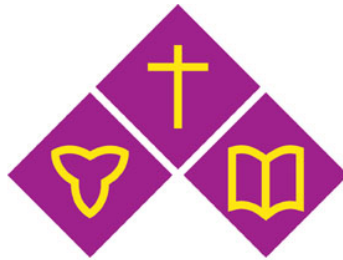


Twenty-First Century Learning: The Road Ahead

A Brief to the Minister of Education

October 27, 2011



Ontario Catholic School
Trustees' Association



Ontario Catholic School
Trustees' Association

OUR MISSION

Inspired by the Gospel, we provide leadership, service and a provincial voice for Catholic School Boards in promoting and protecting Catholic education.

OUR VISION

In keeping with our Mission, the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association:

OPERATIONAL VALUES

- **Embodies** and promotes the values and traditions of our Catholic faith in all Association activities.
- **Respects** the principles of democratic and accountable governance.

POLITICAL ADVOCACY

- **Protects** the constitutional right of the Catholic community to govern, control and manage Catholic schools.
- **Promotes** education in our province that reflects the Catholic principles of social justice.
- **Advocates** for government recognition of the distinctive nature of Catholic education.
- **Advocates** for provincial policy, legislation and funding support that enable Catholic boards to provide quality Catholic education.
- **Influences** the strategic and political direction of the Ontario government and opposition parties regarding issues that impact Catholic education.

INFORMATION & SERVICES

- **Provides** faith formation and professional development resources and opportunities for its members.
- **Provides** to member boards information and services that recognize their diverse circumstances and needs.

COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLIC RELATIONS

- **Develops** effective structures that enhance communication and working relationships among OCSTA and its member boards.
- **Communicates** with member Boards and Catholic partners regarding relevant educational issues and OCSTA activities.
- **Promotes** public understanding of and support for Catholic education.
- **Celebrates** and **highlights** Catholic education's significant and continuing contribution to Ontario society.

PARTNERSHIPS

- **Stimulates** ongoing visioning of how Catholic education partners can collaborate to serve the interests of Catholic education.
- **Builds** significant partnerships within and beyond the Catholic community in support of Catholic education.

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Introduction

Much has been accomplished during the previous decade to prepare the four publicly funded systems of education in Ontario to meet the challenges of learning and teaching in the 21st Century. Yet, there remains important work to be done. Learners need to be prepared to function effectively in a world that is much different from that experienced by their parents. The instructional supports that today's students need are different and more costly than was required to meet instructional challenges of the past.

OCSTA's previous finance briefs have brought to the attention of the Minister of the day issues that Catholic school boards believe need to be addressed. Our Association has been pleased with the Ministry response to a number of recommendations that we have made. On some topics, there is still room for improvement.

The present brief is divided into two sections: 1) Priorities for 21st Century Learning; and 2) Unfinished Business. The first will be the highly focused core of the brief, the second is found in Appendix A.

PRIORITIES FOR 21ST CENTURY LEARNING: RECOMMENDATIONS

Technology

When the funding model was implemented in 1998, it was based on historical spending patterns from the "1997 costing framework." It did not envisage or provide for new, larger and more complex systems of information technology. The funding benchmarks have not been increased since 1998 to recognize these more expensive applications of technology. As a result, the current GSN funding model does not provide sufficient funding to cover the ongoing costs associated with current technologies, which are critical to instructional programs in the 21st Century.

In addition, the GSN does not provide any one-time funding for the upgrading of the foundation ICT infrastructure (e.g., servers, network switches and network communications), which has a maximum life cycle of seven-to-ten years and now needs to be upgraded if students and teachers are to fully benefit from the advantages that technologies offer to classroom instruction. The costs associated with the ongoing maintenance and one-time upgrading of these systems are relatively common to all boards in Ontario and these must be addressed through the GSN.

In order to function effectively and efficiently and to meet both internal and external reporting requirements, school boards, as most organizations, have become more reliant on information technology in both administrative and academic areas. A portion of the Foundation Grant

(reduced in 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12) provides funding for the latter, however, there is no specific IT grant for administrative needs. Computer hardware and software quickly become obsolete and must be refreshed in order to maintain efficiency and effectiveness. Although the cost of hardware has generally decreased over the years, the cost of sophisticated software programs, support and training have escalated. These costs must be funded from the board administration envelope and have contributed to increases in expenditures over the past few years.

