

# THE ROCK

FEBRUARY 2019

## PRIVATIZATION THREATS AND EDUCATION CUTS

### *The ol' conservative refrain*

#### THE RECENT CUTS

- Promise of 4% from all ministry budgets
- \$1B from the Ministry of Education
- \$25M already cut from education programs
- Much of Bill 148 erased eliminating labour rights
- Ernst and Young Review – Roadmap for privatization

Cuts to education mean fewer educational staff in the classroom and in work sites, pressure on class sizes, less supervision of students and less help for students with special needs. This also means fewer resources and less access to learning technology, closing of libraries and learning spaces and closing of community schools. The initial stance from the Ford government would undoubtedly translate into higher costs for students and parents. Specifically, increased student fees, increases in tuition fees, more student debt and fewer support services for post-secondary students.

It has been historically documented that spending public funds on for-profit corporations to deliver education services costs more, while moving to a U.S.-style education system of charter and voucher schools will result in lower levels of achievement for students. It is therefore illogical to give private corporations access to public education resulting in wasted tax dollars, political scandals and unnecessary stressors for students.

Students need more mental health services and supports in our schools delivered by education professionals who know our public education system.

They need safe and well-maintained learning facilities to optimize their learning while adult learners need more access to publicly funded learning and retraining opportunities. These realities reach post-secondary students as well because they need more access to student services, and lower tuition fees so they do not start their careers with a mountain of debt.

The commentary above speaks to the pillars of OSSTF's fightback positions against what is surely to be the Ford government's attack on our public education system. DO NOT stand idle while this government dismantles what you, as education workers, care about and spent your professional lives building. A promise by Premier Ford to eliminate four (4) percent from every ministry budget amounts to one (1) billion dollars from education, \$25 million of which has already been eliminated with his cuts to post secondary tuition assistance and supports for racialized and indigenous at-risk youth. It has begun in earnest!

Contact your federation representatives to find out how you can help.

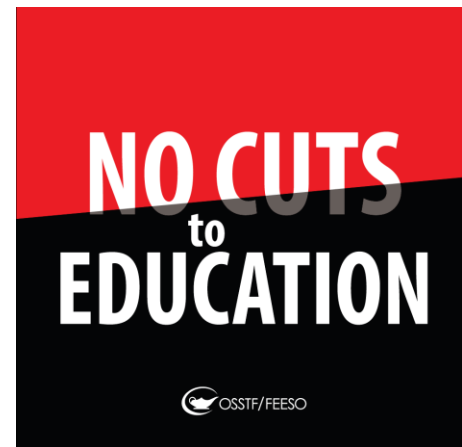
**DO YOU WANT PREMIER FORD TO PUT OUR WORLD-RECOGNIZED PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM AT RISK BY CUTTING \$1 BILLION IN THE NEXT BUDGET?**

**UNDERSTANDING  
PRIVATIZATION**

Ontario’s public education system is our most valuable resource. It is fundamental to our democracy and our economy. Nonetheless, threats to that system come from several directions. We are all familiar with the challenges posed by underfunding, for example. This glossary below provides a quick introduction to another threat: privatization. Privatization comes in many forms and it is important to recognize and challenge privatization wherever it threatens our public system.

**What do we mean public? What do we mean private?**

OSSTF/FEESO’s 2018 election platform and lobby day materials lay out our vision for public education. Fundamentally, we believe public education is a PUBLIC GOOD. That means everyone benefits from a strong public education system. In contrast, privatizers want to treat education as a private good. That is, a good that benefits individuals separately rather than the entire province collectively.



	<b>Education as a Public Good</b>	<b>Education as a Private Good</b>
<b>Who or What Benefits?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone</li> <li>• Democracy</li> <li>• Economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals: students / family</li> <li>• Employers</li> <li>• Education businesses</li> </ul>
<b>Desired Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content Learning</li> <li>• Members of Communities</li> <li>• Citizens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content learning – tailored</li> <li>• Workers</li> <li>• Taxpayers</li> <li>• Consumers</li> <li>• Profit</li> </ul>
<b>Key Principles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universality</li> <li>• Comprehensiveness</li> <li>• Proficiency</li> <li>• Accountability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficiency</li> <li>• Choice</li> <li>• Rights</li> </ul>

## Charter Schools

At their core charter schools are a sort of bargain. Governments allow charters to operate using public dollars but without rules, regulations and (often) collective bargaining constraints placed on traditional public schools. In return, charters agree to be held accountable to the province or district and to the market choices of parents. In theory, successful charters are 'scaled up' and reforms that enhance student learning are adopted by public schools. In fact, Charter schools originated as a strategy to empower teachers to develop innovative ways to deliver education.



In reality, education workers have been disempowered by charter schools.

- They are paid less than in the public system.
- This is starting to change, but education workers in charter schools generally don't have access to unions or collective bargaining.
- Education workers in charter schools are often not required to have formal certification or qualifications.
- Charters are a drain on the public system often resulting in per-student funding reductions.
- Lack of transparency and accountability means charter schools have been plagued by scandals.

Visit: [networkforpubliceducation.org/another-day-another-charter-scandal/](http://networkforpubliceducation.org/another-day-another-charter-scandal/).

- Charter schools in the U.S. have left the system more segregated than it was before *Brown vs. The Board of Education*.
- Charter schools tend to exclude students with complex and/or multiple disabilities. These are just a few of the issues surrounding Charter schools and the reason OSSTF must take this threat very seriously from the Ford government.

## Private Partnerships (P3s)

P3s are essentially financing schemes that create a win-win for governments and private companies. There are various models, but at the core they are the same: the government contracts with a private company or consortium of private companies, who finance and deliver public infrastructure or public services. The private companies win because they get massive, profitable infrastructure and service projects. Governments win because they are able to move the cost of financing these projects off their books.



Unfortunately, everyone else loses.

- To make profits, P3s reduce labour costs – especially by getting rid of unionized workers – alongside reduced quality.
- P3s are notorious for cost over-runs.
- P3 consortia cannot borrow money as cheaply as governments.
- In 2014, Ontario's Auditor General found that 74 P3 projects cost Ontario a combined \$8 billion more than they would have if they had been built publicly.
- In 2017, Nova Scotia decided to buy back 10 P3 schools because it would be cheaper to own them than lease them. The province would have saved \$52 million building schools the traditional way rather than through finance.
- In fact, a report from the Columbia Institute called "*Back in House*" documents 15 examples of municipalities taking back P3 projects and other forms of privatization because of cost over-runs and low quality.