

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Teachers and education workers don't need credit cards, they need properly funded schools**

TORONTO, ON — The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) is seriously concerned about the Ford government's announcement that teachers will be provided with purchasing cards to buy classroom supplies, an admission that this government's chronic underfunding has left classrooms without the basic supplies students need.

"Any relief for teachers who are currently spending their own money on classroom supplies is welcome," said Martha Hradowy, President of OSSTF/FEESO. "But teachers should not be in the position of having to buy paper towels, tissues, pencils, and other basic supplies for their classrooms in the first place. It's like handing a firefighter a cheque and telling them to buy a hose before they show up to put out a fire. The real solution is properly funding schools, so the resources students and educators need are already there."

Under the proposed announcement today, the province will give elementary school homeroom teachers a \$750 supply card that gives them to access a provincial website where they can order classroom supplies such as arts and crafts supplies, stationery and paper products, posters and classroom decor, paper towels, and tissues. The announcement excludes secondary school teachers in grades nine to twelve.

President Hradowy added that "teachers across Ontario, from kindergarten to grade 12, have long raised concerns about having to spend their own money to support students and fill gaps created by chronic underfunding. The Ford government has cut \$6.3 billion from the education budget since 2018. Rather than addressing the root causes of these shortages, today's announcement still places the burden on teachers to go out and purchase supplies themselves."

Hradowy also noted that the proposal appears to exclude secondary school teachers and education workers who are among the lowest paid staff in schools and often quietly spend their own money to support students and classrooms.

"Our members are clear about what students need," said Hradowy. "Smaller class sizes, more education workers in classrooms, stronger special education supports, mental health resources, and stable funding so schools have the resources students need to receive a high-quality education."

The announcement also comes as hundreds of teachers at the Peel District School Board have

recently been declared surplus, raising concerns about reduced supports for students. The situation in Peel highlights the real challenges facing schools across Ontario as the government prepares to make staffing announcements across the province this spring.

“In Peel, and likely more boards to come, hundreds of teachers have been declared surplus and could lose their jobs,” said Hradowy. “There may soon be fewer teachers in classrooms to support students, and yet the government is announcing supply cards. That shows just how disconnected this announcement is from reality and the challenges facing our schools.”

OSSTF/FEESO is calling on the government to address the real challenges facing Ontario’s public schools by:

- Writing the regulation to allow OSSTF/FEESO and other education unions to get to the bargaining table without delay.
- Addressing staffing shortages, including educational assistants, early childhood educators, and mental health professionals
- Reducing class sizes
- Ensuring schools have the supports students need to succeed

“Ontario students deserve schools that are fully resourced and properly funded,” concluded Hradowy. “Investing in classrooms, staff, and student supports is what will make a real difference.”

*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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