



**Submission to the Standing Committee
on Bill 88 - *Child and Family Services Amendment Act*
(*Children 16 Years of Age and Older*), 2013**

The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on Bill 88 in recognition of services to be provided to children over 16 years of age. We support the efforts to address the needs of this specific age group.

OSSTF/FEESO is a diverse union representing 60,000 educational workers from across the Province of Ontario. OSSTF/FEESO's 140 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 members working in secondary schools know too well the impact upon student well-being and success when family disruption takes place. At this time, any 15 year old in the temporary care of a Children's Aid Society is forced to make a difficult choice. These students must either return home or declare their independence from their family and apply for Ontario Works. The changes that would be brought about with the passing of Bill 88 would allow a student the option of remaining in CAS care and custody for an additional 24 months allowing for important stability that is essential to student achievement.

Under this amended legislation, this extension of care would only take place if the child is party to the agreement. Allowing youth of this age to have a voice in important decisions that impact their lives recognizes the value of self-determination and critical thinking.

The proposed changes would allow for youth who are in temporary care at age 15 to have the option of continuing to receive support through their local child welfare agency up until the maximum age of 18 years. Such support would allow for a greater chance of stability for those youth who are experiencing difficulties which have previously resulted in leaving their family home.

Such stability for students would provide a greater opportunity for success at school. It would also allow for continued access to a full continuum of services and support offered through schools to promote positive social-emotional development and well-being. Given that these changes would be in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on November 20, 1989, and to which Canada is a party, OSSTF/FEESO fully supports Bill 88.