

# Expanding Student Access to Online and Remote Learning

Initiatives Committee • March 22, 2021



# AGENDA

- The purpose of today's consultation is to seek input and advice on plans being considered to **expand student access to high quality online and remote learning** across the province.

Time	Item
3:00 pm	<b>Welcome, Introductions &amp; Updates</b>
3:20 pm	<b>English and French Breakout Rooms – Presentation and Technical Questions</b>
4:15 pm	<b>Plenary Discussion</b>
4:55 pm	<b>Wrap-up and Next Steps</b>

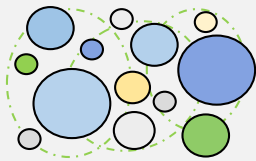
# KEY TERMS

	<i><b>Synchronous Remote Learning</b></i>	<i><b>Teacher-Supported Online Learning</b></i>	<i><b>Fully Independent Online Learning</b></i>
<b>Availability</b>	Ontario <b>elementary</b> and <b>secondary</b> students	Ontario <b>secondary</b> students	Ontario and out-of-province <b>secondary</b> students
<b>Description</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As defined in PPM 164, classes taught at a distance to students when face-to-face learning is interrupted, e.g., a snow day or an emergency.</li> <li>Remote learning may be useful for students that cannot or prefer not to access a physical school environment outside of an emergency context (e.g., medically fragile students)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher-facilitated model of online learning with dedicated time in the student's timetable, where they can take a course (e.g., in the school library or computer lab)</li> <li>The courses are taught by a school board teacher using digital tools, such as the provincially licensed Virtual Learning Environment and online courses and resources developed with ministry funding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A fully independent model of online learning with little teacher support. Accessed by students who prefer to learn asynchronously with flexible hours.</li> <li>Delivered through TVO's Independent Learning Centre (ILC).</li> <li>Students of school boards can attend at no cost if the board provides permission, and the board must pay a fee established by TVO.</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher Employer</b>	School boards	School boards	TVO
<b>Student to Teacher Ratio</b>	Funded at same class size as in-person	Funded at 30:1 for Ontario students (cap of 35)	N/A
<b>Synchronous Learning</b>	<b>Significant</b> , with minimum requirements that vary by grade	<b>Some</b> , with no minimum requirements.	<b>None</b>

# CURRENT LANDSCAPE

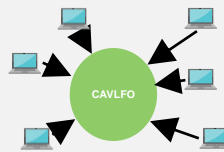
- **About 60,000 students (~10% of secondary students) took online learning** through their local school board in the 2018-19 school year, a number which has grown by about 16% each year since 2011.
- By 2023-24, when the first cohort of students subject to the online learning graduation requirement begins to graduate, the system will need to accommodate up to 250,000 students in online courses annually (~40% of students).
- Demand for synchronous remote learning is also significant due to the pandemic. Approximately 300,000 elementary and 100,000 secondary students have enrolled in remote learning during the 2020-21 school year.

## English School Boards: Individual Board Delivery



- ~57,000 students in 60 Boards (~9% of secondary students)
- Approximately 2,000 teachers
- 3 School Board Consortia offer varying degrees of service and support
- Some English-language school boards are not members of a consortium

## French School Boards: Centralized Delivery



- ~3,000 students in 12 boards (~12% of secondary students)
- 24 seconded teachers
- Operates as a single virtual school called Consortium d'apprentissage virtuel de langue française de l'Ontario (CAVLFO)



## TVO Independent Learning Centre (ILC)

Provides independent learning credits online to about 19,400 students, most of whom are adults



## Inspected Private Schools

Some inspected private schools offer online learning credits towards the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)

# CURRENT ISSUES

In order to support greater student uptake in online learning and support student success, it is clear the system will need to change:

## Choice – inequitable access to online and remote learning

- Many courses are not available online through school boards, and there is limited space in the courses that boards do decide to make available, creating barriers for students. E.g., almost 40% of small schools don't offer Grade 12 Physics.
- Uncertainty around the future availability of remote learning options.

## Quality – uneven quality of online learning offerings

- Limited high quality online course content available centrally for teachers to use in an updated, engaging format that makes the best use of innovative technology, e.g., interactive elements, remote collaboration, gamification.
- Need for professional learning resources and supports for teachers and teacher candidates, including around online learning pedagogy and health & cyber safety.

