

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Ombudsman Report Reveals Mismanaged Education Payments While Schools Remain Underfunded**

**TORONTO, ON** — The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) is raising serious concerns following a recently released Ombudsman report, which found that provincial education payments intended to support students and families were mismanaged, with funds sent to the wrong individuals and many eligible families left without support.

The report, *Catching Up on Fairness*, details how five direct payment programs between 2020 and 2023 were implemented without adequate safeguards, allowing payments to be claimed by individuals who were not responsible for the children. As a result, some parents and guardians were denied funding because someone else had already applied, often without verification of eligibility.

While over \$2 billion was distributed through these programs, the Ombudsman found that repeated design flaws, insufficient planning, and a lack of accountability led to significant inequities in how funds were delivered.

"The Ombudsman's findings are deeply troubling," said Martha Hradowy, President of OSSTF/FEESO. "At a time when students and families needed support the most, this government failed to ensure that critical funding actually reached the students and families it was intended to help. Instead, we see a pattern from this government of rushed decisions, weak oversight, and a lack of accountability."

OSSTF/FEESO emphasized that the findings highlight broader, ongoing concerns about how education dollars are managed in Ontario. For years, the Federation has raised alarms about chronic underfunding in public education, leaving schools without the resources they need to support student learning, mental health, and well-being.

"It is unacceptable that while classrooms are underfunded and students are going without essential supports, millions of dollars are being mishandled or misdirected," Hradowy added. "This is not just about administrative failure — it is about priorities."

The Federation is calling on the provincial government to take immediate steps to ensure that education funding is transparent, accountable, and directed where it matters most — into classrooms, schools and student supports.

“This government should focus on reinvesting in Ontario’s public education system to address years of underfunding and ensure students receive the supports they need to succeed, rather than Band-Aid solutions to larger underfunding issues”, said President Hradowy.

OSSTF/FEESO remains committed to working with all partners to ensure that public education funding is used effectively, equitably, and in the best interests of students and families across Ontario.

*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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Contact:       Media Inquiries  
Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation  
[Media@osstf.ca](mailto:Media@osstf.ca)  
647-354-4137