December 15, 2006

Dear School Council Chair:

One year ago, we introduced the new Parent Involvement Policy to create a more welcoming environment for parents in the education system.

Parent input was tremendously valuable in the development of the policy, and continues to be as we work with parents to implement programs that support parent involvement. We want to make sure that continues.

**Provincial Parent Board**

That is why I am pleased to inform you that applications are now being accepted for membership on a new Provincial Parent Board. The board will enable the government to work directly with parents from across Ontario to increase parent involvement. It will guide provincial efforts to involve parents and give them a strong and representative voice.

The 20-member board will represent parents from across the province. As advisors to the minister, members will play a critical role in ensuring that effective parent involvement programs are successfully implemented across the province. In addition, the board will monitor the state of parent involvement in the school system and the effectiveness of parent involvement initiatives provincewide.

If you, or any parents on your school council, are interested in submitting names for consideration on the new board, you can download the application form and find further information by following the "Parents" links on the Ministry of Education's website ([www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca)). Please note that the deadline for applications is February 16, 2007. The board is expected to be operational in spring 2007.

A nominating committee made up of parents will review the applications and make the final selections of members. During this first year, the nominating committee will be composed of four members of the Interim Parent Involvement Advisory Board, in addition to a representative of the Parent Engagement Office of the ministry.

**Parent Involvement in Ontario**

In the twelve months since the release of the Parent Involvement Policy, we have taken measures to strengthen the partnership with parents and to support parent involvement.

In January 2006, we created the Parent Engagement Office to support provincial parent involvement efforts.
The Interim Parent Involvement Advisory Board, created in November 2005, released its report this summer providing recommendations on the implementation of the policy. The formation of the new provincial parent board is one of the key recommendations of the interim board’s report, which is available at [http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/parentinvolvement.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/parentinvolvement.pdf).

In October we announced the creation of two Parents Reaching Out Grants – one for school-based projects and one for regional and provincial projects. In total, these two grants made $1.75 million available for projects that encourage parent involvement.

This year is the 10th anniversary of the creation of school councils in Ontario. In that time, school councils have greatly enhanced the opportunity for dialogue and partnership among parents, schools and school boards. We are continuing to support school councils by providing the $500 per school that we provided last year to assist school councils with parent engagement efforts.

We have also provided $5,000 plus 17 cents per student to Parent Involvement Committees for a second year. The Parent Involvement Committees give parents a voice at the board level and a direct link to the Director of Education and trustees.

Whatever way parents choose to get involved, whether at home or at the local, regional or provincial level, their support makes a difference to their children’s learning experience.

We continue to update the parent section of the Ministry of Education website, which gives parents access to the latest news and resources. These include Involving Parents in the School: Tips for School Councils, which provides a checklist for school councils and can be found at [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement).

In the past few months, I have had the opportunity to visit parent groups across the province. I continue to be encouraged and inspired by the enthusiasm and dedication shown by parents in Ontario.

I truly believe that involved parents make a real difference to their children’s education. That is why we are working with parents to make it easier for parents to get involved in their children’s education, and to reach out to those who face challenges to involvement.

Thank you for your commitment. Your contributions make our schools better places to learn and help us reach every student. I wish you all the best over the holiday season and in the coming year.

Yours sincerely,

Kathleen Wynne
Minister of Education

cc: Directors of Education/Secretary-Treasurers of School Authorities
Supervisory Officers
Principals
Regional Managers, Ministry of Education