Public School Boards seek long term stability for schools – call on teachers to resume contract talks

The Ontario Public School Boards’ Association (OPSBA) strongly urges the elementary and secondary school teacher federations to return to the Provincial Discussion Table (PDT) to resume work on provincial agreements and meet the Ministry’s November 30th deadline.

“Without a provincial discussion table agreement we run the risk of labour disruption and this could have serious implications for the education of our students and the operation of our schools,” said Loralea Carruthers, Vice President of OPSBA.

Currently our teachers are still eligible to receive the maximum pay increase offered by the government, a pay increase they can have if their unions achieve a PDT agreement.

The Ministry of Education has said that failure to reach a provincial agreement will mean that teachers represented by these unions will receive only a 2% salary increase in each of the next 2 years compared to a 12.55% salary increase when compounded over 4 years.

There is a Ministry deadline that must be met if teachers are to get the benefits of a three per cent salary increase compounded over the next four years. That deadline is November 30, 2008. By that time, the teacher unions and their school board association must sign on to Provincial Discussion Table agreements and the local school board and the teacher bargaining unit must also have a ratified local collective agreement consistent with the PDT agreement.

“The first critical step in meeting the deadline is for teacher federations to return to the table immediately and continue talks towards a provincial discussion table agreement,” Loralea Carruthers said.

When provincial agreements are reached, school boards and their local unions can then move to including the provisions of these agreements into their local contract and work on completing negotiations. These local talks would include agreement on items that are unique to local contracts.

A signed PDT agreement brings with it enhancements that go beyond salary increases. The agreement assures:
• Guaranteed salary increase in of 12.55% over the next four years (3% per year with a compounding factor) for all school board employees.
• An increase of 40 minutes per week of planning time for all elementary teachers. This is in addition to the existing 200 minutes of planning time per week.
• Additional teachers in an era of declining enrolment, providing for:
  o Targeted class size reductions in Grades 4 to 8;
  o Student Success teachers and Literacy and Numeracy coaches in Grades 7 and 8;
  o Additional arts and specialist teachers; and
  o Expanded secondary programming.
• Additional support workers:
  o More caretakers and maintenance workers to ensure clean, safe school buildings;
  o More professional student services personnel, such as child and youth workers to help students deal with family and social issues; and
  o More school secretaries to reduce growing administrative workload pressures.
• More funding for student supervision in elementary schools
• Improved working hours for the majority of the province’s 22,000 educational assistants.

OPSBA finance officials calculate that the additional funding enhancements offered by the provincial government will total almost $700 million annually by the final year of the contract. This figure does not include the annual $1.8 billion in salary increases by the final year of the contract.

This kind of four-year agreement, already adopted by other teacher unions in the province, will be good news for teachers and for the public school system. It will ensure that resources and energies are focussed on high student achievement and on secure and safe learning environments. It will offer schools the peace, stability and confidence in continued progress that strengthens public education.

For more information contact:

Jeff Sprang
Communications

416-340-2540