

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Ontario's Missed Moment: Budget 2025 Fails to Prepare Province for Global Competition**

*OSSTF/FEESO Response to provincial budget*

Toronto, ON – The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) is deeply concerned that the 2025 provincial budget continues a damaging pattern of underfunding public education. Once again, the Ford government has failed to address the worsening crisis in Ontario's schools and campuses.

"Despite repeated warnings from teachers, education workers, students, and their families, this government has once again chosen to ignore the very real and urgent needs in our schools and universities," said Karen Littlewood, President of OSSTF/FEESO. "Instead of strengthening our public education system, this budget ignores the crisis in education and post-secondary education. Unfortunately, it's students and staff who will end up paying the biggest price."

The 2025 budget shows the Ford government's plan to keep education funding stagnant for at least the next three years and does nothing to address underfunding the education system since 2018. The government's lack of meaningful investment will further threaten the quality and accessibility of education across the province.

"This budget does nothing to address the more than \$17 billion school repair backlog or the root causes of staffing shortages and violence that affect the learning and working conditions in nearly every school across Ontario," said Littlewood. "It's students, especially those with the greatest needs, who are being left behind."

While the government continues to claim historic investments, the reality in schools tells a different story. Reports from schools across the province highlight daily staff shortages, ballooning class sizes, insufficient mental health and special education supports, crumbling infrastructure, and unsafe learning environments.

Post-secondary institutions, meanwhile, also remain dangerously underfunded, with no meaningful relief in sight despite repeated expert recommendations to increase funding. In this budget, the Ford government has actually decreased the amount of funding to the post-secondary education sector by \$1.2 billion, or 8.5 per cent. Ontario already ranks last among all Canadian provinces in funding per student for post-secondary education, and the situation has worsened significantly since 2018. The 2025 budget ensures that Ontario will continue to fall behind the rest of the country.

Even the recent announcement of targeted funding for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs at post-secondary institutions does little to address a larger problem in post-secondary education: with severe funding restrictions and years of chronic underinvestment, many colleges and universities will be unable to take full advantage of these opportunities. Without meaningful, system-wide funding increases, newly announced programs are at risk of failure.

“Budgets are about choices,” added Littlewood. “Once again, this government has chosen to put the futures of our students and Ontario's economy at risk,” added Littlewood.

OSSTF/FEESO is urging the government to change course. With the world in the throws of a global trade war, Ontario must do everything it can to ensure our workforce is prepared to compete internationally.

Now is not the time to shortchange public education; it's time to invest in it. Strong, well-funded schools and universities are the foundation of Ontario's long-term prosperity. While the 2025 budget is a missed opportunity, there is still time to change course, especially in the coming weeks as the province and education stakeholders prepare for the 2025-2026 Core Education Funding announcement.

OSSTF/FEESO is ready to work with the government to rebuild trust, improve learning and working conditions, and ensure Ontario delivers the world-class public education that students deserve, and parents expect.

“Our members are ready to be part of the solution. We need a partner in government who will listen, respond, and invest in the future of this province, our students,” said Littlewood. “It's not too late to do the right thing.”

*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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