OCSTA recognizes that the backlog of technological needs is so great that the Ministry will not be able to fund all that is required in a single year. It is critical, however, that the Ministry of Education signal its intention to address this pressing need.

Recommendation

- 1. That the 2012-13 GSN reflect a significant first step on the part of the Ministry of Education to address needs in both classroom and administrative technology, including aging technological infrastructure, over a period of three to four years.**
- 2. That, as part of this phased-in funding, the Ministry of Education provide school boards with one-time funding for technology upgrading as well as annual funding for ongoing technology upgrades and software maintenance and support.**

Early Learning Program (ELP)

Implementation of the Early Learning Program began in 2010-11. The indication is that the ELP has been received well by parents and educators. OCSTA applauds and agrees with this initiative. At the same time, we are also mindful that the move to full implementation will require a substantial investment of resources by the Ministry of Education and by school boards.

Even though we are still in the early stages of implementation, there have been opportunities to identify several issues that need to be addressed with respect to the funding of the ELP.

Some schools had available classroom space for the first and second years of program implementation. Yet, school boards have incurred capital costs to make those classrooms “program ready.” These capital costs were not covered by the grant in 2010-11 or 2011-12. In addition, the grant for the ELP was not sufficient to cover the start-up costs for materials and supplies required for the appropriate delivery of the program.

Recommendation

- 3. That capital costs and the cost of classroom supplies and learning materials be adequately recognized for the 2012-13 fiscal year.**
- 4. That the Grant for Student Needs (GSN) include specific provision for the start-up costs associated with the opening of all ELP classrooms.**

One of the most serious shortcomings of the ELP funding is that there is insufficient funding for replacement of Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) who may be absent from the classroom due to illness or some other legitimate purpose. If immediate resolution of this situation is not achieved, school boards will face deficits for reasons not of their making.

Recommendation

- 5. That the GSN make adequate provision for the replacement cost of Early Childhood Educators (ECE) who cannot work due to illness or other legitimate reasons.**

The popularity of the ELP has manifested itself in some cases with far more requests for spaces than planned for in the ELP roll-out. In some cases boards have opened additional classrooms to meet community needs. In the first two years, the additional costs of doing so have not been covered. Special consideration should be given to funding these classrooms in the third and subsequent years.

In 2012-13, many schools will require significant upgrades and changes in order to provide space for full day learning for four and five year olds. Adequate and equitable Ministry funding, both operational and capital, will be required to provide for the further expansion of the ELP.

It is important to recognize that a child's entry into such a program will significantly influence her or his family's long term choice of a school and thus school system. In order to ensure that this program does not interfere with the normal pattern of student enrolment, it is extremely important that implementation is done on an equitable basis and as quickly as possible.

Recommendation

- 6. That full implementation of the ELP be completed as quickly as possible.**

Funding of the ELP is based on an average class size of 26. Smaller school boards, generally, and school boards that have a high proportion of their students in areas that are not densely populated, already fail to get to an average class size of 26. They cannot generate enough ELP classes of between 27 and 29 students to get to an average of 26. This will only worsen in the latter years of implementation. These boards incur a serious gap between the cost of delivering the program and the funding that they receive for it. The formula for funding the ELP in school boards that cannot reach an average class size of 26, due to the distribution of its population, needs to be adjusted.

Recommendation

- 7. That the formula for funding the ELP be adjusted so as to recognize the structural inability of some boards to achieve an average class size of 26.**

In some school boards, there exist in contractual agreements with teachers' class size clauses that predate the ELP and provide for a lower pupil-teacher ratio than the class size basis on which the ELP is funded. As a result, these boards must either tolerate a gap in their ELP funding or face grievances that will result in expensive arbitrations in which they are unlikely to prevail.

Recommendation

- 8. That the Ministry of Education, either by regulation or legislation, clarify that ELP funding and class-size criteria take precedence over contractual class size clauses.**

The history of education funding in Ontario indicates that predictability and equity of funding is best achieved when education programs are funded inside the GSN. Now that the ELP is an ongoing feature of JK-12 education in Ontario, it is time to treat its funding in a manner that is commensurate with its permanent status.

Recommendation

- 9. That all operating funding associated with the ELP be provided inside the GSN, effective 2012-13.**

As part of the June, 2010 PDT discussion involving ECEs, a good-faith agreement was reached that issues of Pay Equity would not be raised with respect to these employees until at least August 31, 2012. This is not, however, a provision of the final agreement.

