

STATEMENT

“A government more committed to cuts than to kids” CUPE-OSBCU comment on FAO review of Ministry of Education’s spending plan

TORONTO, ON – The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) responded to yesterday’s release of the review by the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario (FAO), which analyzed the Ministry of Education’s spending plan from the 2021 Ontario Budget and the 2021-22 Expenditure Estimates, with Laura Walton, president of CUPE’s Ontario School Board Council of Unions (OSBCU) offering the following comment:

Once again we have evidence that the Ford government is more committed to austerity than to properly funding education, only this time the proof comes from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario (FAO).

CUPE and OSBCU have said for years that since this government was elected that it was restraining spending at the expense of students and this review shows exactly that:

- The FAO projects that school board spending will increase by an average of 2.3% per year until 2029-30, but the government is only projecting an average increase of 1.2% per year. The total shortfall over the period from 2021-22 to 2029-30 will be \$12.3 billion.
- Even the FAO recognizes that this kind of shortfall requires the government to spend more or cut spending. And we know that this government will cut spending every time, unless there is a public outcry that makes them back down.
- Only \$623 million of the \$1.6 Billion in COVID-related funding this year comes from the Ministry of Education; the rest is coming from other ministries (procurement of PPE, etc.) and board reserves. Once again, Ministry is over-estimating its own spending.

Perhaps most galling is the final tally of transfer payments to parents during the pandemic: \$1.848 billion. This is more than the government provided in COVID-related funding for schools! It’s heartbreaking and infuriating to think what massive improvements this money could have made in the lives of students and workers over the past year. It certainly would have gone a long way toward preventing schools from becoming such a significant source of COVID spread, as the premier has said they were.

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