



**Statement to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs
Ontario College of Teachers
Tuesday, December 1, 2020**

Nicole van Woudenberg, OCT, Chair of Council

Good afternoon. My name is Nicole van Woudenberg and I am the Chair of the Council of the Ontario College of Teachers. Joining me today is Chantal Bélisle, Deputy Registrar of the College.

We are here today to support this groundbreaking legislation that will further help safeguard Ontario's students and modernize the operations of the Ontario College of Teachers.

This bill reinforces many of the recommendations College Council has made in recent years.

The amendments reinforce the teaching profession's promise to uphold and exemplify its ethical standards of care, trust, respect and integrity.

These changes will make it easier for the College to fulfill its mission to protect the interests and well-being of Ontario's students. The modernization of the College's governance structure will also better serve the public interest by strengthening trust and confidence in Ontario's teaching profession.

Chantal Bélisle, OCT, Deputy Registrar

On safeguarding students

We asked for stronger regulations to protect students.

The amendment to make acts of hatred more explicit in regulation further enables the College to help eliminate racism and other discriminatory actions in education. This speaks directly to our long-standing commitment for inclusivity and respect for diversity and work that is currently underway by the College to develop an additional qualification course on Anti-Black racism and a professional advisory to help guide member practice.

We asked for stronger penalties and broader definitions for acts of professional misconduct related to sexual abuse and child pornography.

By aligning these heinous acts to Canada's Criminal Code, the College can better protect students and only permit those who deserve to teach, to do so. This speaks directly to our mandate to protect the public interest.

And creating a proactive sexual abuse prevention program parallels the College's focus on furthering teacher education. The program will articulate educational requirements for College members and provide clear guidelines for the conduct of members with students.

We asked for the ability to ensure accuracy during our investigation and hearings process.

By making it possible for the College to order medical assessments during the investigation committee stage, we can ensure matters will be properly referred to the appropriate adjudicative committee. This underscores our commitment to fairness, timeliness and efficiency in resolving discipline matters.

We asked to keep all discipline decisions public. By enabling us to do so, the College strengthens its commitment to public accountability and transparency.

We are confident that these changes to the *Ontario College of Teachers Act* will enable the College to meet its mandate to protect Ontario's students.

Nicole van Woudenberg, OCT, Chair of Council

On governance

The Ontario College of Teachers is Canada's largest self-regulatory body. We continue to be at the forefront of professional regulation in Ontario as well as nationally and internationally.

We are committed to continuous improvement, which is why we commissioned an independent report two years ago to find efficiencies in our governance structure. The review informed our Council's recommendations to the government and have resulted in most of the proposed legislative changes you are considering today.

The benefits to the College, the public interest and Ontario Certified Teachers are numerous.

The College's *raison d'être* is to protect the public interest, and the new governance model will support the College's efforts in this regard.

The equal representation on our Council and statutory and regulatory committees will more clearly demonstrate self-regulation by including members of the profession and members of the public working together to set the direction in the public interest.

The new structure will enable more individuals to be involved in our work as Council and committee members will be distinct from each other.

Moving forward, those who will serve on Council and various committees and panels will be required to have the skills and competencies to best serve in those distinct roles. It is a democratic process that recognizes the critical importance of professional expertise and experience in roles that are crucial to safeguarding students.

Importantly, our members told us that they would be more likely to take part in the College's work if they could apply for the roles available instead of taking part in an expensive, lengthy and intensive election process.

We are pleased to see that the new model will enable the College to dispense with costly elections that resulted in low candidate and voter participation.

Once enacted, the College will be able to operate more nimbly, more efficiently and more effectively and allow an even greater level of member and public engagement in our work. We are strongly committed to these values.

The College has always been a leader of regulatory changes and trends and the proposed legislation helps to evolve our governance structure to serve as a model for regulatory governance in Ontario.

Chantal Bélisle, OCT, Deputy Registrar

In the coming months, the College will work closely with the Transitional Supervisory Officer to ensure a smooth transition to the new governance structure.

The changes proposed in Bill 229 are profound and will have a positive and long-lasting impact, not only on safeguarding Ontario's students and ensuring the College will continue to fulfill its mandate to protect the public interest, but no doubt influence the modernization of professional regulation generally.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts. We would be pleased to answer any questions.