



## **OSSTF/FEESO's Submission to Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs**

The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs in preparation for the 2019-2020 Ontario Budget. OSSTF/FEESO is a trade union that represents 60,000 members in over 150 Bargaining Units across the Province of Ontario ranging from Junior Kindergarten to University. Our members 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 Ontario's education system. Our presentation will focus on K-12 Public Education and University Funding in Ontario.

### **Ontario's K – 12 Public Education System**

As a major stakeholder, OSSTF/FEESO believes in an accountable, comprehensive, inclusive, and equitable education system. The current funding model does not adequately meet the needs of all students due to either outdated and nonsensical benchmarks, or insufficient accountability to ensure that funds are spent for their intended purpose.

OSSTF/FEESO has made submissions to the Planning for Prosperity consultation as well as the Ministry of Education GSN consultation, where we have offered our input on funding efficiencies for the K-12 education sector and the Post Sec sector. Our goals have been clear: efficiencies found are funds available to reinvest into the system, and not to become cuts to the system.

The current funding formula was implemented by the Harris Government in 1997. It was designed to remove funds from Ontario's education system in order to make good on the Conservative campaign promises of tax cuts and reduced spending. The formula was created as a cookie cutter model based upon median spending of all school boards in Ontario, despite the fact that schools and programs were different across the province. The funding formula created benchmarks as funding generators that ignored the actual programming that existed at the time, and instead focused on the basics of education. That decision created chaos for school boards as the funding was substantially reduced.

For four years after the roll out of the funding formula, school boards were struggling. Student outcomes were declining. Morale of teachers and education workers was low. In 2002, due to the dismal state of the flawed education funding model, the Harris Government appointed Mordechai Rozanski to lead the Education Equality Task Force. The Task Force mandate was to review the province's student focused funding formula and to make recommendations on ways to improve equity, fairness, certainty, and stability in the funding of Ontario's students and schools. The report recommended an immediate \$1.7 billion funding increase and identified a \$5.6 billion backlog in maintenance for schools. Subsequent to that report, the Conservative government made slight changes to the funding formula, but did not implement the recommendations of Rozanski. From 2003 to 2017, the Liberal provincial government added funding in successive budget years to attempt to address the issues with the funding model, but these were merely band-aid fixes and not the fundamental changes recommended by Rozanski in 2003.

There have been several independent reports and studies done that analyze the state of the current funding formula over the years by various groups. The results of these studies consistently show that the funding allocated is either insufficient due to poor benchmarks, or the funding fails to address the very purpose for which it was intended. This inadequacy has resulted in school boards having to use funding from other areas to address needs elsewhere, a fact to which the Auditor General in her report in the spring of 2018 had commented.

Teachers, education workers, parents and students have been dealing with the fall-out of this flawed funding formula since 1997. These effects include:

- Insufficient support for students with high needs
- Increased violence
- Closed schools
- Closed classrooms/programs
- Fewer education worker supports for students
- Insufficient text books and other learning materials
- Larger class sizes
- More schools in disrepair, resulting in an increasing number of unsafe schools

### **School Foundation Grant and School Buildings**

The School Foundation Grant (SFG) must be modified to address the minimum staffing requirements of each school. Currently, the SFG only provides funding for administration and minimal clerical staff. Each school also requires a custodian, a minimum complement of teachers and support staff, a school librarian, and guidance teachers. Currently, only administrators and office clerical personnel are generated through the Pupil Foundation Grant, which does not guarantee a minimum complement in a school.

Schools are community hubs. Closing schools due to the absurd requirements of a rigid formula that relies on enrollment can kill a community that thrives around its hub. A school as a community hub should be a compulsory part of the community. Funding needs to be increased in order to ensure that a healthy school building remains a part of the community.

### **Local School Board Priority Funding**

Prior to 1997 and the imposition of the funding formula, Ontario school boards had the ability to tax locally through municipal levies. Ontario's education system relied heavily on local school boards as sources of best practices, and these were a result of locally funded programs. The ability of a school board to use local funding to create innovative programs essentially stopped when the Harris government took control of education funding. In 2001, the government realized the omission and included a Local Priorities Amount of \$200 per ADE in the GSNs that allowed school boards to innovate. Rozanski recommended setting the amount at a fixed percentage of Foundation Grant funding, which was not implemented. In 2006, the Liberal government eliminated the Local Priorities Amount altogether, a cut of \$400 million.

