

NEWS RELEASE

Among four largest provinces, Ontario has smallest high school class sizes but lowest student test scores

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For Immediate Release

TORONTO—Despite popular misconceptions about class size and student performance, provinces with larger secondary school class sizes such as Quebec and Alberta outperform Ontario on international tests, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“There’s no evidence that larger class sizes in Ontario secondary schools will hurt student performance—in fact, other provinces with larger class sizes outperform Ontario,” said Derek J. Allison, professor emeritus of education at the University of Western Ontario, Fraser Institute senior fellow and author of *Secondary school class sizes and student performance in Canada*.

The Ontario government plans to establish a new larger average class size of 28 students for Grades 9 to 12.

The study, which compared average provincial class sizes and test scores from the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), found that in 2015 (the latest year of comparable data), among the four largest provinces, Ontario had the smallest average secondary school class size (24.8 students) but the lowest average PISA test scores in all three subjects—reading, math and science.

In fact, Quebec, which had the largest average class size (30.1 students) among all 10 provinces had significantly higher test scores than Ontario and the highest math scores in Canada. Alberta (28.5 students) had the highest science scores, British Columbia (25.4 students) the highest reading scores.

Because it’s expensive for any province to maintain smaller class sizes, the money may be better spent on other educational initiatives aimed at improving student performance.

“Many factors contribute to student performance, but larger class sizes in high school do not appear to have a negative effect, something policymakers should understand when allocating scarce education resources in Ontario,” Allison said.

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