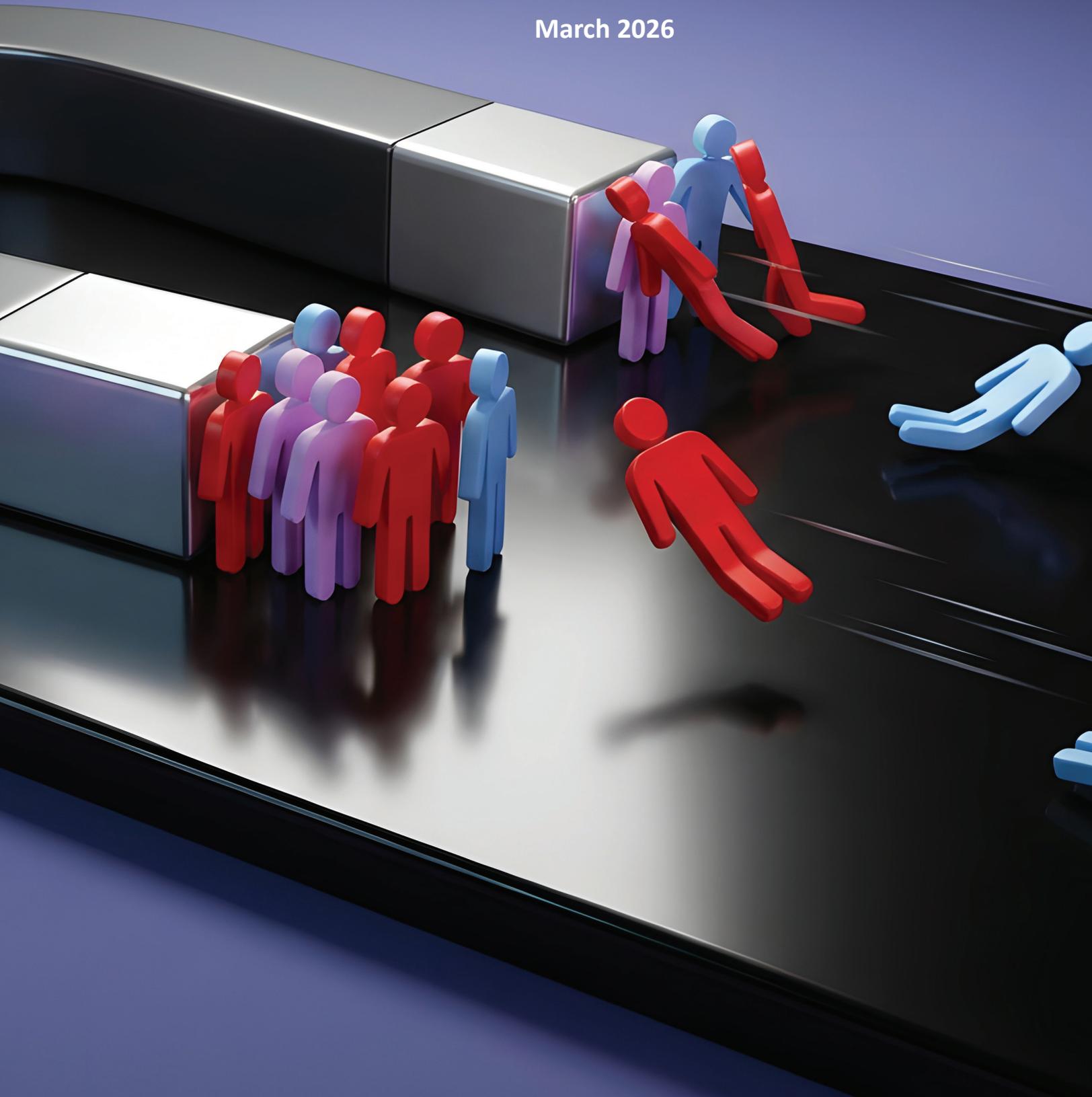


Teacher Recruitment, Retention, Supply and Demand in Ontario: Towards a Long-Term Solution