The work that these childhood educators do is coming to be defined more-and-more as "teaching." There is currently a large gap between pay levels of ECEs and teachers. All school boards will be at risk of incurring sizeable Pay Equity adjustments. Further, the Pay Equity review process is itself time consuming and financially expensive.

Recommendations

- 10. That the resolution of Pay Equity issues take place at the provincial level as part of the on-going PDT process.**
- 11. That the costs of the Pay Equity appeals process be funded by the Ministry of Education.**
- 12. That resulting awards, if any, be fully paid as part of the GSN.**

CLOSING THE GAP

There are concerns about the funding model that, if fully addressed, would empower Catholic school boards to more successfully deliver on the objectives that they share with the Ministry: student success, accountability and continued respect for publicly funded education in Ontario.

Flexibility

The need for flexibility was the major theme of OCSTA's 2010 Finance Brief. Changes to the 2011-12 GSN addressed a number of the issues that were raised in that Brief. For those we are very appreciative. Unfortunately, the issue of spending flexibility was not adequately addressed.

OCSTA appreciates the government's commitment to four systems of publicly-funded education and to student success. We welcome the funding that has been provided to meet the government's priorities in primary class size-reduction, student success, lower drop-out rates and early learning opportunities. Catholic school boards support these initiatives and are proud of the positive results that Catholic schools are achieving.

All Catholic school boards have submitted balanced estimates for 2012-13. It is clear, however, that our member boards are struggling with their financial situation. Two-thirds of them (19 of 29) had to draw down dwindling operating reserves to balance. In addition, some boards had to resort to severe cost-cutting measures including the reduction of administrative, academic and support staff, the deferral of required maintenance and reductions in discretionary expenditure in non-staff (including classroom) areas. These "one-time" measures cannot be continued over the medium or long term. Eventually they must be replaced by sustainable revenue streams that are predictable, in order to bring stability to school board operations and finances.

OCSTA understands the value of overall constraint in these challenging economic times, but does not agree with the recent reductions in specific grants such as the Board Administration and Governance Grant and the Classroom Computer Grant. If the Ministry needs to make reductions in the GSN, it would be better done on an overall basis, allowing school boards the flexibility to determine how and where to make the expenditure reductions. This would be a more transparent approach to funding that would clearly recognize school boards' authority to make expenditure decisions.

Flexibility is enhanced when funding in all parts of the GSN is adequate. Reductions in specific grants reduce the flexibility on which all school boards depend to address local needs and, in the case of Catholic boards, to address the denominational needs of our system.

It is important that the Ministry of Education recognize that changes to the GSN and other circumstances have severely reduced school board autonomy and flexibility to address local needs. PDT agreements combined with matching GSN funding have reduced considerably a serious source of financial pressures on school boards. At the same time, however, these agreements have removed an important source of flexibility that school boards had previously,

when there was the opportunity to “trade-off” some salary increases in favour of other items such as working conditions and benefits. OCSTA is not suggesting that we would prefer to return to pre-PDT types of arrangements. Rather, we are pointing-out that no changes have been made to the GSN to restore even part of the previous flexibility.

Reductions in certain grants and increased “sweating” of grants has further subtracted from the ability of school boards to meet local needs and, in the case of Catholic boards, to address the unique denominational character of their mission.

Recommendation

13. That the Ministry of Education provide adequate funding in all parts of the GSN in order to increase the level of flexibility available to school boards.

14. That the Ministry of Education take positive steps in the 2012-13 GSN to increase spending flexibility to allow school boards to address local priorities and needs.

Special Education

Every discussion of the funding of education in Ontario, sooner rather than later, turns to funding of special education. Special education is not only a significant part of the budget of all school boards, but also tends to be the part of the budget where the gap between the funds allocated by the Ministry and the expenditures of the board is greatest. Few would disagree that funding for special education should be adequate, equitable and sustainable. Few, if any, school boards would consider that this has been achieved.

The 2012-13 GSN included an increase of almost \$200 million for special education, which was needed and much appreciated. Yet all but one of the 29 Catholic school boards report, in their estimates, that their expenditures on special education will exceed their allocation in 2012-13. Collectively, they will exceed their allocation by 10% or \$67.4 million.

