



April 6th, 2020

Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
5th Floor, 438 University Ave
Toronto, ON M7A 2A5

Ross Romano
Minister of Colleges and Universities
5th Floor, 438 University Ave
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

Dear Ministers Lecce and Romano,

Re: Math Proficiency Test and Teacher Certification Requirements under COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented event that affects everyone, and the education sector is no different. We appreciate your government's offer to work across party lines in order to best serve all Ontarians. With this in mind, we are writing to ask that you remove the barriers that Ontario Teacher Candidates face in receiving their certification this Spring.

As of March 31st, 2020 through regulation 271/19, your government began requiring all new certified teachers to complete the Math Proficiency Test (MPT) in order to receive their teacher certification. Your government's rollout of the MPT has been problematic from the start. The MPT was an unexpected mandatory requirement that blindsided Teacher Candidates that expected to graduate this Spring. The field tests for the MPT were administered starting on February 18, 2020 and many problems arose. For example, some teacher candidates drove 6 hours to a testing site, only to learn the online scheduling system had errors which meant they were no longer registered to write that day. While there is a need to improve the teaching of math in Ontario, the middle of a pandemic is not the time for the government to fix the mistakes of its original rollout. Your government's delay in cancelling the requirement for this year leaves Teacher Candidates under a cloud of uncertainty as their accreditation with the Ontario College of Teachers is dependent on the MPT as per reg. 271/19.

Another barrier that exists is that some Teacher Candidates may not be able to complete the regulated 80 days of practicum due to the school closures required because of the threat of COVID-19. Most post-secondary institutions have worked to ease the burden on students in this difficult time; they've reduced or eliminated workload for students, offered alternatives such as distance learning, and worked with professional associations to ensure that any program placement hours missed will not affect the student's ability to graduate and pursue the career of their choice. However, Teacher Candidates have not been given the same opportunity. Many Teacher Candidates have secured jobs for the upcoming school year and many have registered for Additional Qualifications (AQ) programs based on their expectation that they would have normally been qualified to begin teaching in September.

Without the MPT, they will be unable to receive credit for the AQ programs they complete, and are also unable to work professionally as a certified teacher until the Ontario College of Teachers grants them certification. We have received many emails from Teacher Candidates describing their personal stories, and the stress they feel due to COVID-19 and the MPT. Our schools will need these new

teachers in September, especially for 'STEAM' courses and at French school boards. It is our responsibility to make every effort to remove any barriers to certification without delay to provide certainty and stability to these Teacher Candidates and to our education system in September.

With that in mind, we join the Ontario Teachers' Federation in recommending the Ministry takes three immediate actions:

1. Cancel the requirement for Teacher Candidates and graduates of Ontario's initial teacher education programs to pass a Math Proficiency Test (MPT) as specified under Regulation 271/19. All other standardized assessments administered by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) have already been cancelled for this year, and the removal of the requirement for graduating Teacher Candidates would be aligned with the Ministry's earlier decision regarding EQAO testing.
2. For the current year, allow for flexibility in the ways the Ontario College of Teachers assesses the experiences of Teacher Candidates and how practicum days are calculated. This would include allowing additional experiences to count towards the 80 days of practicum required by current regulation. Additional experiences could include:
 - a. Observation days in an Ontario publicly-funded school setting; and
 - b. Teaching in a distance learning environment during the COVID-19 pandemic
3. For the current year, enable the College of Teachers to issue a Transitional Certificate to Teacher Candidates who, due to the current school closure, have not completed their 80 days of practicum. The transitional certification would enable these Teacher Candidates to begin working as qualified teachers in September and can be transferred to a full Certificate of Qualification once the missing practicum days have been reached. This transitional certification already exists for Teacher Candidates doing their teacher preparation in "special/multi-sessional" programs such as Technological Education, Native Languages and First Nations Ancestry in Ontario. Extending the Temporary Certificate in a structured and time-limited way to a specific cohort that has been adversely impacted by the pandemic reflects a minor, incremental change to the current Regulation governing teacher qualifications.

As the Official Opposition Critics for Education and Colleges and Universities, we have heard from many students, parents, certified teachers, and Teacher Candidates who believe that the Math Proficiency Test creates undue stress in the midst of an unprecedented pandemic, and a major barrier for Teacher Candidates to receive their teaching certification at a time when our education system needs them the most.

Please keep us informed of your response.

Thank you,



Chris Glover, MPP
Spadina-Fort York
Critic: Colleges and Universities



Marit Stiles, MPP
Davenport
Critic: Education

CC: Nancy Naylor, Deputy Minister of Education
Nicole van Woudenberg, Chair, Ontario College of Teachers
Brittney Vandersel, President, Ontario Teacher Candidates' Council