

February 17, 2021

The Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education
Ministry of Education
315 Front Street West, 14th Floor
Toronto, ON, M7A 0B8

Dear Minister Lecce,

On behalf of the Waterloo Region District School Board, we are writing in support of Halton District School Board's requests, outlined in their letter dated January 7, 2021, for you to:

1. Consider adding educators to the Provincial COVID-19 Command Table, and
2. Provide school boards, and the general public significantly more notice of extension of virtual learning or change of regional or provincial learning modes.

In these challenging times, it is difficult for everyone to continue to navigate the shifting directions in the context of uncertainty. The COVID-19 Command Table could benefit from the direct and timely input from "in-the-field" representatives of the education sector.

On December 21, 2020, the Province announced the shift to virtual learning starting the week of January 4, 2021. Making this announcement after the holiday break had begun caused a great deal of uncertainty and stress. Educators were called upon to put in many hours over the break to prepare for the full virtual start. Students and families had to request and obtain devices, scramble to plan for childcare and make alternate work arrangements, all of which take significant time and effort.

While we recognize this is an evolving situation and that difficult decisions need to be made on an ongoing basis, we also recognize the importance of providing our students, families and staff with timely information and resources to ensure our students' have meaningful educational opportunities and their well being is a priority.

Trustees of the Waterloo Region District School Board support the Halton District School Board's requests to the Ministry that support collaborative decision making and will benefit all students, staff, and families in the province, namely:

- "Add a representative(s) from the education sector to the COVID-19 Command Table and enhance processes for meaningful consultation prior to making important decisions.
- Move to a system which builds in time for Boards to pivot, during regular work hours, so that we can ensure equitable opportunities for all students (including connectivity and



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device distribution), respectfully manage staff resources, and give staff and families a chance to make plans to support both learning and health.”

Sincerely,



Joanne Weston
Chairperson of the Board of Trustees
Waterloo Region District School Board

CC:
OPSBA
Ontario Public School Boards
Regional Chair of Waterloo Region, Karen Redman
Mayor of Cambridge, Kathryn McGarry
Mayor of Kitchener, Berry Vrbanovic
Mayor of Waterloo, Dave Jaworsky
Mayor of Township of North Dumfries, Sue Foxton
Mayor of Township of Wellesley, Joe Nowak
Mayor of Township of Wilmot, Les Armstrong
Mayor of Township of Woolwich, Sandy Shantz

Sent by email: minister.edu@ontario.ca



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