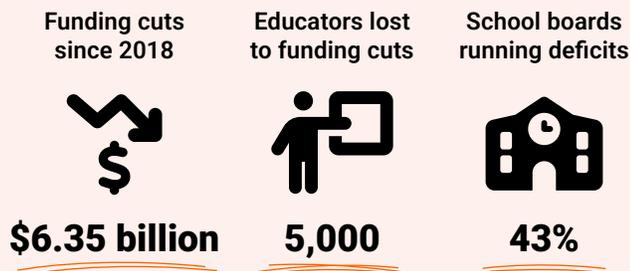


HOW UNDERFUNDING AFFECTS PUBLIC EDUCATION



What's happening with school funding in Ontario?



- ▶ Since 2018, funding cuts have taken [\\$6.35 billion out of Ontario schools](#).
- ▶ If funding had kept pace with inflation and enrollment growth, it would be [\\$561.7 million higher](#) this year alone.
- ▶ Cuts to education funding have led to the [loss of 5,000 educators in classrooms](#) since 2018.
- ▶ More than [40% of school boards are running deficits](#) because of the drop in per-student funding.
- ▶ School boards are spending [more than \\$580 million more](#) than they're getting from the government for special education supports.
- ▶ The FAO predicts that unless funding increases, the [infrastructure backlog for schools will reach \\$22.1 billion](#) in the coming years.

How does underfunding affect students and schools?

Large class sizes: Students are being crowded into larger classes where it is more difficult for them to learn and receive the support they need.

- ▶ The government's own documents reveal that [for every 1000 secondary students, school boards now have 3.87 fewer secondary school teachers](#) than they did in 2018.
- ▶ Around [1,458 schools were overcapacity in the 2023-24 school year](#), with 150,881 more students than spaces available.

Lack of qualified teachers and educational assistants: Without necessary supports in the classroom, students miss out on learning.

- ▶ [24% of elementary schools and 35% of secondary schools](#) are experiencing daily shortages of teachers.
- ▶ 16% of elementary schools do not have a full-time educational assistant, a [45% increase since 2019](#).
- ▶ Due to funding cuts in 2023-24, the Toronto District School Board [cut 522 teaching positions](#), 40 school-based safety monitors and 35 child and youth workers and the Toronto Catholic School Board [cut 120 teaching positions](#). **This is a total of 642 positions cut across only 2 of Ontario's 76 school boards.**

**Updated on August 8, 2025*

- ▶ Due to budget deficits, Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board [issued lay-off notices to 71 elementary teachers](#), the Thames Valley District School Board made [\\$4.7 million in staffing cuts](#), and the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board [reduced staffing levels by 135 full-time equivalent positions](#) for the 2025-26 school year.

Lack of other necessary support staff:

Schools also need support staff to offer the full range of supports students need, in addition to keeping schools safe and healthy.

- ▶ [93% of schools](#) say they need more support staff such as educational assistants, administrators, and custodians.
- ▶ [63% of elementary school principals and 58% of secondary school principals](#) report that they've had to ask special education students to stay home because there were not enough staff to support them and keep them safe.

Students with complex needs and disabilities are disproportionately affected: When school budgets are stretched too thin, students who require more resources are the first to get left behind.

- ▶ In 2024–25, school boards across Ontario [had to spend \\$582.7 million more than what they received](#) to address and support special education.
- ▶ Ministry data obtained through an FOI request showed that [over 2021-2022, 374 students were unable to participate in school](#) due to a lack of accommodations for 7,722 days with 184 of those students receiving special education services.
- ▶ My office teamed up with the Ontario Autism Coalition to set up an informal survey on these exclusions. The results found that [78 children had missed 558.5 hours of school](#) in Ontario, equivalent to 92 days, over two weeks.
- ▶ [29% of students with disabilities](#) have been secluded at school, often behind a locked door.
- ▶ [80% of parents of students with autism](#) worry about their child's safety at school.

Mental health suffers: Schools require additional supports to meet students' increasing mental health needs.

- ▶ More than [half of middle school and high school students](#) report mental health challenges.
- ▶ [91% of schools say they need more support](#) for students' mental health and well-being than what they can provide currently.
- ▶ Only [9% of schools reported having regular access to a mental health specialist](#) or nurse. 46% reported no access at all.

Violence increases: Forcing children who are struggling academically, behaviourally, or with their mental health to go without needed supports increases frustration and leads to an escalation of violent behaviours.

- ▶ A 2025 University of Ottawa survey of educators found that [67% of respondents had experienced at least one student-initiated act of physical force](#), including 90% of educational assistants.
- ▶ In 2022-2023, [77% of ETFO members personally experienced violence or witnessed violence](#) against another staff person.
- ▶ [75% of OSSTF members say there is more violence in the school system now](#) than there was when they began their careers.
- ▶ According to the Auditor General, [reports of violent incidents have increased 114% since 2017](#). As not every incident is reported, this only captures a fraction of the violence in our schools.





Schools are crumbling and in disrepair:

Failing to properly fund school repairs means that serious safety concerns are not being addressed and the state of our schools is deteriorating, with floods, mould, and unsafe drinking water.

- ▶ According to the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario, [more than one-third of schools in the province are not in a state of good repair](#). Unless additional funding is provided for repairs, the FAO calculates that 75% of schools will not be in a state of good repair by 2033.
- ▶ [Nearly half of Ontario's public schools](#) have had at least one test of drinking water that exceeded federal safety guidelines for lead.
- ▶ Approximately [1 in 12 schools in Ontario](#) have aerated concrete roofs, the same type of concrete that the Ford government shuttered the Science Centre for, citing safety concerns.

What happens when we invest in public education? When we invest in the success of Ontario students, we invest in the future of our province.

Increasing graduation rates by 3.7% could save



\$16.4 million

Each dollar of public education spending



generates **\$1.30** in economic impacts

Better outcomes for social wellbeing:

Investing in our children through properly funding and supporting public education creates healthier populations, higher standards of living, and a reduced crime rate.

- ▶ If high school graduation rates rise 3.7%, [Ontario can save a total of \\$16.4 million](#) across social assistance, public health care, and criminal justice services.
- ▶ Maintaining higher graduation rates for two decades could [save the province \\$3.5 billion](#).

Better outcomes for the economy: Children in Ontario deserve to be set up for success. When children are provided with the proper supports, they thrive in our communities.

- ▶ Each dollar of public education spending [generates \\$1.30 in total economic impacts to Ontario](#). The inverse is true for each dollar taken from public education.
- ▶ Each additional high school graduate [saves the Ontario government \\$2,767 each year](#) on social assistance, health care, and criminal justice.
- ▶ High school non-completers [require 71% more in health care expenditures per year](#) than high school graduates.

Better outcomes for equality: Equity and accessibility for all students in Ontario is one of the cornerstones of our public education system. A properly funded education system has the [expectation to act as a socio-economic equalizer](#), creating opportunities to mitigate the inequalities that follow students into the classroom.