March 2026



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Context

All democratic societies hold as a key foundational tenet the presence of a strong and thriving publicly funded school system. The economic health and success of these societies are also inextricably linked to the availability of publicly funded education. In Ontario, as elsewhere in Canada, families entrust schools with the critical responsibility of nurturing the healthy development and growth of their children. Fulfilling this duty depends on a sustainable supply of qualified teachers, who can design and deliver lessons, evaluate progress, and report on student learning. Ontarians rightfully expect all elementary and secondary school students to be taught by teachers who hold appropriate qualifications for the age group and subjects that they teach. Our students benefit each day from these dedicated and caring teachers, whose work shapes their learning and future success.

For several decades, in the absence of a robust forecasting mechanism, the province of Ontario has struggled to address challenges with teacher recruitment, retention, supply and demand. Whether in periods of surplus or shortage, these struggles have been both incessant and confounding. Since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts by Ontario's K–12 school system to ensure an adequate supply of qualified teachers have been even further exacerbated.

It is important to note that, while UNESCO has acknowledged a pervasive, global shortage of teachers, the challenges faced by Ontario are specific to this province, and do not mimic those experienced in other countries or even in other Canadian jurisdictions. Moreover, there is ample evidence to substantiate that within our own province, the realities of teacher recruitment, retention, supply and demand are experienced very differently in our French- and English-language school systems and that geographic factors also impact these realities distinctively.

Supply Considerations

In terms of supply, we acknowledge the existence of two different aspects or considerations, both of which are important: There are the non-monetary factors, and there are monetary factors. The non-monetary factors for teachers would include considerations such as the total number of “seats” available in the faculties of education, the length of time to complete the education program, and the appeal of other professional/graduate programs. These factors determine the total pool of individuals who are willing to be teachers and/or who are teachers. In the field of economics this is commonly called the “supply of labour.”

...ITE application confirmations at faculties of education across the province have risen steadily from a low of 2,790 in 2015 to approximately 5,000 in 2025.

Monetary factors, on the other hand, are the rate of pay and provision of benefits awarded to permanent teachers and occasional teachers. This factor is important as it determines how many individuals from the pool are willing to work at any given time or for what period of time. In the field of economics this is typically referred to as “the quantity of labour supplied.”

Specific to the supply of teachers in Ontario, the decision by the former provincial government to introduce an expanded four-semester program in September 2015, whereby Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs were doubled in length from two semesters to four, had the anticipated impact of substantially reducing the supply of qualified beginning teachers entering the system. The resulting loss of new graduates had a particularly negative impact on the French-language school system: A January 2021 report by a consortium of French-language education stakeholders revealed that French first language schools were experiencing an annual shortfall of 520 new teachers, with some 500 Letters of Permission (LOPs) issued each year to unqualified personnel to fill this gap.

The above notwithstanding, undergraduate ITE application confirmations at faculties of education across the province have risen steadily from a low of 2,790 in 2015 to approximately 5,000 in 2025 (Source: OUAC, 2025). In recent years, the provincial government has introduced, firstly, a Temporary Certificate of Qualification

(January 2021) and, secondly, a New Transitional Certificate of Qualification (September 2023), enabling teachers-in-training to be licenced even before completing their ITE programs. Both of these measures were intended to increase the supply of teachers. More recently, in May 2025, the Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security (MCURES) announced one-time funding of \$55.8 million to create 2,600 additional ITE spaces in 2025–26 and 2026–27.

