

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

RE: *Student Concerns Regarding Strike Action*

April 21st, 2015 –The Ontario Student Trustees' Association - l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario (OSTA-AECO) requests that the Ministry of Education, the Ontario Public School Board Association, and the Ontario Secondary School Teacher's Federation take into consideration the concerns of students regarding strike action, and return to the bargaining table to finish negotiations.

Trevor Sookraj, OSTA-AECO President and Peel DSB Student Trustee, comments, “[T]his is the second time in three years that our school year has been disrupted by labour negotiations. We call upon all stakeholders at the bargaining table to collaborate, and ensure students are not seriously affected by being out of the classroom”. The Bill 115 debacle in 2012 prevented teachers from running extra-curricular activities at public secondary schools for the majority of the school year, and had a severe consequence on student achievement.

Provincial leaders are looking to impose stricter contacts on teachers' unions, including removing classroom caps on students and enforcing heavier workloads, as part of province-wide confusion in the face of a large deficit and growing Ontario public debt. Teacher unions are rebelling against the contract negotiations, and have walked away from the bargaining table, planning strike action in seven boards across Ontario (Peel DSB, Ottawa-Carleton DSB, Lakehead DSB, Durham DSB, Halton DSB, Rainbow DSB, and Waterloo DSB).

In 2012, the Ontario Student Trustees' Association met with the Minister of Education and other stakeholders to ensure that students were being accurately represented, and that the issue was being addressed.

Durham DSB student trustee, James Hare, is experiencing his first day of strike action and echoes his disappointment. “Being home today feels like 20,000 kids just got suspended,” Hare said.

Lastly, OSTA-AECO has noted four key points that they want politicians, teacher union executives, and school boards across the province to hear:

1. The graduation of senior students is greatly jeopardized due to strike action. Students whose learning is disrupted because of strike action will be unprepared for university, and are disadvantaged in competing for scholarships.
2. The academic and extra-curricular experience of all students is severely affected. Students feel that they will be unprepared for future grades, and disadvantaged due to the reoccurring suspension of extra-curricular activities.
3. Students should not suffer because of negotiations or disputes between any parties. Students' well-being and their education should be the main priority of any educational negotiation.
4. OSTA-AECO calls upon Ontario teacher unions and provincial leaders to put students first and realize the example that they are setting for students across the province.

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