

Ministry of Education

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Dear chair:

Congratulations on the start of another successful school year. I trust that your students, staff, and parents are settling into the second week of school following an enjoyable summer. I am writing today to discuss the next steps associated with labour relations now that the Putting Students First Act, 2012 has been passed by the Ontario legislature. This is an important step forward — and it gives Ontario students and families the peace of mind that school will be free from labour disruptions for two years.

The Putting Students First Act, 2012 is another way the McGuinty government is protecting the gains we have made together in education over the last nine years, while taking steps to address our shared fiscal challenges.

In February, we began our provincial discussion table conversations. After six months and over 300 hours of discussions, we came to an agreement with the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA). It is an agreement that represents a fair and balanced approach that will help protect the gains we have made.

Since the OECTA agreement was signed in July, more teachers and support staff have signed-on. But in order to ensure peace and stability in schools and in order to meet our fiscal obligations, we needed to take steps to ensure that similar agreements are implemented across the education system.

The decision to introduce legislation was a difficult but necessary step. We could not risk the extraordinary gains we have made together in education over the last nine years.

Today, class sizes are smaller and full-day kindergarten is available in about 1,700 schools. Student achievement is up and more students are graduating than ever before. We have accomplished all of this as a result of your shared commitment to making our publicly funded education system one of the best in the world. It is because of your passion and dedication that together, with parents, teachers, students and staff, we have accomplished so much.

The Putting Students First Act, 2012 provides school boards, teachers and support staff until December 31, 2012 to engage in local collective bargaining. This allows our education partners to reach agreements that respect local circumstances while also achieving the policy and fiscal goals set out in the legislation.

Where agreements do not meet the goals outlined in the legislation, as Minister of Education, I will ask the parties to continue to work locally and will, if necessary, impose agreements. But there is still time for local agreements to be reached and I encourage all boards to continue the work they have started to get them in place as soon as possible.

For boards with federations that have reached agreements already – specifically French Catholic and public boards, and English Catholic boards – provisions consistent with language in their respective memorandum of understanding around fair and transparent hiring processes and balanced diagnostic assessments must be embedded in local collective agreements.

For boards with federations that did not reach agreements – English public boards – they will not be required to embed those provisions in local collective agreements.

However, as a government, we will move ahead with plans to fully implement fair and transparent hiring provisions and balanced diagnostic assessments equally in every board, using the tools available to us under the Education Act.

Specifically, in the coming days, you will be receiving additional information on the fair and transparent hiring regulation that I announced in August. This regulation will set out a consistent, standard and open process that all boards must abide by to hire long-term occasional and permanent teachers.

Shortly, the Ministry will begin the consultation process for the development of a Policy/Program Memorandum on effective use of diagnostic assessments.

French-language boards will also be receiving information clarifying Welcome and Supervision requirements in the coming days.

Finally, information about funding adjustments to reflect the Putting Students First Act will be highlighted in a B-memo which you will receive within the week.

On behalf of Ontario's students and their families, I look forward to continuing to work with you to protect Ontario's progress in education so we can ensure that we remain focused on supporting student achievement. Over the weeks and months ahead, as we implement the Putting Students First Act, please do not hesitate to contact my office, or to have your officials connect with ministry officials, if you have any questions.

Thank you for your commitment to put Ontario's students first.

Yours truly,



Laurel Broten
Minister