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To: All Ontario School Board Locals and staff servicing school board locals

From: School Board sector staff team

Date: Tuesday, December 1, 2020

RE: Job Security and Funding for School Boards

On November 26, 2020 the Ministry of Education issued a B-memo to all school boards indicating that it would be providing stable funding for school boards that have seen unexpected declining enrolment due to COVID-19.¹ The goal of the stabilization funding is “to mitigate the financial impact of the unexpected enrolment decrease, and to ensure ongoing supports and programming for students”.

Although the B-memo does indicate that individual allocations under the GSN might decrease, overall funding for boards should remain stable. With the additional COVID-related funding announced in August, and the policy statement from the Ministry that boards should ensure ongoing supports for students, we believe there is no legitimate reason for boards to reduce the protected complement (LOU #3 of the Central Agreement) based on funding reductions.

On October 30, 2020, the Minister of Education issued a memo² to all boards indicating that the Ministry was canceling the October 31 enrolment audit. The enrolment audit is conducted twice per year to verify enrolment numbers and adjust funding. We consider the enrolment audit to be the formal basis for boards ability to reduce the protected complement based on LOU #3. The absence of a formal headcount of students should mean that there should be no reduction in staffing based on declining enrolment. The Minister’s memo states that this decision was made, in part, “to be responsive to operational challenges currently facing school boards.” The clear implication is that, as a matter of public policy, the Ministry intends to maintain service levels.

¹ Ministry of Education B-memo 2020:B-22, “2020-21 Grants for Student Needs Funding Stabilization”, November 26, 2020, https://efis.fma.csc.gov.on.ca/faab/Memos/B2020/B22_EN.pdf

² Minister of Education, memo, “Supporting School Board Operations for the 2020/21”

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CHARLES FLEURY
National Secretary-Treasurer/Secrétaire-trésorier national

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B-memos from August 4³ and August 26, 2020⁴ indicate additional funding for staffing, including for CUPE Represented positions, indicating that increasing staffing levels was a priority for the Ministry. Moreover, the early planning and additional funding for boards indicates that, for the purposes of LOU #3, this was not an unforeseeable or catastrophic event. That is, planning was done before hand (therefore it was not unforeseeable) and measures were taken to ensure that staffing levels would increase (therefore it was not “catastrophic” for boards).

While this information might not prevent boards from attempting to reduce the protected complement of CUPE locals, we believe that there is no basis for actually reducing staffing levels. Funding has been stabilized, and increased, for the 2020-21 school year, the enrolment audit has been canceled for the fall, and the Ministry has repeatedly made it clear that it is the policy of this government that staffing levels be maintained. We believe that LOU #3 provides sufficient protection to fight against job cuts by boards.

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³ Ministry of Education B-memo 2020 B-11, “Investments to Support School Reopening in Response to the COVID-19 Outbreak”, October 4, 2020, https://efis.fma.csc.gov.on.ca/faab/Memos/B2020/B11_EN.pdf

⁴ Ministry of Education B-memo 2020-B14, “Additional Funding for School Reopening”, August 26, 2020, https://efis.fma.csc.gov.on.ca/faab/Memos/B2020/B14_EN.pdf