

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Presidents with members in the Ministry of Education
All Stewards in the Ministry of Education

FROM: Brian Gould, OPS Supervisor/Negotiator

DATE: October 9, 2007

SUBJECT: **Ministry of Education**
ERC Minutes – June 15, 2007

Attached, for your information, are the minutes of the above captioned meeting.

Please post or otherwise make them available to the members in your workplaces.

Also attached is a MERC referral form which should be used when referring unresolved local issues to the ministry level. The referral should be sent care of the Job Security Unit with all the supporting documentation, (e.g. minutes, correspondence, etc.), with any referrals.

PLEASE NOTE: THESE MINISTRY MINUTES WERE PREPARED BY THE EMPLOYER.

AUTHORIZED FOR DISTRIBUTION:

IN SOLIDARITY,



Warren (Smokey) Thomas
President



Brian Gould
OPS Supervisor/Negotiator

/fs
att.

cc: MERC Chairs
Ministry ERC

**MINISTRY EMPLOYEE RELATIONS COMMITTEE
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

MINUTES

**Friday June 15, 2007
Frontenac Room, 2nd Floor MacDonald Block
900 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario
9:30 a.m. – noon**

For the Employer

Lisa Sherin (Co-chair)
Mercedes Gagnon
Simon Ouellet
David Doherty
Deborah Metrakos

For the Union:

Alicia Czekierda (Co-chair)*
Chris Cormier
Sue Blackford
Stephen George

*Chair of the Meeting

Guest:

Scott Tyrer

REVIEW OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was reviewed and approved with the addition of two items: YMCA Daycare at E.C. Drury School, Centre Jules Leger Orientation Committee.

REVIEW OF THE MINUTES

The minutes of the March 29, 2007 meeting were referred to a subcommittee for finalization.

BUSINESS ARISING:

1. LERC Training Module

The Union asked whether management had yet received any survey feedback from the London LERC Training pilot. Management indicated that no official survey results had yet been received, but that it had

received positive feedback at CERC. The Union indicated that it felt the pilot project was successful and provided important information, but that it attempted to do too much in too little time. It indicated that it felt the training needed to be two days long, with a full day spent on conflict resolution and role-playing.

A discussion ensued about establishing a LERC or LERCs for the Field Services Branch. The Union indicated that it felt the need for a LERC that would allow face-to-face discussion of all members. Management indicated that it preferred the option of having a single LERC for the branch that would meet using the new Field Services Branch videoconferencing technology. It was agreed that establishing a LERC is a joint responsibility and that there is a need for joint communication to encourage employees to participate. It was also agreed that the co-chairs would discuss the issue further.

Commitment: *The Co-chairs will further discuss means of establishing a Field Services Branch LERC.*

2. Seniority Lists, True Vacancy Report, Unclassified Contracts

Management provided the Union with a breakdown of on-call supply staff versus regularly scheduled unclassified staff at Provincial Schools. The Union indicated concern over its inability to identify the work site in certain cases on the True Vacancy Report. Management agreed to review the situation and provide information on work sites in future reports.

3. Provincial Schools Governance

Management indicated there was nothing new to report on this item.

4. Residential Counselor 1 and 2 Job Specifications

The Union reiterated its view that the RC 1 position at Provincial Schools should be used as an underfill to the RC2 position, as it had in the past. It noted problems with retention, given there is no career path for RC1 counselors. It indicated that its position is consistent with the class standards which contemplate a progression from the RC1 position to the RC2 position after two years.

Management indicated that the issue would be reviewed as part of a Residence Review to be undertaken at Provincial Schools. The review will address the services provided, service infrastructure, organizational structures, and best practices with respect to staffing. While a contract has not yet been awarded on the review, and consequently details of the

methodology are not yet determined, Management indicated that it expected the review would include site visits and interviews with staff. Management committed to keeping the Union informed as to the process that will be undertaking in the review.

Management indicated that a contractor was expected to be hired by the end of June. The majority of interviews will probably occur in early September, with the final report expected by late fall. Management committed to share the report with the Union and to report on which recommendations have been accepted.

The Union asked whether there had been corporate disclosure of the review. Management committed to inquire as to whether disclosure had been provided.

