

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Education Union Gives Ford's Budget a Failing Grade**

*OSSTF/FEESO response to 2023 Provincial Budget*

TORONTO, ON — In response to the 2023 provincial budget release, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) is calling attention to the Ford government's continued shortchanging of public education.

"Today's budget follows years of the Ford government's intentional underfunding and underspending in education," said OSSTF/FEESO President Karen Littlewood. "Despite their highly misleading announcements about historic education spending, this government is shortchanging public education and neglecting to invest in students and Ontario's future. This lack of commitment to education funding demonstrates a real deficit in planning by this government.

The increase in education sector funding for this year is \$2.3 billion but the entire increase comes from the billions that the federal government has given Ontario for child care.

"There is no justification for the continued shortchanging of education given that the Financial Accountability Office predicts a surplus. Education funding continues to fall far short of student needs and it doesn't need to be this way," President Littlewood commented.

"We will be digging deeper into this budget over the coming days but at this point, it's crystal clear that this government will continue to sacrifice the high quality education system that Ontarians expect and deserve in order to advance their own corporate agenda," added President Littlewood.

"Education is one of our best investments, creating \$1.30 in positive economic benefits for every \$1 invested as well as lowering costs across social services. A fact that this government seems to repeatedly ignore," Littlewood notes.

"Right now, other provinces are investing more in education. Alberta, for example, is looking to hire thousands more teachers and education workers, potentially attracting talent away from Ontario, especially given how Ford has suppressed public sector workers' wages under Bill 124."

"The whole economy is being affected by staffing shortages right now, and the education sector is no different," President Littlewood pointed out. "More and more teachers, and certainly education workers, are opting to find work in other sectors. The Minister has discussed the need to train and recruit more educators and to increase more education workers, but this government

has been suppressing their wages for years. They continue to demonstrate a lack of commitment to this largely female workforce. Bill 124 certainly did nothing to help address the gender pay gap.”

“Ontario has had a public education system that has been recognized as one of the best in the world. But it’s under threat by this government’s inadequate funding. The situation will only get worse as this government’s planned spending remains far below the funding levels that are needed to maintain our world-class public schools, colleges, and universities. It’s time to stop shortchanging students and start investing in our future,” concluded Littlewood.

*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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