December 10, 2012

Dear Chair,

In May, I wrote to you asking you to be part of a process to find greater efficiencies at the school board level through possible amalgamations. We started this process to respond to our shared fiscal reality. The Ministry of Education – like all other ministries – must find a pathway to the long-term sustainability of our publicly funded education system.

Finding greater efficiencies in how we deliver education is an important piece of moving toward sustainability. In this work, we have an opportunity to be creative and innovative as we work together to ensure that student needs are met. We also entered this initiative recognizing that we wanted it to be very different from previous amalgamation processes. We made it clear that we wanted to hear from you – your best advice, ideas, and insights.

In addition to my meetings with each school board association, the ministry met with school board staff over the summer to get input on principles for moving forward with effective processes and also to solicit feedback. During regional pre-consultation sessions, many participants were clear that this was not the right time to move forward with board amalgamations. You also told us that there could be other ways to find savings, including back-office consolidation.

As a result of this feedback, we have made a decision to meet the savings target associated with board amalgamations through other means. The expectations of the education sector in helping to meet the ministry’s budget target remain unchanged. We still need everyone to do their part. And we continue to work with boards and their communities to ensure student needs are met.

I encourage boards to make progress on the commitment you have expressed in the past several months to find opportunities for more innovative partnerships and greater efficiencies.

Protecting what we value most in education in Ontario in these tough financial times is a challenge that will require the best of our energies and ideas. We look forward to the opportunity to regroup and re-engage with school boards and education partners to find solutions that will work across the province, and that will have us make further progress as a world leader in education.
Thank you, as always, for your hard work and dedication to Ontario’s publicly funded education system.

Yours truly,

Laurel Broten
Minister

c: Directors of Education
Council of Ontario Directors of Education
Ontario Public School Boards’ Association
Ontario Catholic School Trustees’ Association
Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques
Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l’Ontario