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## MINISTER'S COMMENTS STALL PROGRESS IN NEGOTIATIONS

OECTA has had more than 40 bargaining dates with the government and the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association. Unlike our sister affiliates, we have made significant progress on issues that pertain to our trustees' association, which has enabled us to move on to substantive discussions on issues that involve the government.

There are still major differences on a number of key matters, but the Ministry of Labour-appointed mediator felt there was sufficient momentum in last week's negotiations to call the parties back to the table today. Recognizing that strike action is difficult for everyone involved, the Association responded with a show of good faith, by suspending the rotating strikes planned for this week. However, it was made clear to the government that the onus was on them to come to the table with a plan to reach an agreement that would be acceptable to Catholic teachers.

Unfortunately, while we continue to take a reasonable approach, the government continues to take every opportunity to insult teachers and throw negotiations off track. After the Minister of Education spent the weekend making baseless, inflammatory comments about Catholic teachers and our Association, his negotiating team came to the table with the same proposals to take resources out of the classroom. At times, it seems they have no real intention of negotiating an agreement.

The Association remains committed to our goal of reaching a fair agreement at the bargaining table, and we will await word from the mediator as to whether she believes further negotiations would be worthwhile. However, we will not tolerate the government's disrespect for our members, or their insistence on making permanent cuts to publicly funded education.

While the administrative job action continues, the Association will also be considering options for further strike action. Please continue to monitor your personal email for important updates.

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