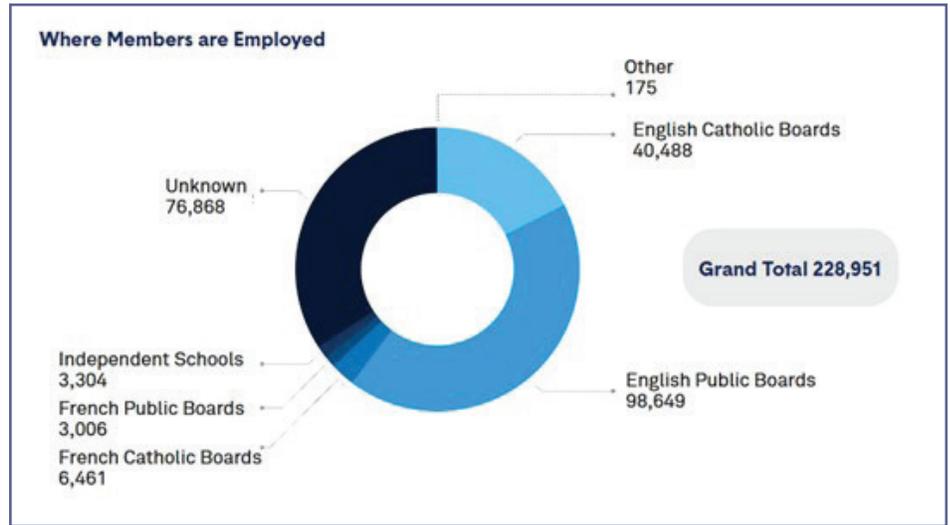
Recruitment and Retention Realities

In spite of these recent attempts by the provincial government to increase teacher supply, the matters of recruitment and retention have continued to confound hiring practices in both the English and French school systems:

The Missing Qualified Ontario Teachers’ Phenomenon

- According to data from the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) Annual Report for 2024, there are more than 76,000 qualified teachers who are in good standing but who might not be currently employed in Ontario’s K–12 schools (public or private).
- Data from the Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan (OTPP) show a total of approximately 185,000 educators who were active contributors to the Pension Plan at the end of 2024. The chart below illustrates the difference between the total number of members of OCT who were in good standing at the end of the 2024 calendar year (228,951), less those reported by OCT as being employed in Independent schools, and the total reported

We can conclude from these numbers that there are some 40,000 individuals holding Ontario teaching credentials who are not employed in either the public or private K–12 school system in Ontario.



Source: Ontario College of Teachers, Annual Report, 2024

- by OTPP. We can conclude from these numbers that there are some 40,000 individuals holding Ontario teaching credentials who are not employed in either the public or private K–12 school system in Ontario.
- There is little to no data currently available to explain why so many qualified teachers are not currently employed in Ontario schools. There is always a small percentage of qualified professionals in any field who decide after graduation that they do not want to pursue a career in that profession. Others may remain in the profession but move to live in other jurisdictions. That said, what we do know about this group is that they continue to pay their annual fees in order to hold onto their teaching certificates, i.e., they choose to remain qualified.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that some in this group have left the publicly funded school system because they have found work that better suits their needs. Others have tallied their combined undergraduate and teacher education skill sets and realized that they can find jobs with better salaries and/or better working conditions, outside of the teaching profession. As of 2008, following the height of the teacher shortage of the early 2000s, large numbers of qualified teachers were not able to secure sufficient employment in teaching (source: OCT Transition to Teaching study). After five to eight years of futile attempts to find permanent positions, many of these qualified teachers have sought work in a different field. More recently, the revocation of Regulation 274 has discouraged

| Source | Members at December 2024 |
|---|--|
| OCT | 228,951 (of which 3,304 are employed in independent schools) |
| OTPP active contributors | 185,000 (approx.) |
| Total not working in publicly funded K–12 education | 40,647 (approx.) |

Ministry of Education (EDU) three-year trend data captured in the fall of 2023 showed that for the English system, rates of new graduates surpassed retirement rates. Simultaneously a significant proportion of newly certified teachers were not finding a permanent or long-term occasional (LTO) position in the publicly funded education system. This situation of oversupply persists today.

occasional teachers in many boards from remaining in the profession since they no longer can see a clear progression into permanent positions for themselves.

