

MEDIA RELEASE

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OSSTF/FEESO: Government Power Grab from School Boards Distracts from Funding Crisis

TORONTO, ON — In response to today's announcement on legislation regarding changes to school board governance and accountability, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) is disappointed that the Ford government's proposed changes continue to fail to address the real problem of chronic underfunding in Ontario's public education system.

"This government is more concerned about writing legislation to give themselves more power over school boards. The ministry already has the ability to investigate governance and financial concerns. They have all the power to improve safety in schools. They don't need new legislation to do it," said Karen Littlewood, President of OSSTF/FEESO. "Today's announcement merely tried to place a spotlight on school board governance, to detract from the real issue - underfunding. Once again, it's clear that public education is an afterthought for this government, and not a priority."

OSSTF/FEESO remains optimistic about the opportunity to work constructively with the Minister of Education. We are committed to working with the government to address long-standing challenges in the education system, including building a strong and transparent and properly funded public education system that serves all Ontarians that values students, families and their communities.

"Today's announcement comes less than a week after releasing the Ministry's Core Education Funding, where the government had the opportunity to fix the funding crisis in Ontario schools. While we in no way defend wasteful spending by any board, and we agree that reforms are needed to ensure taxpayer dollars are used wisely," said Littlewood, "we are also committed to ensuring schools are truly safe through proper investments in staff, reasonable class sizes, mental health supports and buildings in need of repair".

With many school boards already struggling under years of government underfunding, the OSSTF/FEESO is calling for the government to fix the real issue.

"Placing more focus on school board monitoring will not solve funding issues. Boards will still have to do more with less," concluded Littlewood. "Our students deserve learning environments that will help them succeed. This legislation fails to address the real root cause."

OSSTF/FEESO is ready to engage in meaningful discussions with the government to find solutions that will strengthen accountability and transparency of school boards while putting resources directly where they need to be for the best interests of students, staff and their communities.

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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