

Ministry of Education

Ministère de l'Éducation

Deputy Minister

Sous-ministre

Mowat Block
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1L2
Telephone (416) 325-2600
Facsimile (416) 327-9063

Édifice Mowat
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1L2
Téléphone (416) 325-2600
Télécopieur (416) 327-9063



MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education
Secretary/Treasurers of School Authorities

FROM: George Zegarac
Deputy Minister

DATE: May 17, 2012

SUBJECT: School Board Amalgamations

As Minister Broten has indicated in her letter to school board chairs, we will be launching a consultation process to restructure and amalgamate school boards with a view to the long-term sustainability of our publicly funded education system. This will begin with a province-wide teleconference with Chairs and Directors of Education on May 29 at 3:30 p.m., hosted by the Minister of Education. The purpose of this teleconference will be to share information and discuss a proposed consultation process.

The Minister has asked that we move forward quickly to meet the 2013-14 timeline. Therefore, soon after the teleconference, we will begin regional consultations with directors and their staff to seek solutions from around the province. We have an opportunity to be creative and innovative as we work together to ensure student needs are met.

We need your input to make sure we get the process right. We are also looking for your continuing commitment to supporting the consolidation of back office activities. Discussion topics for regional conferences will include:

- Input on potential criteria, opportunities and challenges for amalgamation of school boards
- Proposals for potential partnerships and restructuring
- Input on most effective processes

As Minister Broten has indicated, following these staff-level administrative discussions in May and June, we will consult with board chairs, trustees, teacher federations and other education partners in July. Our goal is to come back with a strategy for your input before the end of September.

Given that final decisions have yet to be made about the reach and scope of this initiative, it is incumbent on boards to adjust their financial and operational planning horizons. This includes refraining from entering into any new agreements that have financial implications beyond

August 2013. Such agreements would include the hiring of senior staff on a multi-year basis, negotiating contractual provisions that include inappropriate compensation that results from board amalgamation, and amending the terms of personal service contracts to address possible amalgamations.

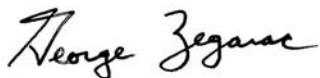
I know that some boards are in the process of hiring new directors of education. To fill these positions, I would strongly urge boards to use acting and short-term contracts, and to ensure that these contracts are free of the inappropriate compensation provisions noted above. Agreements for long-term IT projects should also be avoided, as well as other long-term projects that might become redundant or unnecessary in the event of an amalgamation, or the adoption of a consortia model for delivering back office services.

I expect that boards will use their best judgement to comply with this request. Please contact the ministry to discuss any extraordinary situations where following these guidelines will present undue hardship.

I am pleased to announce that Mary Jean Gallagher, Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Student Achievement Officer of Ontario, has agreed to serve as the Ministry's Executive Lead for the amalgamation initiative. I am confident that her experience in leading system transformation will be an asset to this important initiative. Russ Riddell, the Director of the Ministry's Strategic Transformation Branch, is the executive contact. He can be reached at (416) 325-4835 (russell.riddell@ontario.ca).

As the Minister made clear, I want to reiterate that the Ministry of Education will not be moving to restructure across the existing boundaries of faith or language. That said, I encourage you to continue the work you have been doing to find efficiencies in consolidating back-office activities. This work is necessary and will contribute to achieving our savings target.

We look forward to working with you on creative solutions that will continue to move Ontario forward as a world leader in student achievement and well-being. In this way, all of us will be expected to shoulder some of the burden, and all of us will have the opportunity to come forward with creative solutions.



George Zegarac
Deputy Minister