



Education



Public education is one of the cornerstones of Canadian society. Mothers understand that it builds the foundation for their children's equal participation in the economic, social, cultural and political life of our communities. Public education creates educated citizens. As the primary caregivers, women were the first to understand the terrible impacts of the cuts the Harris Conservative Government made to public education. Funding was cut to the point where many schools were struggling to meet students' academic needs and literally falling apart physically.

The election of the Liberal government in 2003 was supposed to have changed all that. Unfortunately, despite some important investments, the McGuinty government decided to ignore the fundamental problems with the Conservative funding formula. Instead of fixing it, they directed additional funding towards the specific program improvements promised in the election campaign. As a result, not enough money is being provided to enable school boards to cover the actual costs of teachers' and other education workers' salaries nor to cover the costs of maintaining school facilities or the cost of adult education. The new funding does not provide nearly enough resources to address the needs of students at risk.

The \$667 million in increased education funding for 2007-08 will do little to ease the funding crisis faced by many of Ontario's school boards. This inadequate funding has many negative implications, including larger class sizes for elementary grades, particularly Grades 4 to 8; fewer specialist teachers providing programs in music, physical and health education, and art; fewer elementary schools staffed with a teacher-librarian and fewer elementary schools staffed with a guidance specialist. There have also been cuts to support staff, including custodians, office-clerical workers, and professional staff to support at-risk students.

When it comes to post-secondary education, despite the outcry against the Conservative increases to tuition fees in the 1990s, the Liberal government cancelled Ontario's tuition fee freeze after its second year. This reversal in direction in the fall 2006, brought in some of the steepest tuition fee increases in recent history.

Since 2003 the McGuinty Liberals:

- Brought an end to the repressive and hostile attitude towards public education that characterized its predecessor.
- Increased funding to reduce class sizes and to provide additional teachers, but the formula still does not provide enough funding to pay staff, buy supplies and maintain buildings.
- Brought in initiatives aimed at improving education quality, particularly in the primary grades, but created a funding gap and class size increases in higher grades.
- Earmarked additional funding for smaller class sizes in primary grades.
- Provided special capital funding for renovations to address the backlog of deferred maintenance, but this is just a drop in the bucket in terms of the desperate state of our schools.

What Women Need

Women need an educational system that is adequately funded, accessible and dedicated to the needs of all students. Education should not be seen as an expense, but as an investment in our children and our future.

Ask Your Local Candidate:

- Is a fully funded and well-rounded public education system a priority for you?
- Will your party re-vamp the failed funding formula and fully restore the billions that have been cut since 1995 to ensure that adequate resources are available for all our children and for adult education?
- Will you support reinstating the tuition fee freeze at 2004 levels, while expanding operating transfers to replace revenue that is currently being provided from tuition fee increases?
- Will your party double the number of up-front, need-based grants?

For more details go to the following websites:

People for Education: www.peopleforeducation.com

Canadian Federation of Students/Ontario: www.cfsontario.ca