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- Similar patterns were observed for the French-language system, where a significant proportion of newly certified teachers were not being employed in permanent or LTO positions.
- Annual EDU reporting also shows that the number of LOPs and Temporary Letters of Approval (TLAs) issued has risen dramatically. School boards in Ontario must apply to the Ministry of Education (EDU) for a LOP when hiring an individual without teaching qualifications to fill a teaching position. A TLA is needed when the individual holds a teaching certificate but is not qualified to teach the specific subject area or division for which they are hired. The charts below show the meteoric rise in recent years in the number of LOPs and TLAs issued by EDU over the past 20 years.

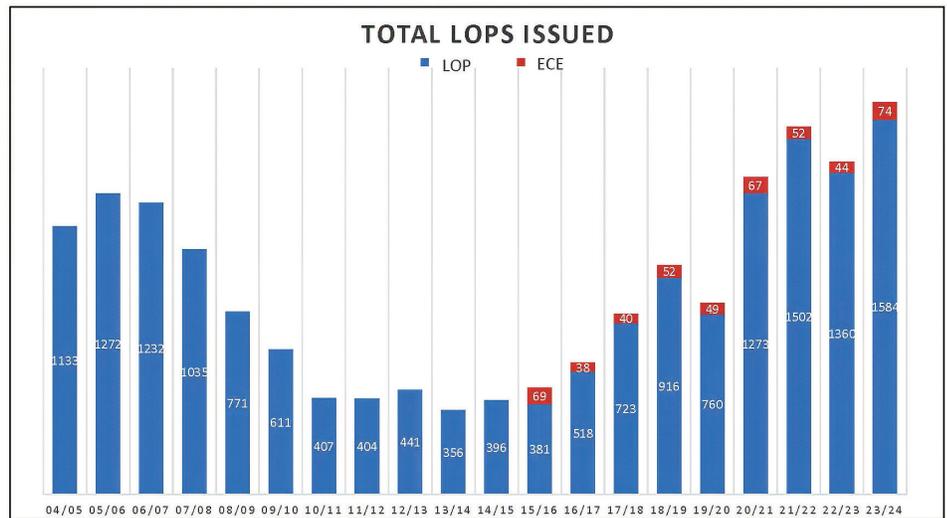
While teachers in Ontario's French-language schools represent just five per cent of all teachers in the publicly funded system, they represent a far greater proportion of the LOPs and TLAs issued:

The Alleged Shortfall in Daily Occasional Teachers

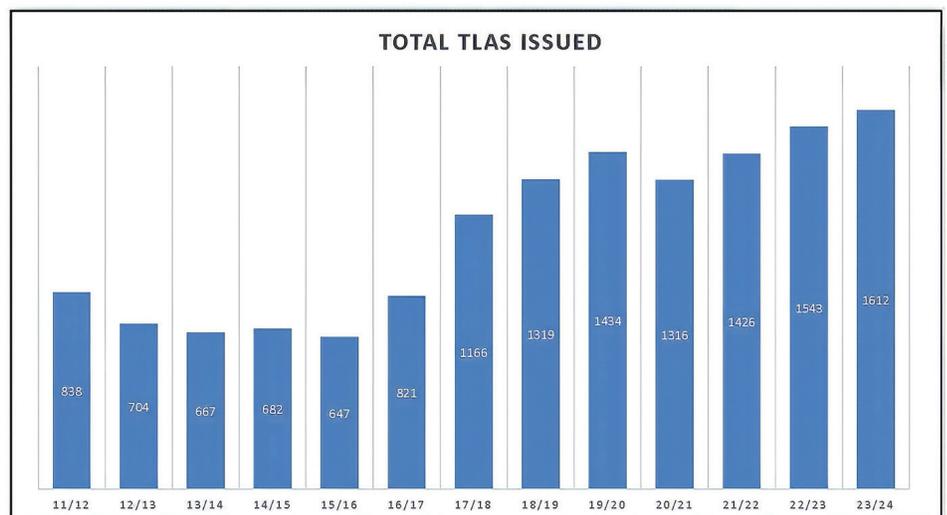
Although there is evidence of a generalized teacher shortage in the French-language school system, there is very limited evidence of a similar shortage of teachers for LTO and permanent positions on the English-language side. This leads us to look at the question of daily occasional teachers (OTs).

