

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Ford Government Continues to Underfund Public Education and Shortchange Students in Ontario**

### ***OSSTF/FEESO response to FAO Expenditure Monitor 2022-23 Q3 Report***

TORONTO, ON — In response to the Financial Accountability Office (FAO)'s Expenditure Monitor 2022-23, Q3 Report, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) is calling attention to the Ford government's ongoing pattern of shortchanging Ontario's students through its continual underfunding and underspending in public education.

"For years, we have seen FAO Reports that conclusively demonstrate how the Ford government is underspending across all sectors, including public education", said OSSTF/FEESO President Karen Littlewood. "It's alarming that this government continues to shortchange students in Ontario and their families."

The FAO Expenditure Monitor for 2022-23, Q3, indicates that this provincial government is underspending in all sectors, including underspending in health by \$1.25 billion, in education by \$844 million, and in post-secondary education by \$175 million.

The FAO projects that through 2027-2028, there will be a \$6 billion shortfall in education funding and a \$2.7 billion shortfall in post-secondary education, clearly indicating that the Ford government plans to continue to underfund public education by the billions.

While the Ford government claims it makes "historic" investments in education, the reality, as documented in the FAO reports, is that this government underfunds education by billions and then deliberately underspends even against its own underfunded budgets. The Ford government cannot say these choices are justified by fiscal needs, as just last fall, the province reported a \$2.1 billion budget surplus and, yet, underspending in all sectors has continued.

In education, the underfunding and underspending come at a time when the school repair backlog has reached over \$16.8 billion and students and staff are increasingly reporting violence in schools and a severe lack of access to mental health supports, two issues that have been exacerbated by staffing shortages linked to years of suppressed wages. The billions of dollars that the Ford government is choosing to withhold from Ontario's schools and students could be used to address these severe and urgent issues.

In post-secondary education, students continue to grapple with cuts to the province's student financial assistance program, made by the Ford government in 2019, resulting in less funding and support for students.

"The ongoing, intentional underfunding and underspending in the education sector jeopardizes student outcomes and negatively impacts Ontario's future. This disturbing pattern will only worsen as enrollment increases and planned spending remains many billions below what is actually needed for Ontario's public schools and universities. It's time to stop shortchanging students and invest in our future," concluded President 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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