

**Ministry of Education**

Mowat Block  
Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1L2

**Ministère de l'Éducation**

Édifice Mowat  
Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1L2



September 12, 2012

Dear colleague:

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 over the last nine years by working together in the education system while we take steps to address our shared fiscal challenges.

In February, provincial discussion table conversations began. After six months and over 300 hours of discussions, the government 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 be 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. All of this has been accomplished as a result of a 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, so much has been achieved.

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 any agreements do not meet those goals as outlined in the legislation, the Minister of Education will ask the parties to continue to do work locally and will, if necessary, impose agreements. But there is still time for local agreements to be reached and all boards are encouraged to continue the work they have started to get agreements 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, the government will still move ahead with plans to fully implement fair and transparent hiring provisions and balanced diagnostic assessments in every board, equally, using the tools available.

Specifically, in the coming days, you will be receiving additional information on the fair and transparent hiring regulation that was 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 you will receive within the week.

Over the weeks and months ahead, as we implement the Putting Students First Act, please do not hesitate to be in touch with any questions.

I look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure that we remain focused on our top priority of supporting student achievement, and to discussing matters at our September 21<sup>st</sup> scheduled meeting.

Sincerely,

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

George Zegarac  
Deputy Minister of Education