



14 November 2023

Student Achievement Division,  
Ministry of Education,  
315 Front Street West  
13th Floor  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5V 3A4

**Subject: Concerns Regarding the Proposed "Accelerated Apprenticeship Pathway"**

Dear Minister Stephen Lecce,

The Toronto and York Region Labour Council represents 220,000 workers across Toronto and York Region. Since 1871, our Labour Council has been championing policies and principles which improve the lives of workers and their communities. We are writing to express deep concerns and reservations regarding the proposed "Accelerated Apprenticeship Pathway" that is currently under consideration by the provincial government.

This particular proposal raises several serious issues that warrant careful consideration. Our concerns regarding the "Accelerated Apprenticeship Pathway" are four-fold:

1. From the perspective of the trades, the proposal to allow youth who haven't completed their high school diploma to enter the skilled trades presents significant problems. Traditionally, skilled trades require a high level of technical expertise and a strong understanding of safety protocols. Allowing individuals without a high school diploma to enter these trades may compromise their ability to challenge employers on health and safety issues, increasing the risk of workplace accidents and injuries. It is vital to ensure that all workers have the knowledge and skills necessary to protect themselves and their colleagues in the workplace.
2. The purpose of education is not solely to produce a workforce of obedient workers but to create conscious global citizens. Contrary to the mantra that we should encourage individuals to complete their education, the proposed "Accelerated Apprenticeship Pathway" appears to counter the decades-long belief that young people should finish their education. Education should not only be a means to an end, but also a way to foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and global awareness. Rushing individuals into apprenticeships without a proper educational foundation may hinder their long-term personal and professional growth.
3. Every high school graduate saves money for the provincial government in the long run. A recent report from the Conference Board of Canada entitled "the Economic Case for Investing in Education" revealed that "each additional high school graduate saves the Ontario government (on average) \$2,767 each year on social assistance, health care,

and criminal justice. While each additional high school non-completer costs the province \$3,128 each year." It indicates that Ontario could spend, on average, an additional \$18 million each year on social assistance, health care and criminal justice. Over a 20-year period, this could add up to \$3.8 billion in additional program spending. Since high school graduates are more likely to contribute positively to society, the provincial government should be doing more to encourage the completion of high school education as it not only benefits individuals but also society as a whole by reducing the economic burden on public services.

4. The proposed pathway raises concerns about which students will be encouraged to leave Grade 11 to pursue apprenticeships. In recent years, the Province began a process of de-streaming in grade 9 in 2021, but this pathway seems to encourage students to leave early and limit their future opportunities. Educational streaming can be particularly harmful to historically marginalized communities, exacerbating disparities in access to quality education and employment prospects. We must be vigilant in ensuring that all students have equal access to opportunities that can lead to prosperous and fulfilling futures.

In light of these concerns, the Toronto & York Region Labour Council hopes that the government will reconsider the proposed "Accelerated Apprenticeship Pathway." It is essential that any changes to our education and workforce development systems are carefully thought out and consider the long-term well-being of our youth and the prosperity of our province.

We kindly request that you take these concerns into account during your deliberations on this matter and ensure that any final decisions prioritize the safety, education, and future prosperity of our youth and the province as a whole. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns further and offer any assistance we can in addressing these challenges.

Sincerely,



**Andria Babbington**

*President*

**Toronto & York Region Labour Council**

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Sent on behalf of our Executive Board members.

Please see addendum for full list of Board members and their unions.

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**Executive Board members**

**Jeff Irons, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 353**

**Abdi Hagi Yusuf, Canadian Union of Postal Workers, Toronto Local**

**Jinkie David, Toronto Public Library Workers Union, Local 4948**

**Hendrik Bruyn, United Steelworkers Local 8300**

**Nigel Barriffe, Elementary Teachers of Toronto**

**Arokiadass John, Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 79**

**Ainsworth Spence, Service Employees International Union Local 1**

**Carolyn Egan, United Steelworkers Local 8300 and Toronto Area Council**

**Joe Popadynetz, Sheet Metal Workers and Roofers Local 30**

**Kingsley Kwok, Ontario Public Service Employees Union Local 575**

**Miguel Lima, Toronto Education Workers Local 4400**

**Aleem Tharani, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 113**

**Chris Nadon, International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees Local 58**

**Andrew Schaper, Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 905**