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August 10, 2012

Laurel Broten, Minister of Education
14th Floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

Dear Minister:

I am responding on behalf of the Ontario PC Caucus to your letter of August 7th, 2012, regarding the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) your government signed with the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to reiterate our position and provide our advice.

As you are aware, years of overspending have resulted in a serious jobs and debt crisis. As Don Drummond has noted, if we don't change direction we are headed toward a \$30 billion deficit. Ontario's debt burden will triple to over \$411 billion, more than all the debts of every other Canadian province and territory combined.

Since the government first signed the OECTA deal, you have claimed to have achieved a net-zero wage increase with OECTA. However, your own internal Ministry documents, school board documents and public documents from OECTA say otherwise. If you were actually achieving a 1.5 per cent pay cut, as you claim, the salary envelope for the Ministry of Education would be going down, but unfortunately, this is not the case.

The claim that this deal – which you want to use as a “roadmap” in all school board negotiations – constitutes a wage freeze is plainly inaccurate. Continued upward movement on the salary grid will still happen, enabling a \$7,000 pay raise over two years for fully 47,500 teachers. The remainder are simply at the upper limits of the grid now, prohibiting further movement on their part. So there is no “freeze” here. There will be a net increase in costs to school boards, with the inevitable consequence that money will be taken from the classroom to pay for salary increases.

Salary grid movement has not been frozen, and if your “OECTA roadmap” is implemented across all teachers' unions province-wide, the deal could cost as much as \$450 million. The three unpaid days off you negotiated, which coincide with Thanksgiving, Christmas and March Break, and that you claim will offset any grid increase, will at most save \$150 million, leaving a \$300-

million hole in the government's fiscal plan, which your most recent estimates have not factored into consideration. Most significantly, the 2012 budget itself specifies that in order to meet your government's fiscal targets, the teachers' salary grid must be frozen in its entirety. This is demonstrably not the outcome of the OECTA "template".

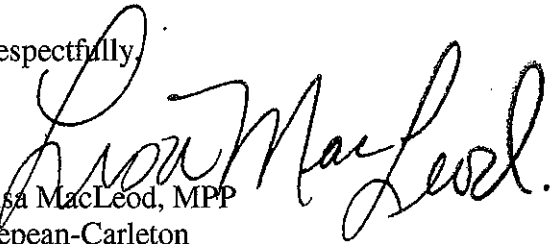
Our position is very clear on this matter: We need an across-the-board public sector wage freeze for all public employees. Without action to stop your government's overspending, our economy will continue to suffer and our children will be burdened by our reckless indebtedness.

On May 7, 2012, Tim Hudak held a news conference advocating a public sector wage freeze, noting that "Public sector salaries make up more than half of all government expenditures," and that "it's only fair to ask public sector workers to share in the sacrifices their private sector colleagues have already been making." Your government is well aware of our position as we have been publicly calling for this measure since the last election, and in fact, Mr. Hudak met personally with the Premier on November 18, 2011 and asked him to move forward with this necessary proposal.

If you truly have the best interests of Ontario students in mind, you could have supported the *Comprehensive Public Sector Compensation Freeze Act* tabled by Elgin-Middlesex-London MPP Jeff Yurek on May 16th that would have frozen salaries for all public sector employees. Needless to say, this legislation was voted down by every member of the Ontario Liberal Caucus.

I also thank you for your offer to meet with Ministry officials. I look forward to this meeting as I have a number of important questions on the OECTA deal and what classroom programs may be impacted by its imposition province-wide.

Respectfully,


Lisa MacLeod, MPP
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Ontario PC Education Critic