May 8, 2013

Dear Chairs,

As you are aware, the recent Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) reached with the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation was ratified by the OSSTF membership. We must now move on with the necessary changes at the school board level, and for that we are counting on your support and cooperation.

The government and OSSTF have come a long way toward rebuilding our relationship with a collaborative approach that reaffirms everyone’s commitment to delivering excellence in our schools for Ontario's students. That new way forward has also seen our teachers, support staff and students return to enjoying extracurricular activities. I wish to express my appreciation for the assistance that school boards provided in the discussions leading up to this MOU.

We recognize that there is more work to be done in rebuilding relationships in the sector. Our government respects school boards as the employers and is deeply grateful for your cooperation during the recent challenging times.

Over the past weeks, we have been discussing next steps with school board, trustee and union representatives. These conversations have been constructive and bode well for upcoming discussions about the future of collective bargaining in the sector.

It is time to move forward with maintaining positive momentum through the implementation of the MOU. The first step is incorporation of the provincially agreed items into local collective agreements. There is also to be a period of local bargaining on other issues of local concern to the school board and union.

The MOU contains adjustments that are appropriate to ensure fairness and consistency in areas such as unpaid days, sick leave credits, attendance recognition, and maternity leave. The inclusion of provincial items in local agreements should not wait for local negotiation of non-provincial issues to be completed, which should occur separately.

It is our expectation that boards will generally be able to implement the MOU within their existing funding envelopes. At the same time, the Ministry intends to support the boards through that process, and will be monitoring closely. Details on the implications of the MOU are set out in B:Memo 2013:B9 posted on the Ministry website.
I have heard from many of you on the matter of hiring practices in Ontario school boards. As you know one of the matters addressed in the MOU is a committee on Regulation 274, dealing with teacher hiring practices. That committee will meet with a view to establishing hiring practices agreeable to the parties in the secondary panel of the English-language public school boards, for implementation by September 2013. The government is very interested in any joint recommendations that are consistent with providing the best possible program to students.

We look forward to working with school boards on the implementation of the MOU. The boards’ positive involvement in implementation will make a crucial contribution to returning the sector to more productive and collaborative labour relations.

We now have an opportunity to build on the progress we have made, and I look forward to new discussions about the future structure for collective bargaining. Everyone agrees we need a new approach, it is time to talk about how we can do better going forward.

Sincerely,

Liz Sandals
Minister

c: Deputy Minister George Zegarac

Directors of Education

Executive Directors, Trustee Associations

President, OSSTF

Executive Director, OSSTF