



## **Improving Access to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Programs for Technological Education Teacher Candidates**

*Position of the  
Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) and its Affiliates*

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Ontario is currently grappling with an ongoing shortage of qualified teachers of Technological Education. Concerns regarding the dearth of teachers qualified to teach broad-based technologies in Ontario's schools are not new. As far back as the 1990s, the Ministry of Education (EDU) and education stakeholders sought out innovative mechanisms for enabling seasoned professionals in the skilled trades to access teacher education programs so that they could practically, if not seamlessly, attain qualifications in the teaching profession.

The charts below show the areas of Technological Studies that currently constitute teachable subjects and the number of teacher candidates (TCs) enrolled in each at Ontario Faculties of Education during the 2023–24 academic year. Data for 2024–2025 is not yet available. The total number of TCs across all subjects and all years of preparation was just 352 in English-language programs and only 25 in the sole French-language program offered at l'Université d'Ottawa. It is worth noting that prior to 2022–23, there were no programs offered in French at all.

## ENGLISH TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATION ITE PROGRAMS

TECH ED			
No. of Tech Ed TCs for each subject area	Pre-service Year 1	Pre-service Year 2	TOTAL
Communications Technology	18	22	40
Computer Technology	6	14	20
Construction Technology	40	32	72
Green Industries	5	2	7
Hairstyling and Aesthetics	27	16	43
Health Care	12	18	30
Hospitality and Tourism	24	21	45
Manufacturing Technology	21	15	36
Technological Design	9	9	18
Transportation Technology	29	25	54
<b>TOTAL TECH</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>365</b>

Source: Ontario Teachers' Federation, 2024

## FRENCH TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

TECHNOLOGIE			
	Formation initiale 1 <sup>re</sup> année	Formation initiale 2 <sup>e</sup> année	TOTALE
Technologie des communications	0	0	0
Technologie des systèmes informatiques	6	4	10
Technologie de la construction	1	1	2
Industries écologiques	0	0	0
Coiffure et esthétiques	0	0	0
Soins de santé	2	0	2
Hôtellerie et tourisme	1	0	1
Technologie de la fabrication	0	1	1
Technologie du design	4	0	4
Technologie des transports	4	1	5
<b>TOTALE : TECH</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>25</b>

Source: Ontario Teachers' Federation, 2024

### The critical nature of subject-specific expertise

Teachers of Technological Education (Tech teachers) are highly skilled individuals who are expected to know their areas of expertise thoroughly and have experience in the field. Without this expertise, Tech teachers would simply not be capable of transferring their knowledge to students.

Regulation 298 is clear that only teachers who have the necessary qualifications in Technological Education may be assigned to teach Technological Education. The Regulation explicitly disallows teachers without specialized qualifications to be assigned by mutual agreement. This restriction has been in place for decades, in recognition of the specialized subject matter that is the basis of the Technological Education courses that are offered in our schools. Moreover, considering the increased potential health and safety risks to students in Technological Education courses or programs, which exceed those in a general education course or program, restricting access to teaching qualifications to only those who are specialists in their domain is all the more critical.



To this end, the current requirements for entry to Tech ITE programs in Ontario demand a combination of work-experience and post-secondary education, which together must total at least five years.

In 2023, the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) held a consultation with stakeholder organizations regarding potential changes to these requirements. Specifically, the College asked stakeholders to consider the possibility and potential impact of reducing the certification of five-year work experience/post-secondary combination to three-year work experience/post-secondary combination. The response from OTF concluded that it would be a disaster to reduce the certification requirements for Tech teachers, both from an expertise and health and safety perspective. Considering that Ontario students are now able to leave high school after Grade 10 to pursue an apprenticeship, they could acquire three years of experience by age 19.

In February 2024, EDU asked stakeholders to provide feedback on proposed regulatory changes to enable non-Tech qualified (i.e., generalist) teachers to be assigned to teach the new Technology and Skilled Trades courses being introduced in September 2024 (TAS10 and TAS20). OTF expressed and still maintains firm opposition to the assignment of generalist teachers to teach TAS10 and TAS20 courses.

Since it would be reckless to reduce the subject expertise prerequisites for Tech teachers, this leads us to consider whether changes to ITE programs may be possible.