Commitment: Management will inquire as to whether corporate disclosure was provided on the Residence Review. It will keep the union informed of the process that will be undertaken in the review and will share the report with the Union and report on which recommendations are accepted.

5. Workplace Safety Insurance Board Reports

Management reported that on January 5, 2007 "Basics of fall protection" training was provided by the Construction Safety Association at Sir James Whitney School to 7 staff members, and that the cleaners at E.C. Drury school received a demonstration on slip and falls provided by their manager. Training will be provided at E.C. Drury and W. Ross MacDonald by an outside training consultant for all maintenance, cleaning, and food services staff by October 2007. As there is only one maintenance staff at Roberts School, that individual will be trained at either W. Ross MacDonald or E.C. Drury in 2007.

Management indicated that it was aware that the Halton District School Board had a five-minute slip and fall video that it might be appropriate to add to the Ministry web-site. If permission is received, the video would be provided in addition to more formalized training. Management would also look at the possibility of having it translated into American Sign Language.

The Union asked whether a report on training could be provided at the LERCs. Management agreed to do so.

Commitment: Management will report on training at provincial school LERCs.

6. Work Boot Allowance

The Union expressed disappointment with the draft revision to the work boot allowance policy. It noted that it had recommended \$140 per year, whereas the draft policy authorizes \$140 every two years. The Union indicated that its recommendation is consistent with the allowance at comparable construction sites.

There was a discussion on the discretion incorporated into the draft policy for managers to authorize more than \$140 every two years on an individual basis. Management committed to communicating this discretion to managers. It also committed to reviewing the policy in light of the Union's concerns.

Commitments: Management will ensure that managers are aware of their discretion to exceed the work boot allowance on an individual basis.

7. Driver's License; Provincial Schools Branch

Management handed out draft Qs and As to be sent to staff on this issue. It indicated that it was willing to add more questions and answers as identified by the Union.

The Union indicated that it would have liked to have received the draft Qs and As prior to the meeting. It stated that it would refer this issue to the Central Employee Relations Committee, as it felt it needed a more in-depth response.

8. Wellness Survey

Management indicated that it had not been able to identify the wellness survey that the Union indicated had been conducted by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. It stated that it had learned that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing did have a health fair at which there was a self-awareness questionnaire. Management had not been able to reach the Ministry of Community and Social Services contact identified by the Union, but would continue to seek information from the Ministry. Management noted that the Union may be referring to consultations that had taken place by the Ministry of Government Services related to priorities for organizational health and wellness.

The Union agreed to attempt to find further information to assist Management to follow up on this issue.

Commitment: *The Union will provide further information on the wellness surveys.*

9. OPS Ideas Campaign

The Ideas Champion, Corporate Coordination Office, provided an overview of the OPS Ideas Campaign and the ideas submitted related to the Ministry of Education. He reviewed the four human resource related ideas submitted to the Ministry, indicating that in two of those cases, the ideas related to OPS-wide practices which were referred to the Ministry of Government Services for action. The third idea was already being implemented and the fourth was a personal issue which was outside the mandate of the program.

10. Provincial Schools Branch Strategic Plan

The Union inquired as to the status of the Professional Services Review, referenced within the Strategic Plan. In particular it expressed concern over whether there was a move towards contracting out professional services, and moving away from the educational focus of the schools. Management responded that the review was just commencing and is focusing on the types of services and their distribution in the context of student needs. The review is a response to a recognition that students are now coming to the schools with multiple exceptionalities that must be addressed as part of the support they need to succeed academically.

The Union asked for clarification of a statement in the Plan about the need to ensure that funding is appropriate to meet student needs. Management responded that this referenced the need to ensure that Branch funding is properly targeted for maximum educational effect.

The Union expressed concern over the process used to develop the Strategic Plan. It reiterated comments made at prior MERC meetings that Corporate OPSEU was not part of the process and that the opinions of individual employees participating in the exercise were not taken seriously. A Union MERC member indicated that she had signed up at one of the town hall meetings to participate on two committees, but was never contacted. The Union inquired as to whether there was still an opportunity for input into the plan.

Management indicated that the Strategic Plan should be seen as a work in progress - a road map - with the detailed implications to be developed and worked into operational plans.

