

November 27, 2008

Dear colleagues,

I am writing to inform you that I have accepted the Government's request to return to the Ministry of Education as Deputy Minister for a limited time in order to assist during Steve Marshall's illness. I will be starting on Dec 15 and will be on secondment from my professorial appointment at OISE, to which I will return when this assignment concludes.

This situation is a reminder, if we needed one, that life is full of surprises, some of which are not at all desirable. All of us were deeply saddened to hear of Steve Marshall's illness. I know everyone wishes Steve a speedy and full recovery so that we can again enjoy his skill and energy. At the same time, it is a great and completely unexpected privilege for me to have the opportunity to work again with the Ministry and with the Ontario education community.

My job will be to help us maintain our focus on strengthening publicly funded education in Ontario, and in particular on continued improvement in student outcomes. Our sector benefits from clear direction, a strong and effective strategy, and a great team of people. As I've travelled the world in the last 18 months since leaving the Ministry, I've realized just how effective and successful we have been in comparison to most other places. But we all know there is no time to rest on our laurels, as impressive as the accomplishments have been. Much more has to be done to fulfill the potential for learning for all Ontario schools and students. The main challenges will be to continue effective implementation of our strategy, to work closely together to sustain the commitment to improvement, to communicate effectively with the public, and to do all that while also responding to changing conditions, most notably the as yet unknown impacts of the global economic crisis.

Over the next few weeks I will be meeting with my team in Education and with people in the broader sector to get myself back up to speed on the issues and challenges. I will also be consulting with Steve so that I am fully aware of his intentions. I do not plan to do a formal set of consultations with the broader sector beyond our normal scheduled meetings, but if you would like to meet around particular issues, please do let me know and I will do my best to accommodate that.

I look forward to renewing acquaintances with many of you, and meeting others whom I do not yet know, as we work together on the vital task of strengthening education in Ontario.

On a final note, I would like to take this opportunity to thank George Zegarac for quickly stepping into the role of acting Deputy Minister upon Steve's departure and for fulfilling the duties with ease. He will continue in this capacity until I return to EDU in mid-December.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben Levin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ben Levin