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Postponing March Break not in best interest of students, teachers, education workers, and families, education unions say

TORONTO—The Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO), the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) released the following statement today.

AEFO, ETFO, OECTA, and OSSTF/FEESO strongly oppose the government's plan to postpone March Break. These are unprecedented times, and this is a much-needed break for students, teachers, education workers, and families who have been under tremendous pressure throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The government's decision to postpone March Break does not take into consideration the mental health and well-being of those involved.

The postponement of March break shows, yet again, the inadequacies of the Progressive Conservative government's planning. If there are concerns related to travel and gatherings during March Break, these should be addressed by the government through other means. Why did Premier Doug Ford reopen the economy when it is clear risks remain? Is he concerned that his stay-at-home orders are ineffective? If so, he should address the real issue: this government's ongoing failure to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Their decision to postpone, despite unanimous opposition from unions representing educators and other stakeholders in the sector, including all school board associations and the Ontario Principals' Council, is another example of this government ignoring experts and making decisions that are reckless and baseless. The pattern the government has shown in making decisions while ignoring experts and the front-line workers that are most affected has only served to compound challenges.

This decision demonstrates their lack of understanding about the stress and pressures of learning and working in a pandemic. Teachers and education workers have gone to extraordinary lengths to teach and support students every day since the start of the school year, whether in person or online. Their efforts should be applauded not diminished.

The Ford government must listen to the voices of frontline workers in the education community and immediately reverse their decision to postpone March Break.

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