

Ministry of Education

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TO: Directors of Education
Supervisory Officers of School Authorities

FROM: Steve Marshall, Deputy Minister

DATE: July 21, 2008

SUBJECT: Government's support to Provincial Discussion Table (PDT) Agreements between trustee associations and 13 unions representing education support workers

In the late fall of 2007 and early winter of 2008, the Minister initiated informal discussions with trustee associations, teacher federations and unions representing education support workers. The purpose was to explore with them ongoing labour peace and progress in the publicly funded education sector by entering into new, local collective agreements without job action. These new agreements would expire August 31, 2012 and would serve to promote the following guiding principles: improved student achievement, a safe and healthy learning and working environment and positive labour relations at all levels of the sector.

To this end, trustee associations and unions met in the spring at discussion tables facilitated by officials from the Ministry and Minister's office. The desire by all parties to put students first and their collegial approach to these discussions have resulted so far into provincial agreements involving at least the following 13 unions representing education support workers:

- Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO);
- Association of Professional Student Services Personnel (APSSP);
- Canadian Office and Professional Employees Union, Ontario (COPE);
- Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE);
- Coalition of Education Assistants of Ontario – Educational Resource Facilitators of Peel;
- Coalition of Education Assistants of Ontario – Dufferin-Peel Educational Resources Workers' Association;
- Coalition of Education Assistants of Ontario – Halton District Educational Assistants Association;
- Coalition of Education Assistants of Ontario – Waterloo Region District School Board;
- Custodial and Maintenance Association (CAMA);
- Labourers' International Union of North America (LIUNA);
- Maintenance and Construction Skilled Trades Council (MCSTC);
- Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU);
- Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

I am pleased to write to you today to outline some details of the additional investments and policy changes the province will make to support the government's continued goal for improved student achievement in an environment of labour peace and progress. It should be noted that required changes to the regulation governing grants to school boards for the 2008-09 school year have not yet been made. The information in this letter is provided in the absence of such a revised regulation. The initiatives and investments described herein must be implemented by, and are conditional upon, the approval of such a revised regulation by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council. The Ministry intends to seek approval for such a regulation and will advise you if it is approved. The Ministry will also be issuing a B Memorandum before the beginning of the school

year.

Fiscal Context

In the fourth quarter of 2007, Ontario's Growth in the Ontario Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 0.1%. As well, Ontario experienced a third consecutive decline in quarterly Real GDP growth. Within this fiscal context, the Government and the Ministry are prepared to provide the resources to support labour peace and progress where these investments also support its goals of improving student achievement, reducing gaps in student outcomes and increasing confidence in publicly funded education.

Professional Development and Training

Professional Development for all education staff is a key feature of the government's education strategy. Everyone who works in our school system has an important role to play in ensuring a high-quality education system. The Ministry intends to introduce a one-time, \$17 million allocation in the GSN in 2008-09 to enhance professional development and training opportunities for education support workers.

Violence in the Workplace

Publicly funded education is best served when staff work in a safe and secure environment. The Ministry intends to establish a Joint Task Group by December 1, 2008 with representation from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour, support staff unions and trustee associations to examine and report on the issue of workplace violence in schools. The Joint Task Group will develop a report which will recommend effective policies and procedures to the Parties no later than December 31 2009.

Education Assistants

Education Assistants play a critical role in the education and welfare of students. The Ministry intends to enhance the ability of Education Assistants to fulfill job-embedded responsibilities, including supervising students and offering after-school homework support, by increasing the Special Education Per- Pupil Amount (SEPPA) in 2011-12 by the following amounts:

- JK to grade three benchmark : \$86.55;
- Grade four to grade eight benchmark : \$66.62;
- Grade nine to twelve benchmark: \$41.09.

In addition, the Ministry will increase the salary benchmark for Education Assistants in the Elementary Pupil Foundation Grant in the GSN by 16.67% in 2011-12. This enhancement, estimated to reach \$119 million starting in 2011-12, will fund an increase in the number of Education Assistants' working days up to 194 days per school year, as well as an increase in the number of working hours up to 7 hours per day, subject to the funding available to the board under this enhancement.

Elementary Supervision

All school-based staff have a role to play in elementary school supervision which is essential in maintaining a safe school environment.

Accordingly, the Ministry will introduce a new allocation in the GSN Pupil Foundation Grant starting in 2008-09 to enhance funding for student supervision in elementary schools as follows:

- \$22.23 per elementary pupil in 2008-09;
- \$26.61 per elementary pupil in 2009-10;
- \$26.88 per elementary pupil in 2010-11;
- \$20.06 per elementary pupil in 2011-12.

This new allocation will stabilize at \$24 million in 2011-12 at maturity. This will fund the equivalent of 2 hours of lunchtime supervision per elementary school.

Custodial/Maintenance Staff/Skilled Trades/Building Security Staff

The Ministry is committed to safe, clean schools to promote an environment where students can learn and staff and students are safe. The Ministry also recognizes new requirements for monitoring water quality and the importance of maintaining school buildings and grounds in good physical condition. As a result, it will increase in 2009-10 the School Operations benchmark per square metre by \$1.41. This will generate \$36 million in additional funding, which will be used by school boards to hire 590 staff.

The Ministry will also conduct an external review of school operations costs to inform the 2010 funding model review.

Elementary Office Support Staff (School Secretaries)

Office support staff are often the “face” of the school for parents and members of the public. They are a significant factor in the public’s confidence in publicly funded education.

The Ministry is committed to increasing funding in the GSN for Office Support Staff in elementary schools (approximately 200 FTEs starting in 2009-10) through the elementary component of the School Foundation Grant as follows :

- All elementary schools with 250 or more students would benefit from the enhancement;
- Elementary schools with 1,000 or more students would receive funding for an additional 0.25 FTE secretary (based on the benchmark salary and benefits);
- The incremental funding for the schools with 250 to 1,000 students would be based on school size. For example, a school with 500 students would generate 0.15 more FTE; a school with 300 students would generate 0.03 more FTE.