Commitment: The Superintendent overseeing the Strategic Plan will be available at either the next MERC meeting or at a videoconference with MERC members to discuss the Plan.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Downsizing in Demonstration Schools and its Impact on Staff Levels

The Union expressed concern that the reduction of student intake into the Amethyst School program, from recent levels of 53-54 students to the funded level of 40 students, could result in staff reductions. Management indicated that there would be a reduction by 3 Residential Counselor positions and that formal disclosure of the change was made to Corporate OPSEU on June 14, 2007.

2. Traveling MERCs

It was agreed that the next MERC meeting will be held at Centre Jules Leger (CJL) in Ottawa, with invitations extended to both LERC members at CJL and local presidents and managers from the Ministry Regional Office.

3. Breaks at W. Ross MacDonald School

The Union raised concern that employees at the school are not receiving any breaks. It indicated that the issue has been raised at LERC over the past year but has not been resolved, with the Management team repeatedly requesting more information.

Commitment: Management will ensure that local management provides a response to the Union's position at the next LERC.

4. Job Specifications

The Union expressed concern over the difficulty it had in obtaining a job specification at W. Ross MacDonald that it requested in April/May. Local management indicated it needed to contact the Branch Human Resources unit. The specification was received with an apology, but the Union felt that it should not have taken so long.

Commitment: Management will inquire as to why the process took so long.

5. Classroom Assistants / School Aids at W. Ross MacDonald School

The Union expressed concern that at W. Ross Macdonald School, in the program for the most challenged students - the deaf-blind program – School Aids are being used to do the work of Residential Counselors and Classroom Assistants and are being paid less than staff in either of those classifications. It indicated that this issue is still unresolved notwithstanding grievances having been filed.

Management indicated that the use of different classifications at different schools to provide residential services will be part of the Residential Services review, already discussed.

Commitment: Management will determine the status of the School Aid classification grievance.

6. MERC Effectiveness Survey

The Co-chairs reported that the Central Employee Relations Committee Co-Chairs had sent out both hard and soft copies of a MERC effectiveness survey. The Union reported that its members have filled out the survey jointly.

7. YMCA Daycare at E. C. Drury School

The Union asked for details of a proposal regarding the use of E. C. Drury staff to support the YMCA program delivered at its campus.

Management responded that the intention was to provide American Sign Language support to the YMCA in recognition of the fact that the children in the YMCA program will in most cases become E.C. Drury students. The support would include the allocation of two E. C. Drury staff members half time. One of those members, an ASL advisor, has as part of her

regular duties to provide off- campus ASL support to various groups. This assignment would, therefore, be a normal assignment within her current job responsibilities. The other position would be staffed through a secondment agreement whereby the E. C. Drury staff member would remain an employee of the school, reporting formally to the E.C Drury elementary school Principal, but would be provided work assignments and be supervised by YMCA management. The position would be paid by E. C. Drury, and all provisions of the OPSEU collective agreement would apply.

The Union asked when the arrangement would start and how the employee would be selected for the assignment. Management indicated that the arrangement would start in September, with selection expected by the end of June. Management agreed to make inquiries regarding how the individual will be selected.

Commitments: Management will report back to MERC on how the secondee is to be selected. It will provide the MERC with a copy of the secondment agreement once finalized.

8. Centre Jules Leger Orientation Committee

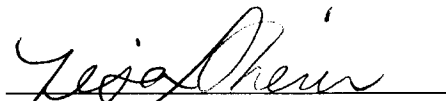
The Union asked about the Centre Jules Leger (CJL) Orientation Committee referenced in the recent communiqué from the Assistant Deputy Minister, French Language and Education Operations. Management indicated that the Committee is a parent liaison committee established 4-5 years ago to provide advice on CJL programs.

The Union also asked about the reference on page 2 of the communiqué to a post October report on labour relations. Management clarified that this referenced labour relations in the school boards, not labour relations within the Ontario Public Service.

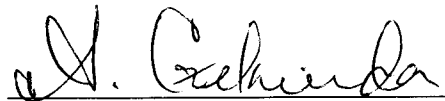
The meeting was adjourned

Next meeting: Ottawa, October 4, 2007

Minutes signed *Oct. 4,* 2007



4
Lisa Sherin
For Management



Alicia Czekierda
For the Union