

ETFO statement on Ontario Autism Coalition Report

For Immediate Release – January 24, 2025

TORONTO, ON - The following is a statement from Karen Brown, President of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), on the [Ontario Autism Coalition's Special Education Survey Report](#):

“The Ontario Autism Coalition's latest report underscores the devastating impact of unmet student needs, policy failures, and chronic underfunding by the Ford Conservatives on children with special education needs across the province. Their cuts have forced school boards to reduce much-needed special education programming, leaving some of our most vulnerable students without the resources and supports they need to thrive. Long waitlists and unacceptable delays for special education assessments mean that students are waiting months or even years for critical diagnoses, leaving them without access to the interventions and support they urgently need. This is a crisis manufactured by a government that has prioritized cuts over compassion and austerity over access.

The Ford government's refusal to prioritize public education is irresponsible. This year alone, public schools are receiving \$1,500 less per student compared to 2018, when the Ford government was first elected. This is equivalent to \$3.2 billion in cuts for the 2024-2025 school year. Disturbingly, this is the estimated cost of the rebate cheques the Ford government is sending to all Ontarians.

Educators and education workers are stretched beyond their limits, trying to fill the gaps left by these cuts, but they cannot do it alone. Students with autism, exceptionalities, and diverse learning needs rightfully deserve fully funded supports, not the makeshift solutions born of government neglect.

ETFO will not stand by while the Ford government abandons Ontario's schools. Students and educators deserve a fully funded, equitable, and inclusive public education system.

We stand united with the Ontario Autism Coalition in demanding immediate action. This government must reverse its harmful cuts, reinvest in special education, fix the special education funding formula, and adopt policies that reflect the realities in Ontario's classrooms.”

[ETFO](#) represents approximately 83,000 members, including public elementary teachers, occasional teachers, designated early childhood educators, education support personnel, and professional support personnel. Visit [BuildingBetterSchools.ca](https://www.buildingbetterschools.ca).

-30-

ETFO Media Relations: Carla Pereira | 416-962-3836 ext. 2332 | cpereira@etfo.org