

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release: Wednesday, May 13, 2026

Students with Special Education Needs require real investment in Supports and Staffing

TORONTO, ON — The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) is calling on the Ford government to immediately increase funding and staffing for students with special education needs, following the Auditor General of Ontario's 2026 performance audit on special education.

"This report confirms what educators and families live every day: students with special education needs are not getting the consistent supports they are entitled to," said OSSTF/FEESO President Martha Hradowy. "In too many schools, staffing shortages and insufficient resources mean students lose learning time, and families are left to fill the gaps."

For years, OSSTF/FEESO members have been raising the alarm that the growing needs of students are not being matched with the staffing, resources, and supports required in schools. Educational assistants, special education teachers, psychologists, social workers, child and youth workers, and the full-service educational team are stretched beyond capacity.

When students are waiting for assessments, facing reduced schedules, or unable to access the supports they need, that is a failure of political priorities—not of frontline staff who continue to do everything possible for students each day.

"Special education is not an 'extra.' It is a fundamental part of a strong and inclusive public education system," said OSSTF/FEESO President Martha Hradowy. "Every student deserves meaningful supports, safe classrooms, and the opportunity to succeed."

OSSTF/FEESO is calling on the Ford government to act on the concerns identified by the Auditor General through:

- Increased and stable special education funding
- More frontline staffing in schools
- Reduced assessment wait times
- Greater access to mental health and professional supports
- Meaningful consultation with educators and education workers

Students with special education needs cannot continue to wait while schools struggle under increasing pressures and chronic underfunding.

“Inclusion only works when it is properly resourced,” continued Hradowy. “Students cannot learn and educators cannot meet complex needs when key supports are missing day after day. The government must fund special education at the level required to ensure school boards can hire and retain the staff students rely on.”

OSSTF/FEEO urges the government to act on the Auditor General’s findings with real investments in special education staffing, services, and training, as rising student needs and board costs continue to outpace government funding. Inadequate funding for special education supports has ripple effects throughout the education system and impacts all students in the classroom environment.

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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