

Ministry of Education

Ministère de l'Éducation

Deputy Minister

Sous-ministre

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April 11, 2012

Dear Directors,

With 46,000 new full-time jobs added in March, it is clear that Ontario's economy is now growing stronger. Despite this positive momentum, Ontario faces a significant budgetary deficit – and we must work together to balance the budget. Together, we need to make the right choices to protect the gains we have made in education and ensure the long-term sustainability and strength of our public education system.

The government is committed to securing the key results achieved over the past eight years: moving forward with full-day kindergarten, maintaining smaller class sizes, and protecting 20,000 teaching and support staff positions.

In late March, the Ministry of Education outlined the proposed fiscal framework for education in the provincial budget. Board-specific funding was communicated through the release of the proposed allocation of the 2012-13 Grants for Student Needs (GSN). I am writing to you today to emphasize that we need to stay within that framework – and we need your support to do that.

To achieve our fiscal plan and protect the education services that families rely on, the government's plan requires strong management of current and future compensation costs, including wages, benefits and pensions. In the budget, we outlined a proposed salary freeze, including a freeze to the salary grid, changes to retirement gratuity and sick day plans and the intent to improve the sustainability of public sector pension plans. For your convenience, please find [attached the language included in the 2012-13 budget](#) on this item.

These proposed measures are intended to apply to all unionized and non-unionized staff, including teachers, support staff, principals, vice-principals, supervisory officers, directors and board staff at all levels. We expect you to apply these measures consistently to all throughout your board.

We made these choices to preserve jobs for teachers and support staff and protect the classroom experience for our students. And while we expect to overcome the current fiscal challenges and emerge even stronger, these changes are necessary to make our first-class education system sustainable in the long term.

In the meantime, we remain committed to the Provincial Discussion Table (PDT) process. We ask that you support that process too. The goal of the PDT process is to ensure all local collective agreements are within the fiscal parameters set out in the budget. Similar to the previous two PDTs in 2005 and 2008, this process will ensure stability in education in Ontario, help us focus on students, and build on the significant gains we have made in elevating student achievement and well-being.

While most of our teacher and support staff partners continue to be focused on the PDT process, some teacher federations have indicated their intent to begin local bargaining. It is my strong preference that all federations remain at or return to the PDT, but in the event that some local bargaining proceeds, it is my expectation that school boards be mindful of their responsibility to Ontario families to negotiate agreements that are within the government's fiscal parameters and that do not have a negative impact on student achievement or the classroom experience.

If you are given notice to bargain locally by any of the unions, I ask that I be informed immediately. As well, before finalizing any collective agreements, please contact us to ensure they are compliant with the fiscal parameters.

Chairs of school boards would have received a similar memo from Minister Broten today.

Shortly, your board will receive a "B memo" that will provide additional information related to our expectations of boards in implementing the measures announced in the budget and further clarity around expectations of boards in the event of local bargaining.

Thank you for your commitment to work together to continue our collective focus on providing Ontario students with the opportunities they need and deserve for a bright future.

Sincerely,

George Zegarac  
Deputy Minister

Attachment