## Equity – need for support in order to succeed online

- Uneven student supports, particularly for students with special education needs.
- Technological barriers to accessing online learning, particularly around accessibility for students with disabilities and broadband connectivity.

# KEY INPUTS

As the ministry developed a draft plan to address these issues, it considered...

- input from engagements with 55 stakeholder groups in fall/winter 2020 on the topic of online learning, including parent and student groups
- a business plan jointly developed by TVO and TFO (as directed by government in summer 2020) outlining how they could provide centralized administration and support for online learning
- four key guiding principles:



**Student-centred Change** – ensure any changes support improved access to online learning and support student success, including for students with special education needs, newcomers, and others



**Collaboration and Respect for Publicly-funded Education** – leverage to the extent possible existing experience and resources in the French and English Catholic and public systems as well as the ministry's agencies, TVO and TFO.



**Respect for Local Governance** – ensure any change respects the Canadian Constitution including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and preserves a role for trustees to oversee education for their communities



**Respect for Educators** – ensure that education sector collective agreements, including provisions related to online learning, are respected, and ensure school board teachers continue to teach online courses for students in the publicly-funded system.

# OVERVIEW OF PLAN

## Issue

## Plan Under Consideration

1. **Choice** –  
inequitable access  
to online learning

- A. Establish **remote learning** as a permanent part of the elementary and secondary school system.
- B. Require boards to offer **guaranteed access** to a standardized list of secondary online learning courses.
- C. Offer students the choice in **course selection** between independent learning and teacher-supported options.
- D. Implement **central coordination** through TVO and TFO.

2. **Quality** – uneven  
quality of online  
learning offerings

- A. Direct TVO and TFO to develop accessible, high-quality online **course content** to support teachers and student success.
- B. Provide more **professional learning** for teachers and teacher candidates, including around matters of health and cyber safety.

3. **Equity** – need for  
support their school  
in order to succeed  
online

- A. Mandate that students will continue to be able to access **supports** through their local school (e.g. internet connectivity, mental health workers, breakfast programs, academic support, etc.)

4. **Other Related  
Changes**

- A. Implement the online learning **graduation requirement** and opt out.
- B. Establish a **global development** strategy led by TVO and TFO.

# 1.A. CHOICE: REMOTE LEARNING

- In the 2020-21 school year, parents had the option to enroll their child in either an in-person model of learning at a physical school, or in remote learning classes with real-time, synchronous learning support from a school board teacher.
- The government is considering introducing legislation to make this a permanent part of elementary and secondary education in Ontario, including after the COVID-19 pandemic is over.
- If introduced and passed, beginning in September 2021, parents would continue to have the ability to enroll their child in **full-time synchronous remote learning** if they choose going forward. School boards would also be required to provide students with remote learning on snow days and in the event of an emergency that results in a school closure.
- School boards would need to ensure elementary remote learning students meet Daily Physical Activity requirements.
- School boards could continue to operate virtual schools if desired, but no additional administrative funding would be provided.
- If implemented, this change will help ensure students have **continuous access to public education**, even when they cannot attend a physical school.

