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Dear School Council Member,

We know that good schools are even better when they have engaged and involved parents. This year marks 10 years since the creation of school councils in Ontario. Over these past 10 years, school councils have made a tremendous impact on the support of student achievement and the success of Ontario schools.

In collaboration with principals and school board staff, school councils have helped develop school improvement plans, contributed to shaping school programs and the organization of the school day, and welcomed new parents to the school community. These important contributions make our schools better places to learn.

There are many ways parents can become involved, both in the home and in the school, that can have a positive impact on student learning and on the school environment. School councils play an important role in fostering this involvement. That is why I am pleased to outline to you some of the new grant programs our government is making available to assist you in this role in supporting parent involvement.

▪ ***2006-07 Base Funding for Parent Involvement:***

As in the previous school year, each school council will receive \$500 to assist with parent communication and other parent engagement efforts. School boards have been asked to allocate this funding at the school level, on top of any existing allocation to school councils. School councils will approve expenditures for activities funded with this allocation.

▪ ***Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants for Schools:***

One million dollars are available province-wide to school councils for projects that enhance the participation of parents who face challenges in getting involved in their children's education. These challenges may include recent settlement in Canada, language proficiency in English or French, socio-economic challenges, or physical challenges. School councils can apply individually or in partnership with other school councils, parents, or groups in the community for these grants.

▪ ***Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants for Regional or Provincial projects:***

This grant program will make funds available for regional and provincial projects aimed at enhancing parent involvement. Proposed activities will fall under at least one of the following categories: (1) contributing to student success (2) creating a culture in which parents are partners (3) ensuring schools and school boards are welcoming for parents and (4) providing parent training and skill-building.

We encourage parent organizations to apply. Ontario school boards and school authorities, non-profit organizations, volunteer-sector associations, and Ontario post-secondary institutions can also apply in partnership with parents.

I would like to thank members of the Interim Parent Involvement Advisory Board who provided detailed advice on the design and implementation of the new grants. These members, who were also part of the Parent Voice in Education Project with me, heard from Ontario parents that they want easier access to information and resources to become effective partners in education.

Communications tools such as dedicated websites, parent handbooks, and parent information banks are at the core of the Parent Involvement Policy.

We also strongly believe that parent-involvement training for parents, teachers, principals, and school board staff will encourage schools to reach out to other parents and the community groups that serve them.

The vision outlined in the Parent Involvement Policy places school councils at the centre of a new partnership between parents, schools, school boards, and the community. The policy is about a change in culture to create a more welcoming environment for parents in the education system. It provides a foundation for us to work together in support of student achievement.

I hope you will take advantage of the new funding opportunities and continue to monitor the parent section ministry's website at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents.

Please let me know how your projects are coming along during the course of the next school year, and how you feel that you are making a difference.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Wynne
Minister of Education

c: Regional Managers, Ministry of Education
Directors of Education/Secretary-Treasurers of School Authorities
Supervisory Officers
Principals
Chairs, Parent Involvement Committees of School Boards