This enhancement is projected to reach \$10 million starting in 2009-10.

Professional and Paraprofessional Support

Professional and paraprofessional staff give students at risk and/or students with special needs the supports they need to embrace learning. Professional and paraprofessional staff can make the difference between a student being able to cope in the classroom or not, and as such, play a significant role in closing the gaps in student achievement.

The level of support for professional and para-professional staff in the elementary pupil foundation grant will be enhanced by 0.33 staff per 1,000 elementary students in 2009-10, enabling the hiring of 401 staff providing direct services to students with special needs and/or at-risk students, with special consideration given to the needs of Grades 7 and 8 students.

This enhancement is projected to reach \$26 million starting in 2009-10.

Continuing Education and International Language Instructors

Education support workers delivering Continuing Education and International Language Programs ensure the broadest possible access to learning and student achievement. The Ministry will enhance the funding benchmarks for two of the four components of the Continuing Education and Other Programs in the GSN (Continuing Education and the International Languages, Elementary) by 3.5% in 2009-10. This enhancement is intended to improve working conditions of staff hired under this grant.

Support Workers Advisory Group (SWAG)

Ongoing provincial dialogues are a means to sustain labour peace and progress, student success and student safety. To this end, the Minister will appoint a Support Workers Advisory Group, composed of Ministry and representatives from unions representing education support workers and trustee associations. The SWAG will discuss issues that arise from the implementation of the PDT Agreements over the course of the term of collective agreements; advise the Minister on the implementation of initiatives; and discuss issues raised specifically during the PDT process.

Compensation

The Ministry agrees to fund the following salary increases:

- September 1, 2008 : 3.0%;
- September 1, 2009 : 3.0%;
- September 1, 2010 : 3.0%;
- September 1, 2011: 3.0%.

These percentages shall be applied to all allowances that are generally accepted as pensionable earnings.

These enhancements are projected to reach, province-wide, \$441 million in 2008-09; \$894 million in 2009-10; \$1.36 billion in 2010-11; and \$1.84 billion in 2011-12. Of this, enhancements for support staff are projected to reach \$116 million in 2008-09; \$235 million in 2009-10; \$357 million in 2010-11; and \$482 million in 2011-12.

Group Benefits and Other Working Conditions

In August 2007, the Ministry announced an enhancement of \$50 million in 2008-09 to be directed to benefits. An additional \$33 million (0.26% increase in benchmarks) annual enhancement will be introduced in 2010-11 for sector-wide improvements to benefits and other working conditions provided that:

- Boards will use their share of the \$50 million enhancement announced in the August 2007 enhancements and allocated through increased benchmarks in the GSN on March 26, 2008 exclusively to offset their current financial pressures and not to improve benefits through local bargaining;
- Each bargaining unit's share of the additional \$33 million, effective in 2010-11, is used to enhance group benefits for the bargaining unit members as locally negotiated for implementation by September 1, 2010. All remaining group benefit coverage levels, provisions and practices in place in 2007-2008, and not revised under this \$33 million enhancement, shall remain status quo for the 2008-2012 locally negotiated collective agreements.

Transparency

The Ministry will provide to School Boards and the unions relevant student enrolment and staffing information from Boards' Estimates, Revised Estimates and Financial Statements for each school year covered by this PDT Agreement, to monitor the provincial deployment of additional positions provided for in this Agreement.

Eligibility for GSN Enhancements

The provision of these enhancements is contingent upon the Director of Education of a District School Board or the Supervisory Officer of a School Authority, as well as the President of all local bargaining units within the same union in a board, providing a memo to Margot Trevelyan, Director of Labour Relations and Governance at the Ministry of Education, that confirms that the Board and the bargaining unit have ratified by November 30, 2008 a collective agreement which:

- Expires on August 31, 2012;
- Includes a statement in its preamble that *“The XX School Board and the YY Bargaining Unit agree that they are committed to improve student achievement, reduce gaps in student outcomes and increase confidence in publicly funded education;”*
- Fully complies with the provisions of the Provincial Discussion Table Agreement;
- Fully confirms, consistent with the Appendices to the PDT Agreements, and for each of the school years 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12, the numbers of support staff the Board will be hiring.

In the event that the Parties do not meet these conditions, Boards would be eligible for a 2% increase in funding for salaries in 2008-09, and a 2% increase in 2009-10. These increases reflect a rate that is higher than the 1.8% inflation in Ontario in 2007 and the average inflation rate of 1.9% over the past four calendar years. The 2008 Provincial Budget forecasted 1.4% inflation in Ontario in 2008-09, 1.9% in 2009-10 and 2% in 2010-11.

Furthermore, during the 2008-09 and 2009-10 school years, Boards would not be eligible for the other funding enhancements discussed in this letter.

These conditions will apply for each of the province’s four school systems.

As Deputy Minister of Education, I am fully committed to implementing the “Energizing Ontario Education” agenda, building on the progress to date and deepening our strategies and efforts going forward. Sustained labour peace and progress is a winning condition for any jurisdiction aspiring to become the best education system in the world.

I wish you and your local bargaining agents much success in addressing local issues in an environment of good faith negotiations, collegiality and mutual respect.

Steve Marshall

c.c. Dominic Giroux, Assistant Deputy Minister, French-Language Education
and Educational Operations Division
Nancy Naylor, Assistant Deputy Minister, Elementary/Secondary Business and Finance Division
Margot Trevelyan, Director, Labour Relations and Governance Branch
Unions and trustee associations participating in PDT Agreements for education support workers