

# KNOW THE ISSUES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION



## UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS AT RISK TO ONTARIO'S HIGH-QUALITY SYSTEM

### The Government Cut 3% in Per-Student Education Funding for 2019-2020

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. This world-renowned system is made possible because of the professional, skilled educators who do their very best every single day to advance student learning. When governments fail to prioritize public education and instead put corporate tax breaks over student needs, high-quality public education is negatively impacted.

Last year, the Ontario Conservatives pushed through significant cuts. For this school year, the government transferred \$430 million less (adjusted for inflation) to school boards than the amount transferred in 2017-2018. This amounts to a real 2% cut in total operating funding for public education.

Average funding per-student for the 2019-2020 year dropped by \$375 (adjusted for inflation). **That's a whopping 3% cut for school boards.** Despite what the Education Minister claims, the recent analysis by the *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives* shows that these cuts will be felt in all 72 school boards.

## Cuts in Education Funding Hurt Kids.

Join public elementary educators, in partnership with parents and community organizations, to stand up for students. Together we can push back to tell the Conservatives to make children a priority by funding public education.

### Full-Day Kindergarten

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

The government has signalled it will make changes to Full-Day Kindergarten 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 that early learners need.

Full-Day Kindergarten is universally accessible. It is an important investment in children and their families because the two-educator model program gives Ontario's early learners the very best start.

## Class Size and Composition

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

Larger classes 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.

## Fair Funding for Public Schools

Ontario's education funding formula has been shortchanging students for two decades. The last Conservative government in 1999 cut \$1.5 billion from education.

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 the actual needs of students.

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

**It is time to fix Ontario's faulty education funding formula.**

## Inclusion and Special Education

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

In March of 2019, the government created a crisis for many children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, by severely limiting the funding available to them. This abrupt change, left thousands of families in chaos, a situation the government still has not resolved. Students should be supported to access the special programs that they need.

School boards have not received additional resources and educators cannot be a replacement for specialized therapists. 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.

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

The government must renew its commitment and effectively fund specialized needs such as supports for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder based on actual student needs.



Join us in protecting high-quality public education **BuildingBetterSchools.ca**