

Statement from JEFA in response to the Ministry Investigation of the TDSB
September 24th, 2024



The Jewish Educators and Families Association of Canada (JEFA) would like to applaud Ontario Minister of Education, Jill Dunlop, for her leadership in ordering a Ministerial review of the TDSB.

We are heartened that this government has responded so quickly to the most recent scandal plaguing our schools and that an external investigation will be conducted and expedited.

There are a few factors involved in this decision that we would like to highlight for consideration:

1. Selection of the Investigator

The investigator must have a deep familiarity with not just how the public education system works on paper, but how it works in practice. They must fully understand how human rights and diversity, equity, and inclusion policies, as well as popular pedagogical theories invoking “student voice,” impact almost every decision-making process within the board.

2. This must be the first step of many to restore public confidence in our schools.

Tonight’s announcement is received with appreciation by all parents in Ontario who care deeply about public education, but it cannot be the last step and it cannot be performative. We also need to consider the role and efficacy of the Ontario College of Teachers. The Ontario College of Teachers is the licenser and regulator for teachers in Ontario. In Canada, and specifically in Ontario, we have a system of self-regulation for teachers, unlike in most of Europe and in the United States, where teachers are regulated and licensed by the government. Approximately 25 years ago, Ontario adopted a self-regulatory model, which means it’s up to the profession and a select number of representatives of the public to ensure that the standards of the profession are being met. Given that authority and responsibility, how is it that earlier this week Premier Ford needed to instruct teachers to “stick to teaching” instead of using their roles and authority to pursue their own political agendas? Where has the Ontario College of Teachers been? We strongly encourage the College of Teachers and Minister Dunlop to consider how this regulator needs to act in response to upholding its statutory obligations to uphold the public interest.

3. Better and safer schools for ALL students and teachers.

JEFA has been working tirelessly on behalf of Jewish educators and Jewish students. We’ve brought to light pivotal issues including Peel Region’s adoption of the Nakba and inclusion of geopolitics in the classroom, and the introduction of “anti-Palestinian racism” policies, without

any specific definition of what anti-Palestinian racism is, that target Jewish identity as a form of racism. We've also brought forward situations like what happened in York Region at St. Teresa of Lisieux, when a speaker shared disturbing information and violent imagery with a strong geopolitical narrative; material inappropriate for a school setting. Our work created community dialogue that helped inform PPM-170, Ontario's new rules for disclosure of external speakers for K-12 schools.

All of our efforts have been driven by our desire for a better public education system for all. When Jewish students and Jewish educators are safe, it benefits all students. We are holding you to account for a public education system where everyone belongs, where everyone feels safe, and where everyone can embrace and cherish Canadian values.

Media Inquiries to:

Tamara Gottlieb

tamara@jefa.ca

416-476-9736