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Ford government's cuts to GSN funding signal drastic drop in services for students and job losses for education workers

TORONTO, ON – The union that represents 55,000 education workers in Ontario schools is calling today's release of the 2019-20 Grants for Student Needs (GSNs) by the Ministry of Education "an attack on students, on public education and on the people who provide services to students." It also projects a minimum loss of 2500 positions that provide in-class support to students.

The array of cuts identified by the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) from today's GSN announcement will mean drastic losses of services for students and schools, as school boards are forced to reduce the number of education assistants, custodians, school secretaries, library workers, early childhood educators, child and youth workers, speech language pathologists, and others who support children's education.

"The false promises of the Ford government are on full display in the cuts to GSN education funding," said Laura Walton, president of CUPE's Ontario School Board Council of Unions. She warned that the cuts will mean real struggle and hardship for Ontario students and their families, because "cuts to frontline staff will mean fewer educational assistants to support students with special needs, fewer custodians to keep our school safe and clean; and fewer school secretaries, who are essential to all elements of school operations, including safe school programs."

Walton also pointed out that per-pupil funding will be \$12,246 in 2019-20, a drop from \$12,299 in 2018-19.

"This is a cut in absolute terms, and it's even worse when adjusted for inflation," she said, adding "given that there will be over 11,000 more students enrolled in Ontario schools next year, based on increased enrolment alone, this represents a big cut in per-pupil funding."

Among other cuts announced as part of the GSN announcement

- \$630 million cut from the Pupil Foundation Grant
- \$230 million cut to Learning Opportunities Grant
- a cut to School Board Administration and Governance Grant

These come on top of a previous round of cuts in March, when the government cut millions from funding for education workers, including \$235 million in Local Priorities Funding (to help fund special education to support children in need and at-risk students; \$36.6 million for extra staffing (cuts to the base amount of Cost Adjustment Allocation); and \$10 million in staffing for education workers (Human Resource Transition Supplement).

"Ontario students and their families rely on the services that CUPE members perform. Schools can't function without them. Yet the Ford government is callously and carelessly slashing the funding that puts the people in schools who support students," said Fred Hahn, president of CUPE Ontario.

"The Ford Conservatives need to be honest with Ontarians and admit what their vicious cuts to public education services will mean for students. There will be less support for students with special needs. There will be more kids, crammed into more classrooms and fewer people to keep those spaces safe and clean. And how they plan to implement their ill-conceived E-learning proposal with fewer staff supports in IT departments, school libraries and school offices is beyond me."

CUPE's Ontario School Board Council of Unions (OSBCU) represents 55,000 education workers across the province in central bargaining in the Public, Catholic, French and English Boards and are part Ontario's largest union, CUPE Ontario with 270,000 workers in every community in the province.

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