# 1.B. CHOICE: GUARANTEED ACCESS

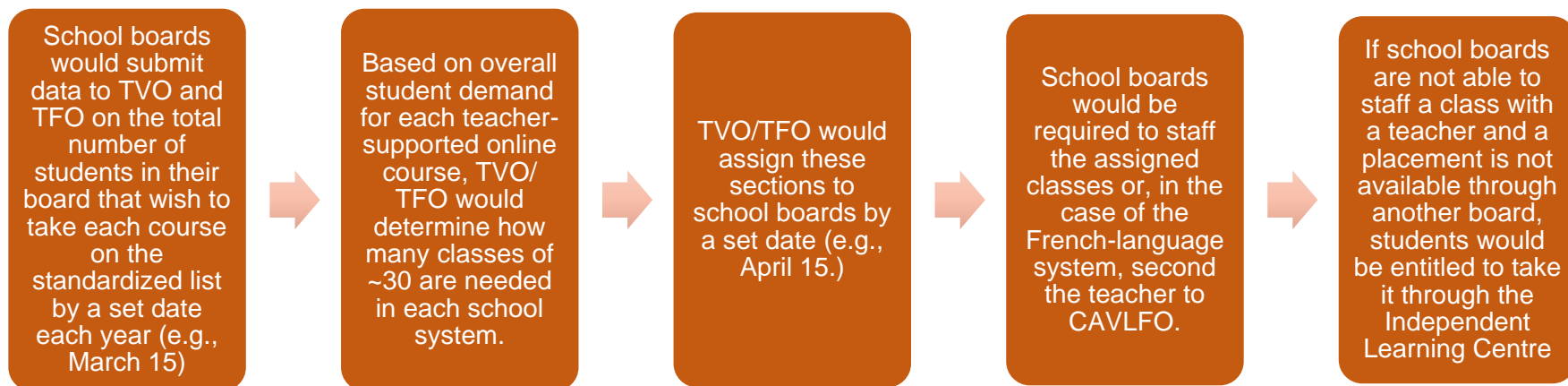
- Ontario is considering a policy in which students will have **guaranteed access** to their choice of any course on a **standardized list of online courses** in annual secondary school course selection processes.
- Beginning in time for course selections for the 2022-23 school year, students would be able to enroll in any course on the list that interests them if they have the necessary prerequisites and meet other criteria to be established in consultation with school boards.
- There would be one standardized list for each school system (English and French public and Catholic) and trustees' associations would be responsible for determining what courses will be included on their respective system's list.
- If implemented, this change would shift school boards from determining *if* they will offer an online learning course, to *when* and *how*, based on student demand.
- It would also help ensure all students have access to a variety of course choices no matter where they live or go to school, addressing barriers many students currently face in taking the courses they want or need to take.

# 1.C. CHOICE: COURSE SELECTION

- To support student awareness of online courses to which they have access, each system's standardized list would be publicly available through a centralized, web-based course catalogue maintained in English by TVO and in French by TFO.
- School boards would be required to offer all online courses on the list to students during annual course selection processes and would be prohibited from offering courses not on the list. Students would not be limited in the number of online courses they can take.
- As they do currently, students would make their course selections supported by their guidance counsellor, special education team, and others.
- For any online course on the list, students would have the option to enroll in:
  - **teacher-supported online learning** taught by a certified school board teacher, including through CAVLFO, which would remain central to the French-language online learning system.
  - **independent learning online courses** delivered through the Independent Learning Centre, which will be operated by TVO for English-language students and by TFO for French-language students. Boards would be required to transfer a fee to TVO/TFO up to a maximum of a full course load.

## 1.D. CHOICE: CENTRAL COORDINATION

- Once selections are made, TVO and TFO would annually work with school boards to centrally coordinate enrolment so that students are able to obtain a placement in their chosen online courses. For teacher-supported courses, the process would be:



- Individual school boards would be able to indicate whether they wish to admit or enroll students from other school systems (e.g., a Catholic board could admit students from a public board if it wishes.) Mixing between systems would not be possible by default.
- TVO and TFO could assist with tracking cross-enrollment of students in other school boards to support financial reconciliation at the end of the school year.
- TVO and TFO would develop technological infrastructure (e.g., a new provincial seat reservation system) to support the process above.

## 2.A. QUALITY: COURSE CONTENT

- The ministry is considering mandating TVO to be responsible for developing online course content aligned with the English-language curriculum, and TFO to be responsible for content aligned with the French-language curriculum going forward.
- The two agencies would develop an expanded and updated library of online courses in each language that would be distributed at no cost to school boards to support teachers in delivering online courses. These courses would also be available for students to preview online through the centralized course catalogue and would be modified by TVO and TFO to support independent learning courses.
- Course content would be fully accessible and make use of cutting-edge technology over time (e.g., adaptive learning, gamification, etc.)
- This content would be distributed to boards at no cost for use in both remote and online learning, and available to preview on the centralized course catalogue.
- Content could be developed collaboratively with third parties (e.g., Le Centre franco, Indigenous providers, others)
- School boards and teachers would be able to modify the content if desired, as well as direct TVO and TFO to distribute modified or newly developed courses if preferred (e.g., Catholic school boards could direct TVO and TFO to distribute board-developed religion courses.)

