

April 28, 2014

## **Children Deserve the Best Teachers – get rid of seniority based hiring**

**April 29, 2014 – Toronto, ON** – Seniority based teacher hiring has been imposed in Ontario by Regulation 274 and should be cancelled, says a group that includes parents, teachers and school principals. “Our children deserve the best teachers, not just the ones with the most seniority,” says Charles Wakefield, spokesperson for the group. “Seniority based teacher hiring makes it very difficult, and at times impossible, for principals and boards across Ontario to fulfill the specific staffing requirements and meet the individual needs of their school’s culture.”



People for Merit-based Teacher Hiring is a non-partisan group of parents and education advocates who have volunteered their time to reach school councils across the province. “We believe that the teachers in our classrooms should be hired based on the sum total of their qualifications. To date we have spoken with almost 100 schools and education advocates, and sent close to 100 letters on behalf of these councils to Premier Wynne and Minister Sandals requesting that this part of the regulation be addressed immediately,” Wakefield added.

Catherine Berka, a Toronto-area parent says, “Seniority-based teacher hiring directly impacts our kids. One mother told me that her daughter went from absolutely loving English to barely passing because her new teacher was so unmotivated. Another parent recounted his son's problems in math due to a long line of substitute math teachers. It took the school so long to find a decent math teacher that the boy started skipping classes because the class was so ‘useless’. We need to ensure the best teachers get to teach.”

The group has many examples from both parents and Principals of seniority-based teacher hiring causing difficulties this past school year. Parents are very concerned that this year’s problems will be repeated in the next academic year. Schools are currently planning for next year and parents want action now to cancel seniority-based teacher hiring.

Regulation 274 was put in place during the labour negotiations in 2012 between the McGuinty government and a teachers’ union to address concerns about nepotism in the hiring process. In September, the Premier called this regulation an “overcorrection”\*. People for Merit-based Teacher Hiring believe addressing favouritism in the hiring process could be done by requiring school boards to have enforced guidelines and an oversight process. Boards could provide relevant information to the appropriate union to ensure transparency and fairness.

Regulation 274 can triple the time that a principal must take to hire a teacher thereby lessening the time the principal has to help children and teachers. “The new teacher hiring process is bureaucratic, ranking teacher candidates by seniority,” says David Crichton, Elementary School Principal. “It restricts the

selection of suitable teachers for the students and makes it very difficult to hire diverse teachers, who are reflective of our school community, and who best meet the instructional needs of the students.”

When the priority is put on seniority, other factors such as a candidate’s enthusiasm, special interests, cultural background and general teaching ability take a “back seat”. An emphasis on seniority is also detrimental when trying to hire special education instructors or teachers with an interest in running extra-curricular activities that schools and children need.

The imposition of seniority based teacher hiring also has the potential to create a vacuum of qualified teachers in the future, as newly-educated young teachers struggle to secure teaching positions. “Regulation 274 creates a significant barrier for our Faculty’s increasingly diverse and talented graduates from entering and renewing the teaching profession. The impact on the profession will be even more acute in 2017 when our first highly-skilled students graduate from the new extended two-year BEd program,” says Ron Owston PhD, Dean, Faculty of Education, York University

“Younger teachers come out of school full of enthusiasm and fresh ideas, including the use of new technologies, but are eliminated from the selection pool under the current regulation,” adds Wakefield. “The regulation also states that earned seniority is board specific; teachers lose their seniority when they move to a new board. With the standardized curriculum in this province, why should a student be able to move school boards and not skip a beat but a teacher’s years of experience only count within their own board?” The People for Merit-based Teacher Hiring would like to thank M.P.P. Donna Cansfield for reading supportive petitions in the Legislative Assembly and recognize the strong support of M.P.P. Monte Kwinter.

\*[http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2013/09/25/hiring\\_regulation\\_274\\_overcorrection\\_premier\\_admits.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2013/09/25/hiring_regulation_274_overcorrection_premier_admits.html)