



**ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION**

Leading Education's Advocates

Ontario Public School Boards' Association
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Michael Barrett
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The Honourable Laurel Broten
Minister of Education
22nd Floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1L2

Laurel.Broten@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Broten,

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association would like to express its concerns about the potential for unrest and instability in our schools that strike action on the part of OSSTF in the immediate future creates. We cannot ignore either how possible action on the part of ETFO and other unions may add to the situation. We are particularly concerned about the ability of our boards to maintain safe learning environments for our students, and the potential disruption that strike activity will have on the learning of students.

School boards are actively engaged in contingency planning to minimize the impact of labour actions, with student safety and learning foremost. You have heard already from the Ontario Principals' Council and the Public Directors of Education, the people on the front lines of the situation, with regard to the concerns that they have. We share their focus on the importance of adequate student supervision, and the potential impact of failing to maintain adequate attendance processes. The contingency planning measures of our member boards will have student supervision and student safety as the highest priority. Boards will be closely monitoring the capacity of schools to maintain a safe learning environment. However, in the event that it is not possible to do so, and it is determined that the necessary conditions for student safety cannot be maintained, our boards will face the possibility that it is not reasonable for students to continue to come to school.

On March 1st we joined with our partner school board Associations in a letter to you articulating the following: "...we must signal our concerns that the process we have just begun, if it is unsuccessful, runs the risk of causing provincial and local labour unrest, instability, and labour action...Collective bargaining has to lead to collective agreements which support student engagement, parent engagement, staff engagement, and safe and nurturing learning environments."

We are saddened that this prediction has come true. While there may be legislative remedies to the current situation, and boards will take all necessary steps to try to provide the students in our care with environments in which they may learn effectively, a positive school climate depends on teachers, support staff, administrators and school boards as a whole working together in mutually supportive and respectful ways for the benefit of our students.

We remain convinced that a positive outcome for this current situation lies in solutions that are worked out respectfully with the parties to collective bargaining. As we have stated previously, we remain committed to working with our employees and the government to reach fair and equitable new contracts. We urge your government to be creative and flexible to find solutions that lead to outcomes that offer the best possible environment for our students.

Yours Sincerely,

Michael Barrett,
President

C: Patricia Sorbara, Chief of Staff
George Zegarac, Deputy Minister