

# Know the Issues in Public Education

Ontario has one of the best public education systems in the world, providing a high-quality education for every student regardless of where they live.

The Ontario government is pushing through cuts that will negatively impact students and their learning conditions. It wants to reduce 4% of spending in public services. That would amount to \$1 billion in cuts to public education. In partnership with parents and community organizations, public elementary educators are standing up for students on these issues.



## Class Size Matters

Grades 4-8 already have the highest class size average in the K-12 system. Now, the government wants to further increase class size averages for grades 4-8 and high school.

Class size increases will mean less one-on-one attention for students from teachers, and will really impact students with special needs.

It will also reduce student access to classroom resources that help them learn.

Educators know that a smaller class size enables them to provide more attention to the particular learning needs of every student and there is much research that confirms this.

## Full-Day Kindergarten is Working Well

Ontario's current model for Full-Day Kindergarten, which includes a teacher and early childhood educator, was based on international research and created by experts. It's been shown to provide lasting benefits for children's reading, writing, numeracy, self-regulation and social skills.

The government has signaled it will make changes to the future of Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK) for the 2020-21 year that would significantly alter the current model.

The teacher and early childhood educator each bring specialized knowledge and skills to best nurture the development and growth of every student. They ensure that children's academic and socio-emotional skills are fostered with the support and guidance early learners need.

Ontario's Full-Day Kindergarten is universally accessible. It is an important investment in Ontario children and their families.

This critical program gives Ontario's early learners the very best start.



## Inclusion and Special Needs Commitment

Since the 1980s, school boards have been required to provide special education programs and services for exceptional students. Yet, funding for inclusive classrooms has never met the actual needs of students.

In March, the government created a crisis for many children with autism, by severely limiting the funding available to them. That's left thousands of families with no choice but to send their children to public school instead of accessing the special programs they need. School boards have not been given additional resources and educators cannot be a replacement for specialized therapists.

Students with special needs, mental health issues or high risk behaviours are already not getting the front-line supports and services they need.

There are not enough educational assistants, psychologists, behavioural therapists, school support counselors, child and youth workers and speech-language pathologists to meet the rising number of such students in classrooms.

The government must renew its commitment to effectively fund specialized needs such as autism supports based on actual student needs.



## Fair Funding for Schools

The government's announcements about cuts have dismissed a key fact. Ontario's education funding formula has been shortchanging students for two decades.

\$1.5 billion was cut from education by the last Conservative government in 1999.

Since then, there has been funding for some new programs but little for important items like school operations and maintenance, services such as libraries, guidance, the arts and physical education, and classroom supplies and computers. Funding for students with special needs has never been adequate and it is currently not based on students' actual needs.

The current Conservative government continues to announce funding cuts, increasing the strain on every aspect of public education.

Ontario's public education system and its students need investment, not cuts.

It's time the education funding formula was fixed.