

MEDIA RELEASE

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Strong Public Education is Ontario's Best Economic Strategy

OSSTF/FEESO Response to Ford government's Speech from the Throne

Toronto, ON – In response to today's Speech from the Throne, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) is calling on the provincial government to strengthen its economic strategy by investing in one of the province's greatest economic assets: its students.

"We heard a lot about protecting Ontario jobs and finding new trading partners, but little about meeting the needs of Ontario students," said Karen Littlewood, President of OSSTF/FEESO. "A strong public education system is one of the most powerful tools we have to ensure long-term economic resilience and innovation."

While the Premier focused his throne speech on U.S. tariffs and economic defense, years of underfunding in public education could weaken Ontario's ability to compete on a global stage in the future. The best way we can unleash Ontario's full economic potential is by investing in publicly funded education today—from pre-kindergarten through to post-secondary.

"Education is the great equalizer. It helps every student—no matter where they live or what they're facing—develop the skills, confidence, and creativity our province needs," added Littlewood. "Despite the government's continued claims of historic investments, the province has actually cut education funding by \$1,500 per student since 2018—and students are feeling the impact. It's time we see education not just as a cost, but as an investment in our shared future. It prepares students for the jobs of tomorrow and builds communities that are resilient, innovative, and inclusive."

Over the past seven years, the problems facing Ontario's education system have only deepened due to chronic underfunding by the province. This underfunding has created conditions where nearly every school board in Ontario is facing a staffing crisis, growing school repair backlogs, longer wait times for vital student supports, and a rise in school violence. Teachers and education workers are being asked to do more with less, stretching an already strained system. Now is the time to confront these issues head-on and ensure a brighter future for all of Ontario.

"When students have a stable, safe place to learn, our communities, economy, and province will thrive," concluded Littlewood. "We welcome the government's focus on investing in resources for Ontario's classrooms and preparing students for the jobs of tomorrow. OSSTF/FEESO is optimistic about having a productive relationship with the new Minister. We are ready to work with the government to address challenges in the public education system—ensuring that every

student, from Windsor to Thunder Bay to Smiths Falls, has the freedom to learn and to thrive, and that Ontario's economy is built on a strong, educated foundation for generations to come."

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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