There are indications that, in some quarters of the Ministry of Education, there is a view that school boards may be taking inadequate account of the fact that special education students generate funding beyond the special education grant itself, for example, through the Pupil Foundation Grant. The implication is that the funding gap is not as great as claimed by school boards. OCSTA disagrees with this view. Grant funds generated by special education students properly go to pay the services and salaries of persons who work in the school. Specifically, if the special education student is in a regular classroom for any part of the day, that student is counted as full-time in that classroom for such things as class-size calculations; there is no “saving” that can be applied to the additional programs and services received by these students.

OCSTA supports a layered approach to special education funding. The current practice of providing grants through the Foundation Grant and supplementing these with a separate and

protected Special Education Per Pupil Amount (SEPPA) grant to assist in provision of services and programs for students with special needs must be maintained. It is necessary, however, that benchmarks within the SEPPA allocation be reviewed and updated to better reflect the real costs experienced by boards.

Students with high levels of need constitute a significant pressure point on special education budgets. It appears that the funding formula used to allocate funds for these students does not adequately reflect the prevalence of such students in our schools or of the real costs associated with providing the educational programs and services that they require.

Recommendation

15. That the Ministry of Education continue to allocate funds for special education through a layered process that includes the Foundation Grant, a separate and protected SEPPA grant and funding to recognize the changing incidence of students with high needs.

Parents as well as professionals who are involved with young people who have high need for special education services have often noted that the gains made by these children during the school year are eroded during the period of summer recess. If the educational gains made by these high-needs students are to be cumulative, rather than largely repetitive, it is important that programming be provided for them over the summer months.

Recommendation

16. That the Ministry of Education provide funding for educational programs during the summer that will keep students with high needs from losing the gains made during the school year.

Capital Issues

School boards and, arguably, the Ministry of Education, benefitted from previous capital allocation programs in a number of ways. Paramount among these were the predictability and flexibility afforded to school boards to plan, on a district-wide basis, for the most effective and efficient means of addressing their various capital requirements. While several of those capital allocation programs have now been discontinued, the capital needs of school boards have not abated.

The continuing needs of school boards include the following:

1. Old schools need to be re-built;
2. Some schools need to be consolidated due to declining enrolment and this often requires some capital upgrades to “receiving” schools;

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3. Deferred maintenance needs still exist in all school boards;
 4. Ultimately all schools will need to meet AODA accessibility standards, but there are no funds earmarked to address these needs; and
 5. Even with overall decreases in enrolment, new schools need to be built in the growth areas that are sometimes far from existing schools.

OCSTA appreciated the inclusion in the 2011-12 GSN of multi-year funding for certain types of capital projects. This change falls short, however, of the comprehensive set of capital grants that previously existed. Under the current system a multiplicity of different projects, which under the previous system were streamed into specific capital programs, are now herded into two funding streams one for priority capital needs and one for priority renewal needs. The solution may not be to return completely to the previous system, but there is a need to expand capital grants programs further to enable the Ministry and School boards to better engage in long-term planning and realize the efficiencies and accountability that such planning makes possible.

The current situation would benefit from the creation of a multi-year program to address capital needs. This would seriously enhance predictability and make it possible for school boards to plan and clearly articulate those plans to the Ministry. It would also make it easier for the Ministry to review applications and make allocations in an orderly and transparent manner that reflect the priorities of both the Ministry and school boards.

Recommendation

- 17. That one or more additional multi-year capital funding processes be established in order to restore the ability of both the Ministry of Education and school boards to plan for future capital needs.**

The benchmarks that have been used to fund capital projects have been a problem for some time. OCSTA is appreciative that the benchmarks were increased in 2010-2011. None the less, they have not been sufficiently updated to keep up with increases in the cost of construction. In addition, variation in cost of construction in various parts of the province is not adequately reflected in the benchmarks. OCSTA recommends that benchmarks be updated yearly, in order that they do not fall so far behind that addressing them becomes a large financial burden.

Recommendation

- 18. That the benchmarks utilized in the calculation of funding capital programs be updated annually and adjusted to reflect inflation and other changing construction costs as well as variations in these costs across Ontario.**

One of the capital programs that no longer exists is the New Pupil Places Grant. Its prime objective was to replace temporary accommodation, some of which have been in place for

twenty years or more, with permanent accommodation. The loss of this grant program has been to the particular detriment of Catholic school boards because they have proportionally more temporary accommodations than their coterminous boards.

Recommendation

19. That the Ministry re-dedicate itself to a capital grants program that has the objective of replacing temporary accommodation with permanent facilities.

