

Labour Relations

Status of Negotiations

August 25, 2008

The Ministry of Education continues to facilitate provincial discussions with the school board associations, teacher federations and support staff unions aimed at addressing issues which, if resolved provincially, would greatly facilitate local bargaining. These discussions have been on-going since spring 2008.

These Provincial Discussion Table Agreements (PDTA), if signed, set out pay increases over a four year period, staffing increases and improvements to working conditions. From the Board's perspective, the agreements also ensure improved student achievement, safer and healthier learning and working environments, and positive labour relations at all levels of the education sector. Finally, the Provincial Discussion Table Agreements are multiyear, so they would have the added benefit of ensuring no disruption to the school year as a result of labour relations issues for at least a four-year period.

The Ministry of Education provides the funding to school boards for standard contract items such as salary increases, staffing levels and to pay for the costs of teacher preparation time. School boards are not able to agree to contracts that would increase these costs beyond the provincial allocation for each board. So the main purpose of the Provincial Discussion Table Agreements is to achieve a uniform agreement on these broad contract issues before local bargaining commences.

Highlights of the Provincial Discussion Table Agreements (PDTA)

- Guaranteed 12% salary increase over the next four years (3% per year) for all school board employees.
- Additional teachers in an era of declining enrolment, providing for:
 - Targeted class size reductions in Grades 4 to 8;
 - Student Success teachers and Literacy and Numeracy coaches in Grades 7 and 8;
 - Additional arts and specialist teachers; and
 - Expanded secondary programming.
- Additional support workers:
 - More custodians to ensure school building maintenance;
 - More professional student services personnel, such as child and youth workers to serve students better; and
 - More elementary school secretaries to address workload issues.
- More funding for student supervision in elementary schools.
- Improved working hours for the majority of the province's 22,000 educational assistants.

To be eligible for provisions of the Provincial Discussion Table Agreements – including the annual three percent salary increase for the next four years – teacher and support staff unions and their school board associations must sign on to provincial framework agreements. Once completed, school boards and their local unions would then move to ratifying the provisions of these agreements into their local contract and proceed to complete contracts negotiations, which may include agreements on items unique to local contracts.

As of the start of September 1, 2008, the following teaching and support staff unions have entered into Provincial Discussion Table Agreements with trustee associations:

- Teachers in all of Ontario's French language school boards
- Teachers in all of Ontario's Catholic school boards
- Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)
- Labourers' International Union of North America (LIUNA)
- Maintenance and Construction Skilled Trades Council (MCSTC)
- Ontario Public Services Employees Union (OPSEU)
- Provincial Schools Authority Teachers (PSAT)
- Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
- Association of Professional Student Services Personnel (APSSP)
- Canadian Office and Professional Employees Union, Ontario (COPE)
- Custodial and Maintenance Association (CAMA)
- Coalition of Education Assistants of Ontario – Dufferin-Peel Educational Resources Workers' Association
- Coalition of Education Assistants of Ontario – Educational Resource Facilitators of Peel
- Coalition of Education Assistants of Ontario – Halton District Educational Assistants' Association
- Coalition of Education Assistants of Ontario – Waterloo Region District School Board

Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) and Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF)

As of September 2008, unions representing Ontario's elementary and secondary teachers (as well as some support staff affiliates) have decided to leave the provincial table and will commence bargaining with their local school boards without a Provincial Discussion Table Agreement.

This means that the elementary and secondary school teacher federations with the Lambton Kent District School Board do not have provincial framework agreements.

Failure to Reach A Provincial Discussion Table Agreement

The Ministry of Education intends to seek approval of regulations to provide boards who do not reach provincial framework agreements with a level of funding that would permit a 2% annual salary increase for the next two years for their employees. In addition, certain provisions of the Provincial Discussion Table Agreements such as staffing level increases will not be permitted.

Next Steps in Negotiations

For all those employees whose provincial union has signed a Provincial Discussion Table Agreement, the Board will proceed to complete contract negotiations with the local affiliates. Once a tentative agreement has been reached, both parties will move to ratification.

For employees of teacher and support staff unions whose provincial union has not reached a Provincial Discussion Table Agreement, local bargaining will commence. These employee groups will not be eligible for the salary increase levels and staffing provisions of the Provincial Discussion Table Agreements, as stipulated by the Ministry of Education.

As prescribed by law, the Board will commence contract discussions which will be subject to the parameters as set out by the Ministry (e.g. no provincial agreement compensation limits) and/or the financial capacity of the Board, as set out in the funding levels provided by the Ministry of Education. Public school boards can only agree to compensation and staffing levels that the government has provided funding for. There is no additional funding to exceed these parameters.

Clearly this will place limits on negotiations. It should be noted that the Board will not be able to agree to contract terms that exceed the Ministry allocation or put the Board in a deficit position. All school boards must have balanced budgets.

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