

MEDIA RELEASE

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FORD GOVERNMENT TRYING TO HIDE SIGNIFICANT CUTS TO EDUCATION FUNDING

TORONTO, ON — The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) calls out the Ford government for making cuts to core education funding at a time when students need more support, not less.

“Once again, I am disappointed to see that the Ford government’s funding for the 2024-2025 school year will not keep up with the rising costs that school boards are facing,” said OSSTF/FEESO President Karen Littlewood. “Student needs are increasing and becoming more complex, and we are in the midst of an historic teacher and education worker recruitment and retention crisis. Despite all this, the Ford government has failed, yet again, to provide the funding that students need. Educators are fed up with being expected to keep doing more with less.”

The Ford government continues to make misleading claims about supposed “historic” amounts of funding in public education. However, when accounting for inflation and increases in enrollment, over \$2 billion is missing from core education funding for the 2024-2025 school year when compared to the 2017-2018 school year. Funding per pupil has also failed to keep up with inflation as the Ford government has cut effective funding per student by almost 10 per cent since 2018.

“I would like to be able to say to students and staff that public education will be properly funded this year. Sadly, that’s not the case. It’s more of the same from this government,” added Littlewood. “For example, this government has repeatedly claimed that they are increasing access to mental health services for students. In reality, Ontario schools are losing qualified mental health professionals to the private sector because of this government’s deliberate shortchanging of education.”

The province’s underfunding of public education has led to worsening working and learning conditions in Ontario schools, which has fueled an unprecedented staffing crisis for teachers and education workers. This has had a huge impact on students’ access to mental health services. High numbers of psychologists, social workers, and other mental health professionals are leaving education because they can find higher wages and better working conditions elsewhere. Wait times continue to grow for students across the province who need access to vital mental health supports.

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“The Ford government can make all the distracting announcements they want about cell phones or vaping but without investing in the qualified, caring professionals that students need in schools and classrooms, student mental health needs will continue to go unaddressed,” concluded Littlewood. “More and more families are forced to turn to private services, if they can even afford it. For families that can’t afford private mental health services, their children simply go without those supports that should be guaranteed in schools. There is nothing historic or commendable about repeatedly failing to meet student needs.”

OSSTF/FEESO will continue to analyze the core education funding information released last week and will share information with members and the public on funding for the upcoming school year.

OSSTF/FEESO, founded in 1919, has over 60,000 members across Ontario. They include public high school teachers, occasional teachers, educational assistants, continuing education teachers and instructors, early childhood educators, psychologists, secretaries, speech-language pathologists, social workers, plant support personnel, university support staff, and many others in education.

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