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Education Cuts (as of April 18, 2019)

The Ford government's agenda for education is clear. Decisions are being driven entirely by the goal of cutting at least \$1 billion from the education budget. Here is a list of the cuts so far.

• Curriculum resource writing projects

- Truth and Reconciliation
- American Sign Language
- Indigenous Languages for Kindergarten

• Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund

- Cancelling the cap and trade program meant the loss of \$100 million earmarked for school repairs and retrofits.

• Parents Reaching Out Grants

- In October, the government said these grants were being cut for the current school year, despite the fact that planning and projects were already underway.
- In December, the government announced that the grants would in fact be given to more than 2,500 applicants.

• Mental health

- The Liberals' 2018 budget committed \$2.1 billion over four years for mental initiatives, including a commitment to hire 400 mental health workers in secondary schools and enhance professional development.
- The PC election campaign promise was \$1.9 billion over 10 years – a cut of \$335 million per year from the Liberal plan. It is unclear how much of this will be directed to children and youth, or if any new mental health workers will be hired.

• Special education

- In response to repeated requests from OECTA and others, the Liberal government announced \$30 million to increase the Special Incidence Portion, which has been capped since 1998. This would have allowed for the hiring of an additional 500 education assistants to support students with extraordinarily high needs.
- The PCs have cut \$2 million from the original announcement and reallocated the remaining \$28 million to the Special Education Per-Pupil Amount Allocation, with no indication of hiring any new educational assistants.

• Education Programs – Other

- The government informed school boards of \$25 million in cuts to EPO funding just before the Christmas holiday.
- EPO grants typically fund programs for at-risk students.
- The affected programs will vary from board to board. Examples include:
 - Tutors in the Classroom
 - Innovation and Learning Fund
 - Well-being: Safe, Accepting and Health Schools and Mental Health
 - Indigenous Support and Engagement
 - Re-engagement (12 & 12+)

• Guidance teachers in elementary

- Through the GSNs, the previous government planned to provide dedicated funding to hire 450 FTE guidance teachers for Grades 7 and 8.
- The PCs have kept the additional funding in place, but have eliminated the requirement that it be used to hire guidance teachers in the elementary panel exclusively.

• Post-secondary education funding

- The government has announced a series of changes that will reduce funding to colleges and universities, and make education more expensive for low- and middle-income students.
- Tuition fees are being cut by 10 per cent, with no accompanying increase to operating grants from the government to post-secondary institutions. This will take \$400-500 million out of college and university budgets.

- The government is changing the proportion of the Ontario Student Assistance Program that will be provided in loans as opposed to grants. This means low- and middle-income students will be less able to access post-secondary education.
- Ancillary fees will now be voluntary, meaning students will be able to opt-out of funding for organizations such as student unions, student newspapers, and clubs for equity-seeking groups.

- **Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth**

- The office was moved under the responsibility of the Ontario Ombudsman, resulting in the lay-off of more than 40 staff.
- This is yet another government cut targeting vulnerable youth.

- **Funding for students with autism**

- As a result of the government's changes to the Ontario Autism Program, many families will no longer be able to afford specialized services, and more students with autism will be attending publicly funded schools.
- The changes take effect April 1. Although the government will give families some time before being forced off their current support plans, and school boards have been given access to additional funding to ease with transitions to school for the remainder of the 2018-19 school year, no ongoing funding for student supports has been announced.

- **Increasing class size averages**

- Starting next school year, the government intends to increase class size averages from 23.84 to 24.5 students in Grades 4 to 8, and from 22 to 28 students in Grades 9 to 12.
- This will remove more than \$500 million in education funding, and result in the elimination of as many as 4,000 - 5,000 teaching positions in Catholic schools.

- **Mandatory e-learning credits**

- Beginning in 2020-21, secondary students will be required to earn four of their 30 credits through e-learning.
- E-learning classes will be funded at an average student-to-teacher ratio of 35:1, meaning up to 1,000 teaching jobs are likely to be lost.

- **Local Priorities Fund**

- As part of the 2017-19 extension agreement, the Association negotiated the hiring of 335 teachers to work with Indigenous students, students with special education needs, and other at-risk students.
- The government has said it does not intend to fund these positions next school year.

- **Early Childhood Educators**

- Funding is currently provided for 1.14 ECEs per 25 students.
- Starting next year, funding will only be provided for a student-to-ECE ratio of 25:1.

- **Cost Adjustment Allocation**

- Currently, school boards receive supplemental operational funding to hire needed education workers.
- This \$64 million fund will be discontinued for the 2019-20 school year.

- **2019 provincial budget**

- The 2019 provincial budget projects that over the next four years, education funding will increase by an average of 1.2 per cent annually. The government has tried to frame this as good news, but in reality this will significantly erode core education funding.
- The projected funding is well below what is needed to keep up with inflation and population growth.
- The figures also include expensive items outside of elementary and secondary education, such as the new child care tax credit.
- By year four, the government will be underfunding education by \$700 million per year. When you factor in funding dedicated to the child care tax credit, by the 2021-22 academic year there will be a \$1.1 billion shortfall in core education funding.

• *This list will be updated as more information becomes available.*

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