

# VALUE

## **TRADES AND MAINTENANCE WORKERS in our schools**



**OUR SCHOOLS  
NEED FAIR FUNDING  
NOW**

### A funding model that lets schools crumble

Ontario's education funding model seems purposely designed to not keep pace with the actual cost of school operations and maintenance.

Unrealistic benchmarks continues to be the leading defect in the funding model, and it has created a huge deficit in school boards' school operations budgets. Funding of school operations is based on student enrolment and an arbitrary 'dollars per square foot' benchmark, so school operations funding declines when enrolment drops—even if no schools or classrooms are closed!

This benchmark has been so inadequate that a recent study estimates an annual school operations province-wide deficit of \$375 million since the funding formula was introduced eight years ago.

### \$375 million funding deficit

Faced with a yearly shortfall, school boards have insufficient funds to replace and maintain ageing mechanical, electrical, plumbing and ventilation systems in our schools. As a result, many schools are crumbling. Some schools harbour dangerous molds and poor air quality, while others still have toxic asbestos in the walls.

With no money to repair facilities, school boards have cut school support staff who work as skilled trades by the hundreds. The process has been a slow attrition of trades personnel.

**'Proudly committed  
to helping  
students succeed'**



### Few skilled trades workers left in schools

Once valued for their skills and often touted as role models among youth, school trades staff are becoming a rarity in Ontario's schools.

This shedding of skilled trades workers is happening at a time when Ontario's Liberal government actively promotes careers in the skilled trades. Yet the government's education funding formula discourages school boards from retaining maintenance personnel and promotes contracting out to the lowest bidder.

What better role models could there be for students than to see skilled trades workers maintaining schools? Instead, they see poorly-maintained schools and perhaps a glimpse of contractors rushing from one job to the next.

## Why does McGuinty support a bad funding model?

The funding formula that ensures that routine maintenance goes undone in schools was put in place by the previous Conservative government. It's clear that the inspiration for the model was ideological and the goal was to promote contracting out.

It's not clear to us why McGuinty, who wants to be known as the 'education Premier,' supports a funding model that was intended to undermine public services.

## Who's benefiting from flawed funding?

Recently, the province has announced funding for major renovations, including HVAC retrofits, and school additions. However, these large projects, and the funding that goes with them, are often packaged in a way that only large corporations can compete for the work.

Lucrative retrofitting projects often include 'turnkey maintenance services' as part of the deal. Maintenance work, once done in-house by school board trades workers, is outsourced.



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## The funding model — what needs to change?

- Elimination of the use of 'per-pupil' funding as the basis for the model.
- Setting realistic benchmarks that provide school boards with the needed \$375 million yearly in school operations funding to avoid annual deficits.
- Funding benchmarks that recognize the full cost of using school facilities for adult classes and community use.



*Ontario School Board Workers  
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