## 2.B. QUALITY: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

- The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the ability to teach online is critically important for a resilient and future-ready education system. Teachers need to be able to move fluidly between in-person and online learning, with the skills and knowledge to teach effectively using digital tools.
- To support teachers, the government is considering expanding TVO and TFO's mandates to include the establishment of a centralized Centre of Excellence
- This role would entail working with school boards and postsecondary institutions to identify and spread best practices in online learning and make available research and professional learning resources focused on:
  - online learning pedagogy
  - supporting students with special education needs and other learners in online learning
  - modules on key cyber safety issues, such as bullying, privacy, human trafficking and mental health
- In addition, the ministry is considering requiring that initial teacher education programs cover instructional pedagogy in an online environment and continuing to provide ministry-led professional learning on the use of the ministry Virtual Learning Environment.

### 3. EQUITY

- The engagements in fall/winter 2020 highlighted that students need wrap-around academic, technical, special education and mental health supports available through the local school.
- The ministry is considering introducing a requirement that students in online and remote learning should continue to be able to access desired supports through their local physical school (e.g., mental health workers, breakfast programs, academic support, etc.) as well as to take required assessments (e.g. EQAO).
- School boards would be required to ensure that all students have access to a space in their secondary school, such as a library or computer lab, with internet connectivity and learning devices where students can take their online course under the supervision of school staff.
- Boards would be encouraged to consider how best to utilize existing staff in secondary schools such as Student Success Teachers, guidance counsellors, and teacher librarians and library technicians to supervise and support students in online learning classes.

# 4. OTHER RELATED CHANGES

## A. Graduation Requirement

- The ministry is considering releasing a PPM in May 2021 that would require students to complete two credits online in order to earn an OSSD, beginning with the cohort that entered Grade 9 in 2020-21.
- As previously announced, parents would be able to opt students out of the requirement, through a process determined by the local school board (or the student can opt themselves out if at the age of majority.)
- School boards would be required to ensure students are aware of the benefits of online learning and the availability of supports before they opt out. This could be through text (e.g., a mass mail out to parents) or a meeting with board staff.
- Online credits towards an OSSD earned through school boards, ILC, inspected private schools, and First Nation/federally-operated schools would count.
- Remote learning would not generally count towards the two-credit graduation requirement, with one exception. In response to the pandemic, the ministry is proposing to allow students to count up to 1 credit earned in 2020-21 either through:
  - secondary remote learning or
  - the adapted model of partly in-person and partly remote learning

