

Ministry of Education

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June 23, 2011

Dear Chair:

Over the last several years, the Ministry of Education has worked closely with you to reform the ways in which you deliver student transportation services to nearly 800,000 students each and every day. I know how hard you have worked to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of this service delivery, while maintaining the highest level of safety, and I want to take this opportunity to thank you.

As you know, the Auditor General in his 2006 report highlighted the need for the competitive procurement of goods and services in school boards. I understand that competitive procurement in student transportation is a complex issue with many competing interests and needs. As part of this multi-year approach, we supported two pilot processes, one in 2009 and one in 2010, that have helped to clarify and highlight the issues and challenges inherent in a competitive procurement system.

In recognition of the concerns and issues expressed by both school boards and operators, I believe that taking an opportunity to review competitive procurement processes for student transportation would be beneficial for all parties.

Today I am announcing a six month moratorium, effective immediately, in the area of student transportation. During this time, it will not be required that boards pursue competitive processes in their procurement of student transportation. I will also appoint a task force that will review the competitive processes used to procure student home-to-school transportation, paying specific attention to their fairness, transparency, accountability and value for money. The task force will be made up of representatives from school boards, transportation consortia, school bus operators, procurement experts and a neutral third-party chair. It will report directly to me as Minister of Education and produce a written report by December 2011.

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I believe that taking the time to review our competitive procurement policies will give us the opportunity to consider the issues that have been raised as a result of the pilot processes. Our goal is to ensure that Ontario taxpayers can continue to be well served by our student transportation providers.

I want to thank you for supporting the government's commitment to fairness, transparency and accountability in our work with a vibrant, multi-operator student transportation community. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Leona Dombrowsky". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Leona Dombrowsky
Minister of Education

c: Directors of Education