Aboriginal Education

Ontario Catholic school boards serve varying numbers of Aboriginal students. The education of Aboriginal children who live on-reserve but attend off-reserve schools is the responsibility of the Federal Government. Payment for the education of these students is done through “tuition agreements” between the school board and the appropriate Band Councils. The costs covered by these agreements are regulated by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (DINAC).

Several problems have been identified with respect to these tuition agreements. In some cases they have been difficult to complete. School boards find that, for many First Nations students, the cost of delivering the educational services they need exceeds the revenue that flows from the tuition agreement. Some school boards have experienced difficulty in collecting the tuition specified in agreements. For smaller boards, late payments can pose serious cash-flow problem. For all boards, long term delays are problematic. School boards are not staffed to act as collection agencies and the usually available measures to collect delinquent accounts have limited applicability when the owing party is a Band Council.

In order to begin to address these issues over the longer term, OCSTA recommends that Ontario’s Ministry of Education, together with representatives of school boards and First Nations, explore the possibility of having First Nations students attending board-operated schools recognized and funded as resident pupils of the board. Representatives of DINAC should also be included in such discussions, as direct payments from DINAC to the Ministry could facilitate such a change.

Ontario school boards find that many Aboriginal students require specialized programs to meet their needs. Often these are special education programs and services. Frequently they include English as a second language programs. DINAC regulations do not allow for all of these additional costs to be covered. School boards are not in a position to work directly with DINAC and attempts to work through Band Councils have not been successful. The Ministry of Education is in a far more favourable situation to approach DINAC for required funding. Our member boards would be pleased to assist the Ministry in making appropriate representation to DINAC.

Recommendation

20. That the Ministry of Education work together with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to ensure the following:

- a. That tuition agreements be replaced by other funding mechanisms that would avoid the present difficulties associated with establishing tuition agreements and with collecting amounts due in a prompt and predictable manner; and**
- b. That tuition agreements (or whatever other mechanism that is put in place) provide sufficient funding for the programs needed by many First Nations children with respect to special education and other expensive services.**

The goal of the Early learning Program (ELP) is to enhance the school/learning readiness of students before they get to grade 1. It is expected that this will manifest itself in a variety of advantages throughout the educational career of young people. Performance in the areas of numeracy and literacy should be enhanced not only throughout elementary school, but also through secondary school. Increased student success should manifest itself in such things as staying in school, credit accumulation, graduation rates and preparation for college and university.

Many Aboriginal children who attend elementary school on-reserve will attend Ontario secondary schools. OCSTA is concerned that these students will not have had the advantage of the ELP, and may be disadvantaged as a result. OCSTA encourages the Ministry of Education to strongly encourage its counterparts at DINAC to make available to children schooled on-reserve the benefits of the ELP.

Recommendation

21. That the Ministry of Education work together with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to ensure that the benefits of the Early Learning Program be made available to children in on-reserve elementary schools, most of whom will eventually move to secondary schools operated by school boards in Ontario.

Copyright Proceedings and Tariffs

Ontario is the only province where school boards, rather than the provincial education ministry, are subject to the Access Copyright, JK-12, “photocopy” tariff. School boards, through their provincial organizations, are directly involved in the tariff setting process.

That anomaly has respectable historical roots. About 1980, the Ontario Ministry of Education was the first province to negotiate a photocopy license for JK to 12 education. When the license was renewed, the Ministry arranged for the school boards to be licensees. Other provinces later

negotiated licenses, but the ministry was the licensee in each case. When ministries of education became aware that licenses or tariffs for forms of copying other than photocopying, i.e., digital copying, were imminent, all the ministries of education, including Ontario, formed a consortium to address digital copying issues. Hence, in Ontario, unlike any of the other provinces (excluding Quebec) or territories, there are two tracts of responsibility for copyright: photocopying and digital copying.

Technological advances have now erased most of the difference between digital copying and what is still called photocopying. Modern “photocopiers” make a digital copy of the item to be copied. “Photocopiers” are used as digital printers. The worlds of photocopying and digital copying have morphed so as to no longer be meaningfully distinguished. The current application for a new JK-12 tariff includes digital copying, but the school boards in Ontario remain engaged in the tariff setting process as Objectors to the high tariff that Access Copyright has filed with the Copyright Board of Canada.

OCSTA believes it would be more effective and efficient for the Ontario Ministry of Education to assume all of these roles.

