



Ontario Catholic School
Trustees' Association

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Honourable Peter Milczyn, MPP
Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs
Eric Rennie, Committee Clerk
99 Wellesley Street West, Room 1405 Whitney Block
Queen's Park, M7A 1A2
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(erennie@ola.org)

RE: Bill 148 An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and the Labour Relations Act, 1995 and to make related amendments to other Acts

Dear Mr. Milczyn and Mr. Rennie:

On behalf of the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association ("OCSTA") we are pleased to provide you with our submission on Bill 148, *An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and the Labour Relations Act, 1995 and to make related amendments to other Acts* ("Bill 148"). The concerns and recommendations contained within this submission reflect consultations with our Catholic school boards.

The Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA) was founded in 1930. It represents 237 elected Catholic trustees who collectively represent 29 English-language Catholic district school boards. Collectively, these school boards educate approximately 545,000 students from junior kindergarten to grade 12 and adults in continuing education programs province-wide.

Inspired by the Gospel, the Mission of the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association is to provide leadership, service and a provincial voice for elected Catholic school trustees who seek to promote and protect publicly funded Catholic education in Ontario.

General Summary:

OCSTA supports a just wage to ensure fairness for Ontario's workers. The concerns we elaborate below reflect potential impacts that should be taken into account by the Ministry of Education on school board operations and budgets. We also offer some suggestions for clarifying parts of Bill 148 with respect to possible changes to the Labour Relations Act.

Financial Impacts to School Boards of Changes to the Minimum Wage:

OCSTA's key concern with the proposed legislation relates to changes to the minimum wage and its impact on various employee groups within school boards. Section 14 (1) of Bill 148 proposes to amend Section 23 (1) of the *Employment Standards Act* ("EPA") to increase the minimum wage beginning on January 1, 2018 to \$14/hour and between January 1, 2019 and October 1, 2019 to \$15/hour. For example, the proposed changes will increase wages for school bus drivers and the costs of school bus transportation firms over time. These increased costs will then be passed onto already over extended school board transportation budgets.

The second employee group impacted includes cafeteria workers and other casual staff of school boards. Although these employee groups are not large, the increase in minimum wage could negatively impact the school boards staffing budgets. Current school board budgets are under strain to meet a variety of services and programs to students and any new increase in costs should be factored into the Ministry of Education's overall grant calculations.

The new costs associated with other proposed changes in the Bill will also have a negative impact on school board budgets. These include the proposed amendments to vacation pay, equal pay for equal work for part time employees and increases in personal emergency leaves. Beyond the actual costs of these proposed amendments, these changes will impose additional operational and administrative burdens on school boards.

OCSTA recommends that the Ministry of Education ensure that any new costs as a result of all of these proposed amendments to the EPA are reflected in annual adjustments to the Grants for Student Needs ("GSN").

Proposed Changes to the Labour Relations Act:

In Schedule 2, the government proposes to amend part of the Labour Relations Act ("the Act") to add new sections 15.1 and 15.2 that allow the Labour Relations Board to review the structure of bargaining units and to make orders in respect of those bargaining units. This may provide for the reconfiguration of non-teacher bargaining units that could have a significant impact on the negotiation and application of both local and central terms of negotiation in future rounds of bargaining for school boards. Again this could have significant cost impacts on school board budgets.

Further, the proposed amendments raise the issue of potential impacts to changes to existing regulations under the Employment Standards Act ("ESA"). At the present time, teachers are exempt from substantial portions of the provisions of the ESA through O. Reg.285/01. A review of this exemption and O. Reg. 285/01 and any changes to this exemption that may fall out of the amendments outlined in Bill 148 are of significant concern to OCSTA.

OCSTA Recommends That:

1. The Ministry ensure any new costs as a result of all of these proposed amendments to EPA are reflected in annual adjustments to the Grants for Student Needs (“GSN”).
2. The government clarify any potential impacts of the new sections 15.1 and 15.2 of the Labour Relations Act on the structure of bargaining units for school boards
3. The government clarify any impacts of Bill 148 on existing ESA teacher exemption regulations.