

February 14, 2013

BY EMAIL

Hon. Liz Sandals
Minister of Education and MPP for Guelph
173 Woolwich Street
Guelph, Ontario N1H 3V4

Dear Minister Sandals:

Congratulations on your appointment to the post of Minister of Education. Perhaps you have heard about the controversy over the procurement of student transportation in rural Ontario. My family lost our business of 60 years in a pilot RFP process in 2010. In 2011, as a result of the continuing loss of small rural businesses across Ontario and a number of protests including in Mr. Wilkinson and Ms. Dombrowsky's ridings, Ms. Dombrowsky imposed a moratorium on the use of RFPs and appointed a Task Force chaired by Mr. Coulter Osborne, the former Associate Chief Justice and Integrity Commissioner of Ontario, to study and report on whether the Liberal government's policy of imposing RFP's on small rural businesses was fair, open and transparent.

I am enclosing some photographs of the rallies as well as Minister Dombrowsky's task force announcement and the Report of Mr. Osborne. I am also enclosing a number of letters and resolutions from mayors, rural MPPs, Chambers of Commerce, CFIB, and small towns. Mr. Osborne released his report in January 2012. Mr. Osborne was unable to conclude that the process was 'fair, open and transparent'. In fact, he identified serious concerns with the fairness of the policy, particularly the destruction of small rural businesses – he called them casualties – and the danger of creating monopolies. Because of these concerns he recommended a moratorium on this process and an independent study to determine whether the process is in fact, fair, open and transparent. He also made a number of recommendations to ensure that a minimum level of fairness is observed in the RFP process.

The Osborne report has been ignored by the government and so have his specific fairness recommendations. Right now, small rural business across the province continue to be made casualties of a government policy that has very serious fairness concerns and which the former Associate Chief Justice and Integrity Commissioner has recommended be suspended to allow an independent review.

This Family Day, Monday February 18, my family and I, as well as other families from rural Ontario who used to have jobs and businesses but no longer do because of the government's decision to ignore its own Task Force recommendations, will be at your Guelph constituency office for a School Bus Family Day Rally and BBQ. We are hopeful that you will meet with us to understand our concerns and to join with us in a constructive dialogue that may save other small rural businesses from the fate we have suffered.

Respectfully yours,

Ruth Anne Staples, Epoch's Garage
Kenilworth, ON
(519)848-3511

cc. Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Premier and Minister of Agriculture
Hon Jeff Leal, Minister of Rural Affairs