

Submission to the Ministry of Education on its Draft Fundraising Guidelines

The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) welcomes the opportunity to provide our comment on the Ministry of Education, Draft Fundraising Guidelines.

OSSTF/FEESO is a diverse union representing 60,000 educational workers from across the province of Ontario. Our union works to protect our membership which is represented in 140 bargaining units across Ontario. OSSTF bargaining units represent both English and French members in elementary and secondary school workplaces, private schools, consortia offering support services to school boards and universities.

OSSTF/FEESO welcomes the fact that the ministry is seeking out stakeholders for their input into these draft guidelines.

Overall the guidelines are in line with OSSTF/FEESO attitudes towards fundraising in our schools. Within our own policies guidelines it states, "It is the policy of OSSTF/FEESO that publicly funded schools in Ontario should not be funded by corporate partnerships and/or fundraising with private and/or business organizations."

Specifically we would agree with the proposed purposes of fundraising as outlined in the guidelines' objectives, "Funds raised for school purposes: should not be used to replace public funding for education and should not be used to support items funded through the allocated budget of a school board, including but not limited to, learning materials and textbooks or capital projects that increase operating costs."

We would also agree that participation in fundraising activities be voluntary as stated under the document's guiding principles.

OSSTF/FEESO welcomes the suggested practice that boards, "Seek advice from school staff, parents, school councils, students, and the school community; and support and protect staff and volunteers from legal liability through practices that promote accountability for the handling and management of the proceeds raised from these activities." On this point, we wish to add that in the development of best practices on the part of school boards, it be a requirement that a committee be struck (including all those named in the previous section on best practices) before school boards finalize their own best practices policies.

Under section III, Best Practices, the document states, "School boards may consider the following when developing board-wide fundraising policies: Impact on classroom time for staff and students

and administrative time for school principals as well as support staff. In this particular section, OSSTF/FEESO believes ‘may’ should be replaced with ‘will’.

It is in the definitions section of the draft guidelines that OSSTF/FEESO believes there should be further dialogue on what is considered the base level of ‘public funding of education.’ Annie Kidder, of People for Education, has tried to argue for the development of a standard for adequate and proper funding for publically funded education which begins with the question, “What kind of education do we want?” Given this question and rather than muddying the waters, OSSTF/FEESO believes that base level of ‘public funding of education’ should be clarified in the document.

OSSTF/FEESO understands that over the last eight years the government has made adjustments to the funding formula and that it has committed to review it further as well. This review should provide the clarification to the definition of base funding that we believe will address any questions that may arise in the future.

OSSTF/FEESO has concerns regarding the definition of what is considered a reasonable and required need for our classrooms and what is extra-curricular. Under the section, “Examples of Acceptable Uses of Fundraising Proceeds” it states - *purchase of additional supplies, equipment or services not funded specifically through school board budgets (for example, band equipment, specialized athletic equipment, pottery equipment)*. In a pottery course, we might argue that pottery equipment is a requirement for the delivery of the program. Further, what is reasonably considered specialized athletic equipment? We would suggest that educational workers be asked to help in the development of a list that might be considered pedagogically sound augmentations to a base level of educational requirements.

What is missing in the document is an acknowledgement of the economic disadvantages that exist between schools based on the socio economic status of their school communities. The fundraising capacity, or lack of, for low income schools has been highlighted by both the Social Planning Council and People for Education. OSSTF/FEESO believes that this issue should be addressed in this document.

We are certain that the Ministry understands that school councils deal with fundraising questions a great deal. For this reason, it is important that the recommendations, through the guidelines, be communicated fully to school councils, school administrations and all staff to avoid any difficulties in the future.

OSSTF/FEESO believes the guidelines document is timely and addresses the many questions that exist around fundraising. We ask that the suggestions in our paper be given due consideration.

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