



November 7, 2018

The Honourable Vic Fedeli, Minister
Ministry of Finance
Frost Building South, 7th Floor
7 Queen's Park Cres.
Toronto, ON M7A 1Y7

Dear Minister:

I am writing to you today not only as president of OPSEU, but on behalf of the 155,000 workers we proudly represent to say: it's time to start listening to the people of Ontario.

As OPSEU members, we are the frontline; we provide vital public services, but we use them too. We are the people, and we are deeply concerned by your government's framing of the deficit to-date. We will not sit idly by waiting for a Fall Economic Statement that will be used to justify drastic and dangerous measures. Our line has been drawn, and we will not allow our public sector to be gutted.

It's time to shift the focus; it's time for public policy that works for the people - not more cuts and privatization. Ontario's public sector has reached its limit. For 25 years, our public services have been under attack, which has disproportionately affected our most vulnerable people and the frontline workers who help them.

Despite the rhetoric around out-of-control spending, the fact remains that Ontario has among the lowest program spending per capita, of any province in this country. As frontline workers, we know that public sector spending has not caused the financial crisis, and it should not be used to justify public sector cuts either. We implore you to change course, while there's still time.

Recently, you compared Ontario's finances to household budgeting, saying "we must live within our means, pay down our credit cards and spend smarter." Well Minister, our economy is growing and there is more wealth now than ever before. We must do a better job making that money work for all the people, not just an elite few. That means fairer taxation and labour laws; it means helping workers, not the corporate elite. And while I agree that there are always ways to spend smarter, that must start by putting an end to costly P3s and privatization schemes, which waste billions of taxpayers' dollars. If there is a need for efficiencies, the place to look is the ranks of middle managers, not services or frontline workers.

Minister, we don't have a spending crisis, we have a revenue crisis. But we know that one-time sell-offs aren't the answer. One-time sell-offs like the Hydro One scam hurt the people. They turn public assets into private profits. It's why I was relieved to hear your statement that the days of attempting to balance budgets through

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one-time revenue are over – and we'll hold you to it. All of our public assets are vital resources *for the people* that have been paid for *by the people* through their taxes. These include assets like the LCBO, but also public properties, like land, parks, water, and infrastructure. We hope you agree to support, strengthen and invest in them, not sell them off.

But I'm concerned that this government has other privatization plans in mind – plans to chop up and hive off pieces of the public sector, in an attempt to “balance the books.”

History has shown that this is a failed strategy. The human and financial costs of cuts and privatization always outweigh the benefits - let's not repeat past mistakes, Minister.

A better Ontario means a stronger public sector; it means fairness, equality of opportunity, and relief for Ontarians. Next week's Fall Economic Statement should reflect the true needs of the people; it should focus on investing in the public services that make our province the best place to live, work and raise a family – like quality health care, education and social services.

You've spoken of the government's moral imperative to pay down the debt. We ask that you honour the government's moral imperative to ensure that public services meet the needs of current and future generations by investing in them. The Fall Economic Statement offers an opportunity to recalibrate and to focus on building a better Ontario.

Minister, it's time to start listening to the people of Ontario.

Sincerely,



Warren (Smokey) Thomas
President of OPSEU

Enclosure

c: Hon. Doug Ford, Premier
Andrea Horwath, Leader, Official Opposition