### **Current delivery models for Technological Studies Initial Teacher Education (Tech ITE) programs**

Due to the need for specialized equipment, the preparation of Tech teachers is a particularly expensive undertaking for faculties of education to contemplate and deliver.

Like all ITE programs in Ontario, the preparation of future teachers of Technological Education programs involves four semesters of study at an accredited Faculty of Education. However, more commonly, Tech ITE programs in the province are delivered via a multi-session format, where the four semesters are offered concurrently with employment as a teacher.

The multi-session format typically involves TCs beginning the program by taking required Education Foundations and Education Methods courses, followed immediately by

placement in a school. The first two weeks of this placement are considered practicum, after which time, a Transitional Certificate is issued to the TC, who then is deemed qualified to teach as they complete the ITE program.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, the multi-session program format was introduced in Ontario many decades ago to enable working trades professionals to pursue teacher education while continuing to be employed. Since many Tech teachers come to teaching as a second profession, it is desirable that they are not obligated to give up their salaries in order to pursue teacher preparation.

Currently, the following universities offer Tech ITE in a multi-session format: Brock, Queen's, Lakehead, l'Université d'Ottawa (French) and Windsor. It would be advantageous for the Ontario government to incentivise more Faculties of Education to offer Tech ITE through a multi-session format model.

Prior to the doubling in length of the ITE programs in 2017, several universities offered eight-month (two-semester) consecutive ITE programs. As a consequence of doubling the length of the program to four semesters, interest in Tech consecutive programs dropped precipitously, and several faculties of education closed their Tech teacher training facilities. Notably, the University of Western Ontario (now Western University), which boasted the largest Tech Studies ITE program, ceased offering this option. The University of Toronto similarly ceased offering its Diploma in Technological Education at this time. Today, only the following universities offer a consecutive Tech ITE program: Brock, Queen's and York.

OTF has long postulated that one year (10–12 months) should be sufficient time for delivery of Ontario's ITE programs and that a shorter timeframe for program delivery would go far towards addressing key shortage areas. This consideration is particularly pertinent for the preparation of Tech teachers.

### **Salary differentials as a disincentive**

Skilled trades professionals, such as carpenters, electricians and others in the building trades, are able to command much higher salaries than teachers typically can, especially when compared with the earning power of teachers in their first years of practice. On a practical level, this differential in earning power serves as a disincentive to candidates who might otherwise pursue a career in teaching.



### Steps towards boosting the number of qualified teachers of Technological Education

OTF shares the concerns expressed by other education stakeholders regarding the ongoing shortage of Tech teachers in our schools. Below are our recommendations for several tangible solutions to this matter.

1. The Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security (MCURES) should boost targeted funding to Faculties of Education so that more institutions, particularly those serving francophone and northern communities, can sustainably offer multi-session Technological Education programs.
2. EDU, in partnership with OCT, should allow Technological Education programs to be completed within a 10–12-month period, while maintaining program rigour, safety standards, and high-quality practica.
3. OTF should encourage the participants involved in collective bargaining to recognize relevant trade experience for salary grid placement with the goal of achieving consistency across all Ontario school boards.
4. The Ontario government, through one or more of the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade (MEDJDC), Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) and MCURES, should incentivise trades professionals to undertake teacher preparation by lowering tuition via a subsidy program.
5. The Ontario government, through one or more of the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade (MEDJDC), Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD), MCURES and EDU, should run a recruitment campaign to encourage skilled trades professionals to consider a career in teaching, with explicit information provided on the pathways for accessing professional training in Ontario.

Typically, prior work experience in the trades is not acknowledged by the hiring school board as experience towards salary rating in teaching. There are a small number of boards that do recognize prior work experience, but this is not the rule across the province. Recently, the Ministry of Education and the College of Teachers have undertaken work to enable Tech teachers who do not hold a post-secondary degree to access the Principal's Qualification Program (PQP) so that they can pursue administrative posts within the school system. While an important step, this change does not address the fact that, when first qualifying as teachers, Tech teachers receive a salary that is substantially below their trades' salaries. If we hope to attract larger numbers of trades professionals to the teaching profession, this reality needs to be addressed.