



ETFO responds to Ontario's education funding plan for 2021-2022

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TORONTO, ON – History has shown us that the Ford government likes to pretend to invest in public education, but actually only moves existing money around and then calls it new funding. As we review their just-announced education funding plan for 2021-2022, we do so knowing that this government cannot be trusted to preserve a world-class education system, nor to protect students and educators.

Notes Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) President Sam Hammond, "Upon initial review, it appears that the province is discontinuing its stabilization funding, yet making it look like education funding is growing. Their smoke-and-mirrors approach is intended to fool us into believing they are investing new money. They aren't. Instead, they are irresponsibly freezing education funding during a pandemic. When you look at the funds required to pay for utility increases and other inflation-impacted costs, Ontario schools will be forced to operate with less funding than they had this year. Saying there is a growth in funding of 2.2 per cent is a gross exaggeration."

This year has been disastrous because the Ford government has repeatedly refused to make the real investments required to keep schools open safely and sustainably. ETFO firmly believes that in-person instruction is the best and most equitable experience for students, but it must be done safely. To ensure in-person learning can resume quickly and safely, the Ford government must provide the necessary funding to:

- focus on the hardest-hit regions;
- continue to prioritize vaccinations for education workers and prioritize all other front-line workers;
- reduce class sizes to ensure two metres of physical distancing;
- fund N95 masks, instead of medical masks, which do little to prevent aerosol spread;
- fund improvements to ventilation and air filtration;
- ensure broad uptake of COVID-19 testing;
- implement paid sick leave; and
- provide financial support for families who need it while lockdown measures are in effect.

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.