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Ford Government Threatens Student Success and Well-Being with Underfunded Education Budget

TORONTO, ON — Ahead of the release of the 2022 provincial budget, the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO), Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), and Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) are calling attention to the Ford government's inadequate investment in publicly funded education and demanding real action to support students.

"The early release of the 2022-23 Grants for Student Needs, which form the core element of school funding, reveal that the Ford government intends to fail students, educators, and all Ontarians with yet another inadequate and underfunded education budget," says AEFO présidente Anne Vinet-Roy. "Students need an education budget that prioritizes their mental health, well-being, and academic success, and delivers a robust and well-funded learning recovery plan."

"The Ford government calls its education plan a 'historic investment,' but it is nothing more than a shell game—a thinly veiled deception that merely puts back some of the previous cuts, fails to address inflation, and prioritizes electioneering at the expense of student success," says ETFO President Karen Brown. "The Ford government's true intent, to cut \$12.3 billion from schools over the next nine years, as projected by the Financial Accountability Office, will have a devastating impact on students and publicly funded education."

"The Ford government's cuts and refusal to address COVID-19, which led to the longest in-class learning disruption in North America, have further widened inequities, leaving our most vulnerable behind," says OECTA President Barb Dobrowolski. "Instead of pursuing privatization and mandatory e-learning schemes, which place student success at risk, the Ford government should be using the opportunity provided by the budget to work collaboratively with educators, families, and communities to ensure the highest quality of learning for all students."

Ontario's unions representing teachers and education workers call on the Ford government to immediately:

- end the reckless cuts and the plan to cut \$12.3 billion from education over the next nine years;
- support a robust, multi-year learning recovery plan, including a commitment to smaller class sizes, so that all students get the focused, individual attention from teachers and education workers that they deserve;
- expand school-based mental health resources, supports, and services, to achieve equitable outcomes and meet the diverse needs of students and educators, including those needed for successful secondary curriculum de-streaming; and
- address the \$17 billion repair backlog and outstanding safety concerns in schools, such as crumbling infrastructure and poor ventilation.

"Ontario's publicly funded schools need action now, with real investment and a real learning recovery plan, not another campaign-style budget announcement that purposely uses misleading numbers to hide this government's repeated failures," says OSSTF/FEESO President Karen Littlewood. "To realize a just and equitable recovery from COVID-19, the Ford government must make the needed investments immediately to benefit all students now and in the future."

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