- EDU data seemingly indicates a dire shortage of daily occasional teachers available to replace absent teachers. This phenomenon appears to be fairly general across the province, and is based on the reports of the number of unfilled absences and the use of unqualified personnel. However, it should be noted that the number of unfilled absences does not directly correlate with a lack of supply of OTs. It appears that the number of unfilled, particularly short-term absences, is occurring irrespective of the supply level of OTs, suggesting that there are systemic issues and barriers in the education system that are impacting occasional teachers' desire to accept short-term (daily) teaching assignments.
- The work of daily OTs is precarious, in so far as it is unreliable, unpredictable and inconsistent for beginning teachers to depend on, in terms of salary, working conditions, access to benefits, and inconsistency of opportunities. The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) provides a useful definition of precarious employment and the impact on workers (see CCOHS: Precarious or Non-Standard Employment and Vulnerable Workers). As such, we contend that these issues

The charts show the meteoric rise in recent years in the number of LOPs and TLAs issued by EDU over the past 20 years.



Source: Ontario Teachers' Federation, 2025



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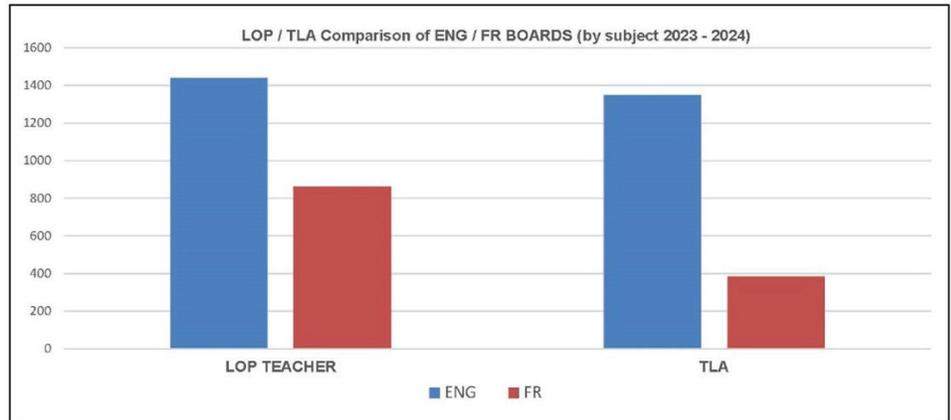
are among the key underlying causes that are translating into unfilled (short-term) absences. In addition, some school boards have structural issues that impact how they engage occasional teachers, such as hiring practices, issues related to their call out systems and/or the use of school based "priority lists" and/or an over-reliance on retirees, all of which serve to aggravate this reality.

- Data from the OCT's Focus on Teaching Survey 2024 (FOTS 2024) indicate that insufficient work opportunities lead teachers to leave the profession. According to the FOTS 2024 report, 60 per cent of respondents who were

certified between 2019 and 2024, who also indicated they were in non-permanent positions and did not have enough work in the 2023–2024 school year, indicated they may leave the profession in the next five years. Furthermore, 73 per cent of those who provided the reasons they might leave the profession indicated lack of longer-term job stability as a major determining factor.

- The daily rate of pay for OTs is typically less than that of a qualified beginning teacher, regardless of their grid position. Daily OTs also earn less than teachers hired to a LTO position under the same collective agreement.

| | ENG | FR |
|-------------|------|-----|
| LOP TEACHER | 1439 | 862 |
| TLA | 1348 | 384 |



Source: Ontario Teachers' Federation, 2025

Available OCT and OTPP data point to a growing number of teachers leaving within the first five years. Deteriorating working conditions, including a rise in student mental health challenges and school violence, as well as a lack of access to New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) supports and professional learning opportunities, have been identified as contributing factors to this increased attrition.

