



CTF/FCE

**The Canadian Teachers' Federation
Pre-Budget Submission – October 2022**

October 7, 2022

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The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF/FCE) is a federal organization comprised of 18 Member Organizations that represent over 365,000 public school teachers in Canada from every province and territory. As a federation of teacher organizations, the CTF/FCE promotes and supports quality inclusive publicly funded public education, in all its forms. We uphold teaching as a profession and advocate for adequate resourcing, labour rights, and social justice, across Canada and around the world.

The Necessity for Leadership

Right now, Canadians are feeling the pinch. Inflation is making life more costly for Canadian families, and we know that long-standing social issues facing the most marginalized in Canada will only worsen without proactive social support and investment. Canadians need broad and sincere leadership from the federal government.

With the threat of the privatization of public goods looming large in the wake of the pandemic, Canadians are looking for peace of mind when it comes to the future. Now is the time for the Canadian federal government to take more leadership in K-12 publicly funded public education (PFPE) across the country, making it a real catalyst in driving societal change and closing those gaps for the most vulnerable like racialized, Indigenous, remote, and low-income communities.

When the CTF/FCE polled Canadians in the summer of 2021, 90 per cent of respondents felt that the federal government should be creating a set of national guidelines for quality teaching, quality environments, and quality resources. We are echoing that call with our asks in this document; below the CTF/FCE has highlighted several challenges that are impacting students, families, educators, and K-12 public education in Canada along with recommendations on how to best overcome or meet these challenges head on for the betterment of Canada and all those living here.

Ensuring Quality Public Education Regardless of Postal Code

The CTF/FCE is coordinating calls for a *National Advisory Council on Publicly Funded Public Education* (NACE) comprised of a number of different national organizations involved in the delivery or policy setting of K-12 public education in Canada. With the NACE, the CTF/FCE and fellow members/observers at the table are discussing challenges facing K-12 PFPE in Canada and providing evidence-based strategies and recommendations to remedy them. With organizations focused on critical issues including Indigenous education, French-language education in minority communities, the training and education of teachers and educators, teaching and learning conditions, the NACE wants to ensure that all students in Canada have access to high quality inclusive publicly funded accessible K-12 education.

The NACE wants to reposition public education in Canada as a leader in the world on issues both inside and outside the classroom. Issues we are focused on include anti-racism strategies; Indigenous education supports; climate change education guidelines; health and safety considerations related to school infrastructure; retention and recruitment of teachers; healthier schools, with national school nutrition and proper physical activity programs; and the mental health of students and educators. Each of these pan-Canadian challenges requires multi-faceted solutions and the federal government's leadership and endorsement of solutions.

Therefore, we are asking for the federal government to provide targeted long-term and sustainable funding for a *National Advisory Council on Publicly Funded Public Education* to deal with these issues impacting all families across Canada.

Treating Mental Health Early On

Unfortunately, more Canadians than ever before are confronted with mental health issues; the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already severe problem and it is especially present within those who have been on the front lines, including educators. Recent research among our membership shows that teachers are increasingly questioning their ability to remain in the profession due to lack of adequate mental health and workload supports.

The CTF/FCE believes strongly in supporting the mental health of both students and teachers. When we consider the lack of supports for mental health in Canada and the gradual shift to address these gaps, the CTF/FCE asserts that schools are the vital place to remedy these problems.

Whether it means acclimatizing students and children to seek mental health supports when necessary or providing teachers and educational staff the chance to seek support and resources for their own or the mental health of their students, the school can be an invaluable venue to establish healthy practices that will provide vital mental health improvements in all communities across Canada.

Through the establishment and introduction of mental health supports within schools we will be able to create a robust system that serves to give a wholistic approach to health in Canada that is world class and treats mental health early in the lives of individuals living in Canada and their communities.

Therefore, we are asking for the federal government to ensure that funding that provinces and territories receive from the Canada Mental Health Transfer is linked to the establishment of publicly-funded in-school K-12 mental health support programming.

Providing Food Security for All Children in Canada

Focusing and learning on an empty stomach is not easy for anyone; for children going to school hungry it profoundly affects their education and their life potential. In multiple jurisdictions around the world and in provinces and territories that have allowed the charitable sector to provide school nutrition programs, we have seen the life-changing benefits of such programs. There has been significant work done on this file through organizations such as the Coalition for Health School Food and to the CTF/FCE endorses and supports their work on this life changing initiative.

In Canada, with the rising cost of living and the increased challenges brought on by climate change – food insecurity is proving to be a bigger barrier to the quality of life here than we have seen in recent decades. The federal government needs to take significant steps to ensure food security for all people living in Canada.

We recognize that the federal government has previously committed to the development of a National School Food Policy, but we want to see this policy put into action in conjunction with the provinces and territories. The federal government has led on issues related to healthcare, education, and childcare, supporting programs that fall under provincial/territorial jurisdiction; ensuring a pan-Canadian school nutrition program is the same. A national school nutrition program should be sustainable, universal, and fully funded through the federal and provincial or territorial governments.

Therefore, we are asking for the federal government to provide targeted long-term and sustainable funding for a National School Nutrition Program in conjunction with provinces, territories, and Indigenous organizations that is sustainable and locally sourced where possible.

Supporting Vulnerable Peoples in Calling Canada Home

Canada prides itself as a world leader on human rights and in ensuring that those who need help, receive it. Over the past year we have seen significant numbers of refugees come into Canada, especially in the face of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the support Canada has provided to Ukrainian people seeking refuge within Canada. The CTF/FCE recognizes these efforts and applauds the federal government on this leadership.

However, Canada is falling behind in our capacity to process refugee claimants with a sizable portion of applications considered in backlog. This can and should be rectified immediately so that Canada can continue its leading role in supporting those seeking refuge, which in turn will promote diversity and help spur growth across the country.

The CTF/FCE has been working with Education International to support refugee claimants such as Afghan women and education leaders who face significant danger and risk as a result of their teaching of or advocacy for girls. No one should be penalized for feminist and progressive community work. We know that bringing in more individuals to Canada will benefit Canada culturally and economically, so we urge the Government of Canada, as a feminist government, to provide more funding for the processing of refugee claimants seeking to make Canada their home in both our capacity to process and our capacity to support.

Therefore, we are asking for the federal government to provide targeted long-term and sustainable funding for an increase in staff to process and expedite refugee applications and an increase in supports for individuals and their families who seek refuge within Canada.