the legislative process, noting that families who depend on strong community advocacy are left with fewer avenues to influence policy. The decision to skip traditional committee hearings has deepened concerns about transparency and accountability.

Eliminating opportunities for public input suggests an intent to push the bill through without scrutiny—an approach that raises serious questions about the motivations driving these reforms.

What students truly need is not more centralized oversight but sustained investment: more teachers, smaller class sizes, robust special education services, and accessible mental health supports. Bill 33 offers none of these. Instead, it restructures governance in a way that concentrates power at Queen's Park while weakening the role of communities in shaping their own schools.

Ontario's publicly funded education system has long depended on the balance between provincial oversight and democratic, community-based decision-making. Bill 33 upends that balance. It is less a reform aimed at helping students and more a political maneuver that jeopardizes both educational quality and local democracy. Students, families, and educators deserve legislation that addresses real needs—not a power grab disguised as progress.

In solidarity,

*Chris*

**Chris Cowley, President**

## REMEMBRANCE DAY CEREMONY AT QUEEN'S PARK

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. OTF President Chris Cowley attends Ontario's Ceremony of Remembrance at Queen's Park to remember and give thanks to our fallen soldiers and to honour all those who have served or are serving this country.