Working Conditions

- Available OCT and OTPP data point to a growing number of teachers leaving within the first five years. Deteriorating working conditions, including a rise in student mental health challenges and school violence, as well as a lack of access to New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) supports and professional learning opportunities, have been identified as contributing factors to this increased attrition. An October 2023 report by the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), entitled *Violence Against Teachers and Related Leave*, presents significant data collected (specifically in Ontario) that support the connection between rising incidents of school violence and teacher absences. This issue impacts the number of daily OTs and LTOs needed to fill absences. This reality may also influence the desire of OTs to fill positions in particular schools/areas where violence in schools is particularly high.
- In FOTS 2023, OCT reported on its findings regarding major considerations for early

retirement that were cited by respondents to the survey:

"In an open response question asking for possible reasons for early retirement, the majority cited challenging working conditions.

Key issues include:

- *work volume and complexity,*
- *lack of respect and recognition, safety,*
- *mental health and,*
- *work-life balance."*

This qualitative data suggests that working conditions are a key factor for retention.

- The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has reported that Ontario has underfunded education by \$6.3 billion since 2018. Chronic underfunding leads to poor working conditions for teachers which is a factor contributing to the availability of teachers.

The OTPP projects that Ontario will experience growing retirement numbers in the coming years, with a 30 per cent increase in teacher retirements projected between 2025 and 2030.

Persistent Shortage Areas

- Shortages of Technological Education, French as a Second Language (FSL) and other high needs subject areas are being experienced across the province, with more generalized shortages in the French-language system as well as in northern, rural and remote schools.
- Trades professionals are reluctant to consider teaching as a profession in boards where they do not receive grid placement recognition for their years of experience in the skilled trades.
- Overall, members from equity deserving communities are under-represented in the hiring pool, and this reality is more acute in the English-language system than in French-language schools. Internationally educated teachers, in particular those hired to teach in French-language schools, lack access to supports that orient them to the Ontario school system.
- Hiring to remote areas of the province for positions that are below a 0.5 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) exacerbate the unwillingness of qualified individuals to teach in those regions. Furthermore, in remote and rural areas where an occasional teacher is required to travel a significant distance to fill an absence, it may not be economically feasible to do so to cover assignments of 0.5 FTE or less.

A Short Note on Predicted Demand

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Data Sources and Available Research

Recent data sources include, but are not limited to:

- EDU: Annual Reports on Letters of Permission (LOPs) and Temporary Letters of Approval (TLAs)
- Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC) Teacher Education Statistics
- Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) and Ontario Association of Deans of Education (OADE): Faculty Enrollment Data
- Ontario College of Teachers (OCT): Transition to Teaching (T2T) survey (2022) and Focus on Teaching Survey (FOTS—2023, 2024)
- Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP)
- Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE)—Paper on Ontario Education Staffing Crisis, April 2025
- OTF/EDU Action Table on Teacher Supply and Demand, March 2023 to April 2024
- Canadian Teachers Federation: Violence Against Teachers and Related Leave Report, October 2025
- Ontario Has Underfunded Schools by \$6.3 Billion Since 2018, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), May, 2025

RECOMMENDATIONS

OTF/EDU Action Table on Teacher Supply and Demand

The following recommendations were proposed by the Steering Committee of the Action Table on Teacher Supply and Demand that operated from spring 2023 to spring 2024. Many, although not all, were supported by EDU at that time. The recommendations addressed four agreed upon areas:

