

Ford government's budget offers only "fake" investments in education



TORONTO, April 11, 2019 /CNW/ - Empty promises and meaningless phrases in the Ford government's budget announcement mask the true harm that will be done to Ontario's students and system of public education, said the leader of the council that represents 55,000 education workers in the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

The most direct consequence of the provincial budget will be a throttling of public education and the services that support it, as the government sets out to provide below-inflation increases for education this year and a funding freeze next year, said union representatives.

Laura Walton, president of CUPE's Ontario School Board Council of Unions, described CUPE education workers' reaction as "disappointed, angry, but not surprised," following the union's analysis of the budget, declaring, "This a false budget, with fake investments in education. It can only have a negative impact on the services that students need in school."

This government has already shown its hand on plans for education in the province: in March alone, the Ford government slashed some \$300 million dollars in funding that helps to support children's education. When previous cuts, a hiring freeze, and staffing cuts are factored in with news from today's budget, September is shaping up to be the start of a grim school year for Ontario students.

"School boards across the province are sending out layoff notices to education workers, who are part of the foundation of our education system," said Walton. "It's simply more proof that the government's drive to save money is fuelled by cuts that make victims of vulnerable people, including children with autism, students, women and low-paid workers."

Ontario schools have suffered from years of underfunding, but cuts by the Ford government are making the situation infinitely worse for students, families and education workers, she added.

"Today's budget shows the government's complete lack of understanding of students' needs and its ignorance of the vital services that education workers deliver in Ontario's schools," said Walton.

CUPE Ontario president Fred Hahn criticized the Ford government's approach to education in the budget, as part of his overall assessment of what he called a "budget of betrayal": "People understand that every job cut in the public sector is really a service loss in the community. Service cuts do nothing to end hallway medicine, improve the quality of education, increase the level of care for seniors or improve social services for the most vulnerable."

On behalf education workers and 270,000 CUPE members in Ontario, Walton and Hahn promised to fight back against attempts to harm or dismantle the province's cherished system of high-quality public education.

SOURCE Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)

