



Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO)
Fédération des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'élémentaire de l'Ontario (FEEO)
136 ISABELLA ST
TORONTO ON M4Y 0B5
Telephone: 416-962-3836 Toll-free: 1-888-838-3836
Fax: 416-642-2424
etfo.ca

Ontario budget provides no new funding to keep students and educators safe

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Toronto, ON – Today's Ontario budget delivered no new funding to ensure students have safe schools and the education supports they need.

"School boards and educators went into this school year with a chaotic, underfunded return to school plan from the Ontario government and this budget has done nothing to change that situation," said ETFO President Sam Hammond. "Ford and Education Minister Lecce have abandoned parents and educators who are left to ensure that students have what they need under extremely challenging conditions."

"Our schools need more teachers to keep students and staff safe through smaller face-to-face classes and to ensure students are getting the best instruction possible by limiting the size of virtual learning classrooms."

"The COVID pandemic has exposed many other issues that require this government's urgent attention. There are schools that need repairs and better ventilation, students need mental health supports and funds are needed to support Special Education and English language learners (ELL)."

The Ford government's expenditures for education and child care have represented only 1.3 per cent of Ontario's response to COVID-19 to date. Based on this budget's projections for the next two years, this will not change.

"Parents have consistently said they want smaller classes and this government isn't listening. The government must rethink its approach to public education and invest appropriately in the education and future of our students," added Hammond.

"The investment of seven million dollars over three years to produce online elementary educational content for elementary grades pales in comparison to what is really needed to ensure students are getting the quality public education they need from teachers via face-to face and virtual classes."

ETFO represents 83,000 elementary public school teachers, occasional teachers and education professionals across the province. Its *Building Better Schools* education agenda can be viewed at BuildingBetterSchools.ca.

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For more information, contact:

Valerie Dugale, ETFO Media Relations, CELL: 416-948-0195, vdugale@etfo.org @etfomedia