### **Adult Non-Credit Continuing Education Funding**

In school boards that offer LINC, LBS, Adult ESL, and other non-credit programs for adults, the funding is provided by different ministries: Citizenship and Immigration, Training, Colleges and

Universities, as well as Federal LINC funding. These streams of funding do not provide for appropriate administration and preparation time that Adult Education Instructors need to ensure the program requirements are met. Portfolio Based Learning Assessment (PBLA) methodologies have been adopted by school boards as the preferred method of assessment, but the significant increase in workload and unpaid time required to adequately operationalize the program is non-existent, creating tremendous pressure on Adult Education Instructors. The GSN funding for Adult Non-Credit Instruction must be increased to address these pressures and ensure instructors receive appropriate preparation time and compensation to fulfil their duties and ensure a successful program.

### **Adult for Credit Day School**

Adult Day School teachers teach the same curriculum as regular day school teachers to adults and students 21 years old. However, Adult Day School teachers have little to no preparation time, no class size protection, and fewer teaching materials as relative to their regular day school counterparts. Although some adult day school teachers have finally reached parity in salary with regular day school teachers, this parity is not based on equivalent workload. Adult day school students do not have the same services available to them such as guidance and special education assistance. The primary reason for this is that the funding grant for these programs (Continuing Education and Other Programs Grant) uses a per ADE benchmark well below that of regular day school students.

### **Violent Incidents, High Needs Students and DSENA Funding**

For several years, a significant number of OSSTF/FEESO members have reported incidents involving biting, punching, kicking, spitting, and other forms of assault by students. These members, primarily Educational Assistants but also teachers, work with high needs students in Special Education classrooms. This issue is quickly reaching a crisis.

The number of students with high needs requiring different programming is increasing year after year, and this problem will only get worse. Appropriate funding must be provided to schools to ensure the adequate provision of programming, staffing, and resources for students with highly individualized needs.

Compounding this phenomenon is the implementation of a redesigned Special Education funding model that predicts the number of high needs students instead of providing funding on an incremental basis according to the enrollment of identified high needs students. In many school boards, the redistributive effect of the DSENA funding for high needs students – leaving some school boards with less Special Education funding than before – has exacerbated the incidents of violent assaults against teachers and educational assistants.

Increased funding must be provided to school boards to protect those who work with high needs students. More education assistants, specialists and support workers must be hired to support high needs students and reduce the incidents of educational worker injury.

School boards are being forced to redesign the jobs of High Needs Support Staff to only support the highest need students. Educational Assistants are being redeployed from supporting a broad range of High Needs students to ensuring the safety of the highest needs students as well as the other students and employees in the classroom with them. Individual student support

has now become a thing of the past. The inadequate number of support staff personnel impacts students with high needs, students with learning disabilities, and other vulnerable students. This places a greater stress on teachers and other staff to ensure those students success.

Inclusive Schools mean inclusive funding. Funding must flow for students that reflect their needs, not what a formula dictates. Special Education is woefully underfunded, abandoning the needs of students and placing staff and students at risk.

### **Learning Opportunities and Language Grants**

Both the Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG) and the Language Grant are compensatory grants designed to address students from varying socioeconomic backgrounds and at-risk students. However, there is no evidence nor reporting that the actual LOG funding is being used for the support of those students. The same is true for the Language Grant. This represents \$1.4 billion in grants that are poorly accounted for.

### **Teacher Qualifications and Experience (Q & E) Grant**

The Q & E grant was originally designed to correct the amount spent on teacher salaries based upon the placement of teachers on each board's salary grid. The Pupil Foundation Grant allots a benchmark amount per teacher, regardless of the teacher's position on the pay grid. The Q & E funding is based upon an eleven-step grid, but there are many teacher salary grids that go beyond eleven steps. Funding through the Q & E for these boards is, therefore, cut off and these school boards must find the difference elsewhere. Q & E funding must be based upon an individual school board's teacher's salary grid instead of a common grid.