# 4. OTHER RELATED CHANGES

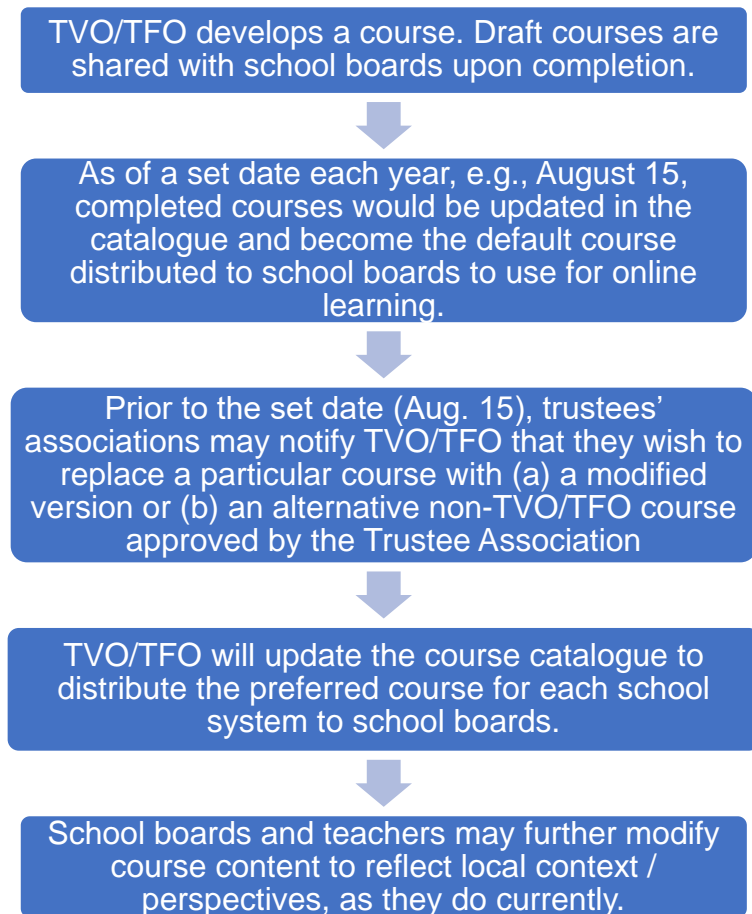
## B. Global Development Strategy

- TVO and TFO will develop a global development strategy to market Ontario online courses and other resources out of province, to build Ontario's global reputation as a world leader in online learning and generate revenue.
- TVO and TFO will become the "one window" through which out-of-province students can enroll in online courses
- School boards would not be permitted to independently market and enroll out-of-province students in their online courses

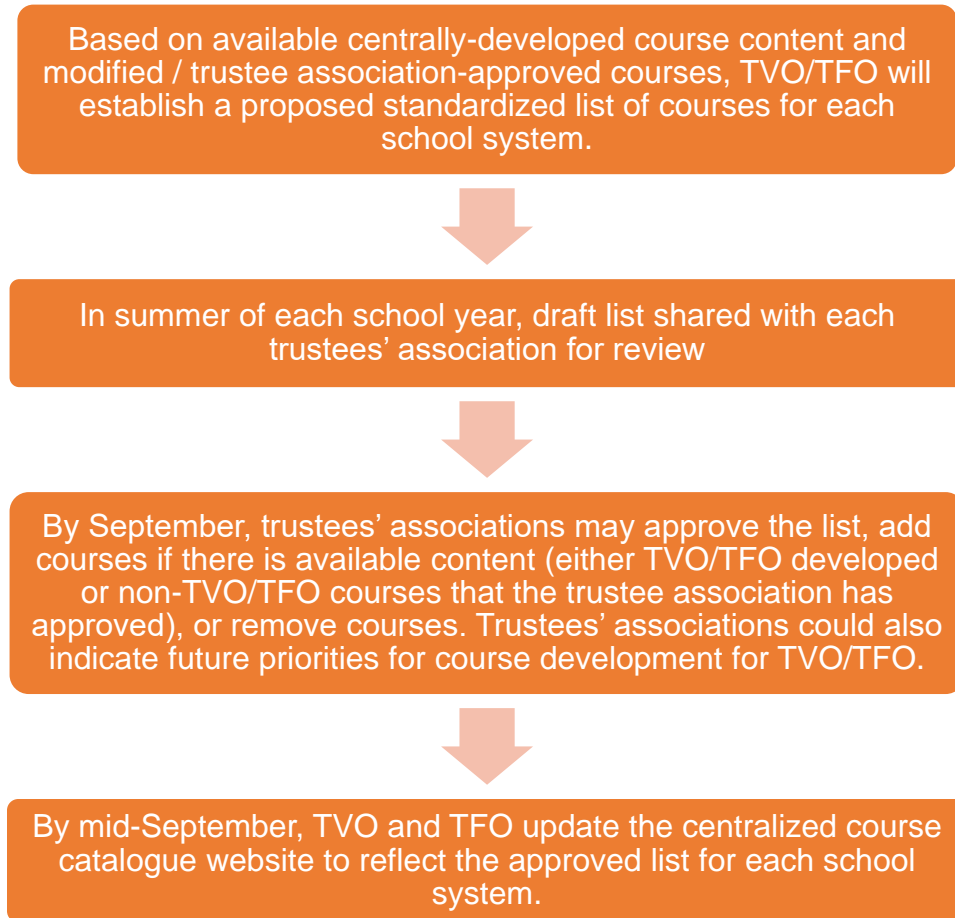
# GOVERNANCE

The charts below outline how local governance would be respected. Specific decision-making bodies and processes would be established in consultation with trustees' associations.

