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OSTA: Janet Ecker Meets with Student Organization: Solutions to Education Crisis Discussed and Stakeholder Status Granted

TORONTO, ONTARIO--The Ontario Student Trustees' Association--l'Association des élèves conseillers de l'Ontario, a provincial organization of pupil representatives, met with Minister of Education, Janet Ecker at Queen's Park earlier this week. OSTA-AÉCO President, Karl Baldauf, and Vice President, Peter Doelman, conveyed the recommendations of OSTA-AÉCO's comprehensive report "Ontario's Students, Ontario's Future" and discussed solutions to the crisis in the education system. The Minister then granted the organization official stakeholder status citing the "unique" perspective a student organization will bring to the Ministry of Education.

"Students now have reason to believe that the Ministry is willing to listen to us," said Baldauf. "Our association has representatives from the Public, Catholic and French systems and recognizes the distinct nature of students in all parts of the province. The voice of students is stronger than ever with the 'unique' recognition granted to us. No organization has effectively represented our best interests. Our report is the voice of the students and the result of a month of consultation with students across the province."

The report was released at Queen's Park in December. It has been hailed by both Premier Mike Harris and Leader of the Opposition, Dalton McGuinty. Recommendations include:

- an increase in the length of school periods to fulfill the Ministry's objective of bringing in-class teaching time up to the national average
- condemning work to rule as a political action by teacher unions
- denouncing the full implementation of Bill 74
- citing the necessity for the federal government to reinstate provincial transfers
- demanding immediate discussions between the Ministry of Education and the unions with an OSTA-AÉCO representative present
- ensuring that any solutions will end the crisis in education on a long term basis. OSTA-AÉCO will build upon the consultation within this document and hopes to provide proposals to the Minister's Advisory Committee by the end of February on behalf of the students of Ontario.

"Our organization is committed to working with all stakeholders to bring peace to the system. We are seeking change. That is what the students want. That is what OSTA-AÉCO will achieve."

For more information visit the official OSTA-AÉCO website at www.osta-aeco.org

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