1. Increase supply in targeted areas

- Work with faculties of education to explore the expansion of a 14- to 16-month program beyond the existing ones (e.g., Université de l'Ontario français, Ontario Tech University, Queen's University), in order to accelerate teacher education and enable qualified teachers to be classroom ready sooner.
- Work with faculties of education to explore the expansion of multi-session programs beyond the programs that exist, in order to broaden availability for teacher education in technological education, French language and Indigenous languages and to enable a broader pool of teacher candidates in these programs to enter the classroom after their first semester via the multi-session transitional certificate.
- Investigate the possibility of shortening the length of the four-semester ITE program, such as through an accelerated 12-month program.
- Increase spaces in faculties of education focused on qualifications in high demand, subject to available resources: technological education, Indigenous languages, and French language, and additional shortage areas identified by data gathering.
- Introduce and/or expand more flexible Initial Teacher Education models such as online and experiential programming to better attract candidates in northern and rural parts of the province.
- Incentivize faculties of education to align program

timing with the academic school year to reduce the gap between graduation and employment (e.g., July–August).

- Increase intake for high needs subjects and the supply of teachers for geographic regions (e.g., northern, rural and remote) by providing incentives to potential teacher candidates such as loan forgiveness, employment guarantees and induction support.
- Engage in a fulsome provincial recruitment strategy for shortage areas, including incentives such as free tuition, loan forgiveness, etc.

2. Improve efficiency of board hiring and supply management

- Establish local/regional/provincial planning tables with faculties of education and federations to ensure proactive enrolment and recruitment planning based on employer/labour market needs.
- Introduce northern and rural recruitment financial incentives including compensation, moving and travel allowances.
- Provide support for accommodation including funding for teacherages.
- Develop a new graduate hiring database to indicate qualifications and geographic availability of new graduates
- Reduce reliance on retirees—highlight and incentivize hiring of new graduates over retirees.
- Work with school board, Federation and other partners to explore mechanisms for replacing short-term teacher absences (including costs and benefits) that will inform direction/policy to school boards on approaches to address planned and unplanned daily absences. Exploration will focus on mechanisms that would enable boards to hire a pool of certified permanent replacement teachers available to support a school board, family of schools or school with the aim of providing direction/guidance that:
 - reduces the number of daily unfilled absences that boards face;
 - decreases the use of unqualified emergency occasional teacher replacement personnel;
 - provides more consistent coverage for schools; and
 - lessens interruptions to student learning.

3. Retain early career teachers

- Enhance support for the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) towards a focus on early career retention by requiring Boards to offer professional learning in the first year of work and to include all new teachers. Clarify board understanding of NTIP and provide guidance on parameters/eligibility and criteria for use of funds.
- Extend the timeframe for Teacher Performance Appraisals (TPAs) for new hires from 12 months to 24 months to allow time for orientation, learning and growth in their first two years of employment.
- Implement bridging programs within faculties of education for internationally educated and mid-career individuals to support their orientation into Ontario's education system.
- Develop strategies for addressing working conditions and wage disparity for all, and for daily OTs in particular. Additional investments are needed to make tangible improvements in working conditions and pay to make these jobs in areas of need more attractive to recruit and retain qualified teachers.

4. Enhance data information sharing and reporting

- Establish a standing oversight committee that meets twice annually to review teacher supply and demand trends, and to provide advice on key trends requiring intervention in order to avoid crisis-level responses.
- Establish a mandatory data set and regular data collection process for on-going monitoring and analysis.
- Monitor and evaluate implementation of all recommendations/initiatives.

Additional Recommendations that Were Not Part of the Action Table on Supply and Demand

No single recommendation will resolve the complex teacher recruitment, retention, supply and demand challenges currently faced in Ontario. It is important to view the above recommendations in concert with the supplemental recommendations surfaced below:

1. Increase the attractiveness of daily occasional teaching

- Work with school boards and federations to develop fair, standardized and transparent hiring practices across Ontario that provide a clear pathway from occasional teaching to permanent teaching.
- Ensure appropriate compensation for daily OTs. This should be accomplished by addressing the differential salary and benefits funding for all occasional teachers to align with that of permanent teachers. Access to paid life, health and dental benefits are important working conditions for all teachers.

