

# Reopening Schools this September

## What's Necessary for a Safe and Healthy Return

### Main messages:

1. Elementary educators want to be back in schools with their students, but we want to do so safely.
  2. The government's return to school plan and the funding to support it falls far short of what is necessary and required.
  3. The Ontario government must provide sufficient funding for smaller classes, improved building ventilation to comply with recommended standards, additional classroom space if needed and the hiring of more educators.
- It is urgent that the government rethink its plan. Restaurants, grocery stores and gyms will have more safety restrictions in place than elementary schools given the insufficient funding allocated for this plan.
  - The government's refusal to reduce class sizes means that classes in grades 4-8 will have an average size of 24.5 or more than 30 students. That makes it impossible to allow for two-metre physical distancing.
  - When it comes to Kindergarten, there are still upwards to 30 children in a confined space. These students don't sit in rows; they are engaged in learning through play. They are more active and have less self-regulation than older students.
  - The fact that the government is not requiring masks for students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 is concerning. The science around COVID-19 among children is still evolving. There have been outbreaks in elementary schools and child care centres in Quebec and Ontario. That's why school boards should practice the Precautionary Principle when it comes to smaller classes and mask requirements.
  - Ontario cannot afford to get this wrong. The Ford Conservatives need to step back from this flawed plan. It's time for a rethink and to introduce a real plan, one that puts safety first when schools reopen.
  - While ETFO and the public are strongly advocating for smaller classes, our educators are getting ready for the school year. Educators are professionals and will do their very best to meet the learning needs of their students.