Recommendation

- 22. That the Ministry of Education, rather than school boards in Ontario, assume responsibility for all copyright tariff setting processes as well as become subject to the resulting copyright tariff(s).**

Educational Programs Other (EPO) Grants

Grants under the name of “Educational Programs Other” (EPO) have become a well recognized part of the funding of education in this province. Five years ago there were 30 such grants; today, there are many more. These funds are provided in-year and outside the GSN. They are for targeted projects, and are conducted within the same fiscal year in which they are announced and often require an application and one or more reports.

There are usually undeniable merits to the projects funded through EPO grants. The problem for many school boards is that they must be applied for and initiated outside of their usual planning and implementation cycle and often with very short timelines. Many of these grants involve one-time funding and have a life of much less than one year, which limits the value that the grant can generate for the board. When combined with the reporting requirements, these limitations cause some boards, particularly small ones with little administrative staff, to pass on the opportunity to apply for these funds.

Recommendation

- 23. That school boards be given as much advance notice as possible about new opportunities for EPO grants.**

We have previously made the Ministry of Education aware of these concerns and are grateful that some of our concerns about reporting requirements have been taken into consideration. Yet, much more needs to be done.

Recommendation

- 24. That the administrative requirements with respect to EPO grants continue to be reduced.**

It would be helpful to boards if the Ministry of Education put in place a mechanism that would allow boards, in special circumstances, and with the permission of the Ministry, to use an EPO allocation over two fiscal years. These exceptional circumstances could include the board's ability to demonstrate that phased implementation would greatly improve the outcomes of the project compared to that which could be achieved in-year.

Recommendation

- 25. That provision be made to allow school boards, with the permission of the Ministry of Education, to delay partial or full implementation of certain EPO grants if doing so would demonstrably improve the quality of the initiative.**

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

Standards

OCSTA and its member boards support fully the goals and principles of AODA and the long-term benefits that will accrue to Ontarians when it is fully implemented.

Working together with our counterpart organization, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, OCSTA has provided its views about the standards and regulations pertaining to Customer Service, Information and Communication, Employment Accessibility, Transportation and the Built Environment. While OCSTA welcomes the on-going implementation of the AODA and very much appreciates the collaborative process by which standards have been developed, we are concerned about the school boards' ability to fund the modifications to facilities, administrative processes and other aspects of board operations that will be required as a result of these new standards. School board funding does not currently recognize costs associated with implementing the new standards. Given the extensive demands on school board resources, now and in the foreseeable future, funding to meet the many requirements of the *Act* must be provided.

In our submissions to the Minister, OCSTA and OPSBA spoke of the difficulties in obtaining the necessary funding to bring current IT systems to the standard necessary under the proposed AODA Standard for Accessible Information and Communication. The same point was made that we have made earlier in our section on Technology, that school boards are already experiencing challenges with inadequate funding to replace obsolescent administrative and instructional systems and to bring classrooms up to a standard compatible with teaching and learning needs of the 21st Century.

Recommendation

- 26. That the Ministry of Education, together with other appropriate Ministries of the Government of Ontario, provide the financial resources, both immediate and ongoing, that will allow school boards to be compliant, within the timelines, with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act and its regulated standards.**

Conclusion

OCSTA's Finance Briefs have been an important vehicle of communication about financial issues facing our member Catholic school boards. The Association continues to be grateful for the positive reception afforded to our briefs by the Minister and Ministry officials. We look forward to continuing opportunities for dialogue. We are willing and prepared to assist the Minister and her officials on questions of future changes to the funding of education.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation

1. That the 2012-13 GSN reflect a significant first step on the part of the Ministry of Education to address needs in both classroom and administrative technology, including aging technological infrastructure, over a period of three to four years.
2. That, as part of this phased-in funding, the Ministry of Education provide school boards with one-time funding for technology upgrading as well as annual funding for ongoing technology upgrades and software maintenance and support.
3. That capital costs and the cost of classroom supplies and learning materials be adequately recognized for the 2012-13 fiscal year.
4. That the Grant for Student Needs (GSN) include specific provision for the start-up costs associated with the opening of all ELP classrooms.
5. That the GSN make adequate provision for the replacement cost of Early Childhood Educators (ECE who cannot work due to illness or other legitimate reasons).
6. That full implementation of the ELP be completed as quickly as possible.
7. That the formula for funding the ELP be adjusted so as to recognize the structural inability of some boards to achieve an average class size of 26.
8. That the Ministry of Education, either by regulation or legislation, clarify that ELP funding and class-size criteria take precedence over contractual class size clauses.
9. That all operating funding associated with the ELP be provided inside the GSN, effective 2012-13.
10. That the resolution of Pay Equity issues take place at the provincial level as part of the on-going PDT process.
11. That the costs of the Pay Equity appeals process be funded by the Ministry of Education.
12. That resulting awards, if any, be fully paid as part of the GSN.