2. Incentivize employment of teachers of high needs subject, representation and geographic areas

- Incentivize trades professionals to consider teaching as a profession by providing tuition subsidies and guaranteeing recognition for salary purposes based on their years of experience in the skilled trades. Several school boards currently have collective agreements that provide Tech teachers with year for year recognition on the salary grid for work experience in the trades (years as an apprentice are excluded). This practice should be applied across all school boards.
- Award similar tuition subsidies to teacher candidates enrolling to teach other areas where there is a limited supply (for example, French first language).
- Provide a special allowance for teachers who pursue subject specialization in areas of high demand, e.g., in French as a Second Language (FSL) and special education.
- Provide support for internationally educated teachers, in particular those hired to teach in the French-language system, to orient them to teaching in Ontario. A good model is La Passerelle (Enseigner en français en Ontario) in the French language system.

- Guarantee a minimum assignment of 0.5 FTE to teachers who move to remote areas of the province to teach.

3. Address retention of early career teachers

- Ensure that all beginning teachers receive access to meaningful New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) that includes mentorship and release time for professional learning.
- Increase NTIP funding for additional hours of training to be provided jointly by the school board and local union.
- Conduct further research to gather more qualitative data and quantitative data on the impact of salary and working conditions on teacher recruitment and early career retention.

4. Increase attraction to the teaching profession more generally

- Address student mental health and incidents of violence by ensuring adherence to relevant legislation (such as the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)* and the *Education Act*) and student codes of conduct, as well as appropriate access to qualified professionals, reducing class sizes and providing comprehensive programming supports. These steps will reduce teacher burnout and improve retention.
- Create an advertising campaign that elevates the image of the teaching profession. Positive public perception can attract individuals to the profession and boost morale among current educators. Public perception of education is impacted by what adults report about their experiences in education. The CTF report cited earlier in this paper indicates that both Canadian adults and teachers report concern about rising level of violence in public schools. Public perception about school violence can impact teacher recruitment as well as retention.
- All education stakeholders should commit to promoting interest in teaching and eliminating employment barriers. Fair compensation, manageable workloads, improved working and learning conditions, a safe work environment and professional respect are key to keeping early career teachers in the field. This commitment should be reflected in collective bargaining tables across the province.

- Work with faculties of education to deliver ITE that prepares teachers to meet the evolving and complex challenges of today's classrooms. This would include an improved focus on classroom management, technology, special education, and assessment, evaluation and reporting.
- Provide appropriate education funding that keeps pace with inflationary costs so that schools are well resourced and enable teachers to provide their best service to their students.
- Implement programs that support the recruitment of teachers similar to those currently in existence in Ontario that support the recruitment of nurses. Examples include:
 - Nursing Partnership for Learning, Employment, Development, Growth, and Experience (Nursing PLEDGE)—Ontario will invest \$110 million over three years to help homes establish nursing mentorship programs that will help people build careers and skills, supporting close to 4,000 mentors and their mentees by 2027–28.
 - Jumpstart Opportunities in Nursing in Long-Term Care (JOIN LTC)—Ontario will invest \$70 million over three years in JOIN LTC, which allows eligible nurses who commit to working in long-term care for two years to receive an incentive of \$25,000, with an additional \$10,000 available for those who commit to a rural, remote or northern home, plus \$10,000 more to help with relocation costs. This program aims to bring 4,000 new nurses to long-term care by 2027–28.
 - Externship pilot program—Ontario is investing \$665,000 in 2026–27 in a pilot that will enable up to 40 nursing students to work at long-term care homes and gain valuable experience as they work towards graduation.
- Request the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) to co-develop a research inquiry with the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF), aimed specifically at OCT members in good standing who are not currently working in education to ascertain why this is the case and what would encourage them to return to/take up employment in the teaching profession.