## TVO/TFO Course Content



## Standardized Course List



# LEGISLATION

- In support of the anticipated future state and to set the stage for consultations, the government is considering introducing amendments to the *Education Act* to:
  - Make synchronous remote learning a permanent option in elementary and secondary schools, and required in cases of an emergency requiring school closure and on snow days;
  - Create regulatory authorities to support the plan outlined in this deck, including authorities to:
    - Prescribe the roles and responsibilities of school boards, school authorities, and other entities to be prescribed in regulation (e.g., TVO, TFO, trustees' associations, CAVLFO, consortia) in the delivery and coordination of online and remote learning
    - Establish a centralized list of online learning courses for each school system, to support equitable choice in online learning opportunities no matter where a student lives or goes to school
    - Establish data-sharing processes that enable an effective online learning system, while preserving privacy for students
    - Prescribe the use of technology infrastructure, such as software, information systems and/or technology-based instructional tools and resources, to support a consistent student experience and ensure effective data sharing processes
- To ensure teachers are well-prepared to teach online going forward, the ministry would propose regulatory changes under the Ontario College of Teachers Act to enable the College to require that initial teacher education programs cover instructional pedagogy in an online environment.

# POTENTIAL TIMELINES & NEXT STEPS

By May  
2021

Spring legislation on online learning and remote learning introduced

Implement online learning graduation requirement.

Engagement with school boards on governance and data sharing processes and protocols.

By Sept.  
2021

Guaranteed access to remote learning for elementary and secondary.

New profile for teacher-led online learning, expanded course selection and higher quality course offerings.

Mandates of TVO and TFO legally expanded and French ILC transferred to TFO.

New courses developed.

By Dec.  
2021

New online course catalogue launched to make it easier for students to find out about online offerings.

Phase 1 provincial student reservation system launched to support coordinated access to online learning.

Feb  
2022

In time for the 2022/23 school year course selections, students have access to online courses listed in the centralized course catalogue and the option to take them through the ILC (independent learning) or a school board (synchronous learning), setting the stage for continued implementation of standardization.

# USER JOURNEYS



Josephine



Matt



Nicole

Desired Learning Experience	<i><b>Synchronous Remote Learning</b></i>	<i><b>Teacher-Supported Online Learning</b></i>	<i><b>Fully Independent Online Learning</b></i>
<b>Current</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Josephine is a medically-fragile Grade 7 student that wants to attend public school and needs significant engagement with a teacher to learn effectively.</li> <li>She has flourished in her remote learning classes during the COVID-19 pandemic, where she receives synchronous learning with her teachers and peers.</li> <li>She is afraid she will not be able to continue to access this learning model when the pandemic ends.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Matt is a student in an English-language public board in Northern Ontario who wants to take Gr. 12 Chemistry.</li> <li>It isn't offered in his school in-person this year, so he decides to take it online – but the online courses offered by his school board are limited.</li> <li>His guidance counsellor puts Matt on a waitlist for another school board's online offering, but unfortunately, no space becomes available, and he cannot take the course.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nicole is an academically-focused French-language student who wants to accelerate her progress through secondary school.</li> <li>She wants to take an ILC course, but her school board will not support this and encourages her to wait until her board offers it in the future.</li> <li>She browses the catalogue and notes that there are limited French-language offerings and that the courses are translations that do not align with the French curriculum.</li> </ul>
<b>Proposed (by 2022-23)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Josephine's board is required to offer full-time remote learning as an option for all students that prefer to attend school remotely.</li> <li>Due to her health risks, Josephine and her parents enroll her in full time remote learning.</li> <li>Snow days have become remote learning days for all students in her board, reducing learning disruption.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Matt can take any online course listed on the central course catalogue for the English public system.</li> <li>Through a process facilitated by TVO, he is provided with a placement at another English public school board, where a teacher delivers the course using high quality TVO content.</li> <li>He accesses the course in his school library through a study hall model.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TFO has become responsible for French-language learning through the ILC and courses align with the French curriculum.</li> <li>Nicole can access any course offered through the ILC and her school board cannot prevent her enrolment if she has the prerequisites, etc. and the board must transfer the fee to TFO.</li> </ul>

# QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

Please contact the ministry at [SPTB@ontario.ca](mailto:SPTB@ontario.ca) to make a written submission or to request an additional meeting to discuss further.

The deadline for written submissions is **March 29, 2021**.