

October 23, 2020

The Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education
Ministry of Education
5th Floor
438 University Ave
Toronto, ON
M5G 2K8

Dear Minister Lecce,

I am writing to you today to express my support for the letter that the Lakehead District School Board shared with you on September 9, 2020, requesting more funding for schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since March, your government has indicated that our students' and staff's health and safety are your main priority when creating a return to school plans.

In August, three weeks before the start of school, you announced that Boards across the province would have access to \$500 million, unlocked from board reserves. For families across the province, this announcement was welcome news. An extra \$500 million is a great deal of money. However, the reality is that this announcement created inequities in funding as available reserve funding looks different for each Board in the province.

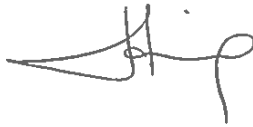
For years, our finance staff at the Waterloo Region District School Board have been diligent in their financial planning, ensuring that we are in a strong financial position with some funds in reserves. As OPSBA President Cathy Abraham pointed out in her statement, "... in many circumstances, these reserves have already been designated for other high-priority initiatives or unanticipated expenses." The global COVID-19 pandemic is not the type of unanticipated expense these funds were intended for.

School boards across the province have shown their commitment to their students and staff by creating a safe return to school based on thoughtful planning, leadership, and funding. We are still waiting for your government to do the same.

I join Lakehead District School Board and other Boards across the province to ask you and your government for more funding to ensure staff and students have access to PPE, increased ventilation in buildings and fully-funded smaller class sizes to ensure proper physical distancing.

Minister, it is time to stand behind your claims of sparing no expense when it comes to keeping schools in Ontario safe. Now is the time to provide the necessary funds that we and all other Boards in the province require and are requesting.

Sincerely,



Jayne Herring
Chairperson of the Board of Trustees
Waterloo Region District School Board

CC:
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