



MEMORANDUM

TO: Local Presidents
Executive Members (For Information)

FROM: Joanne Myers, Executive Assistant, Professional Learning/Curriculum Services

DATE: April 10, 2017

RE: **Updated Communication to Members about Rights Regarding EQAO Withdrawal**

At the 2014 Annual Meeting, the following motion was passed:

(5-1) That ETFO communicate to its members with children in grades 3 and 6
AMR 54 their rights regarding their children and EQAO testing.

At the December 2014 Executive Meeting, the following motion was passed:

(59) That ETFO communicate to its members their rights regarding their children and withdrawal from EQAO testing through information on the ETFO website, the e-newsletter and information to local presidents.

ETFO's View on EQAO Testing

The Federation views province-wide testing of every student in the primary and junior divisions and grades 9 and 10 as both a misuse of student time, and an ineffective use of funds that should be redirected to support students' learning. The consistent trend within the media of ranking schools by assessment results has been unfair to students. It is ETFO's position that teachers' ongoing daily assessment is far more meaningful and efficient for students and parents. ETFO staff consistently communicates the need for random sample testing to EQAO staff.

Background Information for Members

The topic of supporting members with a right to withdraw their children from EQAO is a recurring issue. January 2014 Executive Memo 12:15 (attached as Appendix A) was a memo related to student withdrawal that fully outlines the history and ramifications. In Ontario, there is no legal way to withdraw students from EQAO. It is a mandated program according to the EQAO Act. Ontario's Education Quality and Accountability

Act, 1996 states that all students in publicly-funded schools are legally required to write the provincial tests unless formally exempted. EQAO has an exemption policy that is very narrow in scope. EQAO assessments are the legally mandated program that must occur during the specified test administration time. Under the Education Act, there are obligations around compulsory attendance and duty of attendance. Parent/guardians (including ETFO members) cannot officially 'exempt' their children from the administration of the EQAO test for extended illness, family emergency or extenuating circumstances as they can for example in British Columbia. See Appendix B.

The information below outlines how ETFO members may attempt to withdraw their own children from the testing:

- There is no formal procedure to withdraw children from the testing under the Education Act.
- A member may choose to write a letter to the school administration requesting the withdrawal of their child from the EQAO assessments. The letter should request the withdrawal from the testing and include the expectation that the child receive in-school accommodation throughout the two-week testing period.
- The request for withdrawal may be denied. School administration may demand that the child is kept at home throughout the EQAO assessment period which could be up to two weeks in time.
- If school administration refuses to grant the request, members would be solely responsible for the child care and safety of their children throughout the assessment period.
- There have been a few principals who have not been aware of the legislation and have not demanded that the child write the assessment and have allowed the child to remain at school. This has only occurred in a few isolated situations.

Should a member wish to proceed with withdrawing their child from EQAO testing, after taking into consideration the legal ramifications, a sample letter has been provided. See Appendix C.

ETFO Communication Plan

The following actions for communication will be taken to inform members who have children in grades 3 and 6 of their rights regarding their children and EQAO testing:

- This memo and attachments have been made available to all local presidents.
- This memo and attachments will be sent out in an upcoming ETFO eNewsletter.
- This memo and attachments will be posted and highlighted on the ETFO website.