### **Implementation of the Calls to Action**

Many of the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission involve changes in education that are more inclusive of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. Education will play a significant role in the reconciliation journey. The Ministry of Education began a number of consultations, curriculum revisions and initiatives that addressed the Calls to Action. These involved all stakeholders, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, as well as educators, youth and other organizations. Implementation of the Calls to Action in all sectors of government, including the Ministry of Education, must continue and see enhancements if reconciliation is to occur between Ontario and Indigenous peoples.

OSSTF is calling on the government to:

1. Fully implement the recommendations of the Rozanski Report.
2. Immediately review and redesign the funding model that meets the needs of students and education workers to ensure that Ontario remains one of the top jurisdictions in the world for education.
3. Rework the Student Foundation Grant to ensure that:
  - a. Each school is funded for a minimum complement of custodians, teacher-librarians, guidance teachers, teachers and education support staff,
  - b. Community schools become community hubs and are not closed.
4. Reintroduce a Local Priorities Amount as a percentage of Pupil Foundation Grant funding to allow school boards to address local needs.

5. Ensure the funding to school boards from all sources for non-credit continuing education is sufficient to provide teachers the adequate tools and time to deliver a successful program.
6. Increase funding to the Continuing Education and Other Programs Grant through a revised ADE amount to provide parity for adult day school teachers and regular day school teachers.
7. Abandon the DSENA funding model in favour of a funding model that reflects the individual requirements of high needs students to ensure better student outcomes and a safe school environment.
8. Adjust the Teacher Qualifications and Experience Grant so that school boards are appropriately funded to meet salary obligations.

## **Post-Secondary Sector**

### **Dedicated Funding to those who Support Academic Staff**

Any funding model that applies to the university sector must include dedicated funding directed to those who support students in the university with stable and sustained employment. While the academic achievement of students is an important facet of a University education, it is equally important that students be supported by professional non-academic staff. Currently, there is no mechanism to identify the role of such non-academic staff in the university funding model. By incorporating such a metric into the funding model, it would recognize the importance of the function of the non-academic staff and codify those jobs are continuous, and that there must be adequate funding to put an end to the disturbing trend of part-time or contract work in university employment. The current model for research grants fails to recognize the important role of non-academic staff. In many circumstances, research grants provide crucial funds to academic research but, does not sufficiently fund the non-academic support that is critical with that research, resulting in that support being a limited contract position.

### **Tuition cannot be the major source for funding Universities in Ontario**

As has been noted by OCUFA, tuition fee income in Ontario is now the major source of funding for universities with 51% of operating revenue coming from the fees charged to students for admission. OSSTF/FEESO believes that Ontario's university system must remain publically funded and not subsidized by those who attend. As such, OSSTF/FEESO joins other like-minded organizations in the call to increase public funding to universities and relieve the crushing financial burden on students. This will ensure that every person in Ontario has access to a post-secondary education, regardless of financial status.

### **Accountable and Transparent funding ensures success**

Currently under the Ministry of Education, public school boards must account for the allocation of public money through a series of reports. These Education Funding Information System (EFIS) reports are designed to provide both accountability and transparency to the public. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education provides yearly consultations by the stakeholder groups prior to releasing the Grants for Student Needs. The experience of OSSTF/FEESO in this these consultations is that it is an essential opportunity to provide input and gain understanding of the funding changes from year to year. It also ensures that funding for K – 12 remains vibrant and current. The Government of Ontario must adopt this practice in respect of university funding in

Ontario to empower local partners and to ensure resources are appropriately directed to students on university campuses.

OSSTF/FEESO is calling on the government to:

1. Create and fund a mechanism that recognizes non-academic staff form an integral part of the university so that universities can employ and pay for appropriate staff;
2. Reduce the reliance on tuition fees for post-secondary education by providing appropriate funding thus allowing all Ontarians to attend a college or university regardless of economic status;
3. Compel universities to report publically to the provincial government their allocations from public and private funds to appropriate expenditures and promote transparency;
4. Consult with stakeholders on a yearly basis regarding funding issues and changes to funding.