

MEDIA RELEASE

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OSSTF/FEESO Outlines Priorities for Ontario Budget

Shortchanging education hurts Ontario

TORONTO, ON – The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) is calling on the government to make the necessary investment in public education in its upcoming budget. "For the past several years this government has shortchanged students, parents, teachers, and education workers by stealth," said OSSTF/FEESO Vice-President, Martha Hradowy.

"It is time for this government to make the necessary investments in public education that will ensure student success. We cannot allow Ontario to fall behind," added Vice-President Hradowy. A recent report from the Financial Accountability Office (FAO) indicated the government shortchanged the education system by more than \$840 million over the past three quarters.

"This comes 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," said Hradowy. "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."

"We call on the Ford government to make investing in public education a priority in this budget," stated Hradowy. "Independent studies have shown that investing in public education generates \$1.30 in economic activity for every \$1.00 spent. Public education can generate social benefits, such as a healthier population, a higher standard of living, and a reduction in crime. That lessens demand for Ontario's social assistance, public health care, and criminal justice services."

"Ontario is also facing stiff competition from other jurisdictions for teachers and education workers," Hradowy pointed out. "Provinces such as Alberta are making efforts to increase staffing in their public education system, with potential to attract teachers and education workers from Ontario. At the same time, we have noticed an increase in the number of Faculty of Education graduates choosing not to work in education. All of this adds up to a crisis that can be averted through proper investments in public education."

"The ongoing, intentional underfunding and underspending in the education sector jeopardizes student outcomes and negatively impacts on 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 start investing in our future," concluded Hradowy.

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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