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13. That the Ministry of Education provide adequate funding in all parts of the GSN in order to increase the level of flexibility available to school boards.
 14. That the Ministry of Education take positive steps in the 2012-13 GSN to increase spending flexibility to allow school boards to address local priorities and needs.
 15. That the Ministry of Education continue to allocate funds for special education through a layered process that includes the Foundation Grant, a separate and protected SEPPA grant and funding to recognize the changing incidence of students with high needs.
 16. That the Ministry of Education provide funding for educational programs during the summer that will keep students with high needs from losing the gains made during the school year.
 17. That one or more additional multi-year capital funding processes be established in order to restore the ability of both the Ministry of Education and school boards to plan for future capital needs.
 18. That the benchmarks utilized in the calculation of funding capital programs be updated annually and adjusted to reflect inflation and other changing costs as well as variations in these costs across Ontario.
 19. That the Ministry re-dedicate itself to a capital grants program that has the objective of replacing temporary accommodation with permanent facilities.
 20. That the Ministry of Education work together with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to ensure the following:
 - c. That tuition agreements be replaced by other funding mechanisms that would avoid the present difficulties associated with establishing tuition agreements and with collecting amounts due in a prompt and predictable manner; and
 - d. That tuition agreements (or whatever other mechanism that is put in place) provide sufficient funding for the programs needed by many First Nations children with respect to special education and other expensive services.
 21. That the Ministry of Education work together with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to ensure that the benefits of the Early Learning Program be made available to children in on-reserve elementary schools, most of whom will eventually move to secondary schools operated by school boards in Ontario.
 22. That the Ministry of Education, rather than school boards in Ontario, assume responsibility for all copyright tariff setting processes as well as become subject to the resulting copyright tariff(s).

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23. That school boards be given as much advance notice as possible about new opportunities for EPO grants.
 24. That the administrative requirements with respect to EPO grants continue to be reduced.
 25. That provision be made to allow school boards, with the permission of the Ministry of Education, to delay partial or full implementation of certain EPO grants if doing so would demonstrably improve the quality of the initiative.
 26. That the Ministry of Education, together with other appropriate Ministries of the Government of Ontario, provide the financial resources, both immediate and ongoing, that will allow school boards to be compliant, within the timelines, with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act and its regulated standards.

APPENDIX A

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: ITEMS OF CONTINUING CONCERN

There are certain recommendations that have been made by OCSTA in previous years, which have not yet been fully addressed. OCSTA has chosen not to repeat these items in detail, but considers them important enough to list here. We would be pleased to supply background information on any of these issues.

Declining Enrolment

That the GSNs ensure that the Declining Enrolment Adjustment realistically recognize the timeframe within which boards are able to adjust their costs in the light of lost enrolment: First year, 100%, Second Year, 50% and Third Year, 25%.

That the funding formula be adjusted such that qualifying for the declining enrolment grant be calculated separately for the elementary and secondary panels, rather than on the “net” of the two taken together.

Employee Benefits

That the Ministry immediately undertake a study of the cost of benefits, including the costs that relate to the end of mandatory retirement, and adjust the GSN to address the remaining shortfall in funding for employee benefits in three additional stages, starting in 2012-13.

New Initiatives

That the Ministry of Education provide full funding for its new initiatives and that full funding accompany all new government initiatives, including funding to recognize the cost of utilities and the HST.

Legal Costs

That the GSN make additional provision for legal costs, beyond what is now covered in the GSN.

That the Ministry of Education do one of the following: either create a special budget “home” for legal costs that is not in the Administration and Governance category; or, as an alternative, remove legal costs from the Administration and Governance line when tests for compliance are conducted.

Transportation Consortia

That the Ministry of Education review and refine its transportation reform policy so as to achieve the following: 1) make clear the continuing authority and autonomy of school boards to establish policy regarding student transportation within their jurisdiction; and 2) include the right to withdraw from a consortium as the final step in the dispute resolution process.

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