

October 10, 2019

The Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
22nd Floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON
M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Lecce,

On behalf of the Board of Trustees for the Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB), I would like to take this opportunity to request the release of new Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines (PARG). The SCDSB recognizes that the previous guidelines did have some limitations and, as with any process of this magnitude, continual improvement and evolution is crucial. This was evident during the development of the Ministry's *Plan to Strengthen Rural and Northern Education*, as well as in consultations regarding strengthening supports for urban education. After the Ministry's extensive consultation with the public and representatives from the education and municipal sectors during the fall of 2017 and winter of 2018, in which this board participated, a new revised PARG was released in April 2018. These much needed revised guidelines were expected to take effect in the fall of 2018 after the Ministry developed templates and guidelines relating to initial staff reports, economic impact assessments, community partners and e-signature guidance. This did not occur.

Where the SCDSB has had instances of critical facility conditions, low enrolment, programming issues and challenges in providing accessible and supportive learning environments, the pupil accommodation review was the tool utilized to ensure a solution that was transparent, sustainable, and in the best interest of all students. Not having this tool available is forcing the SCDSB and its staff to make decisions and recommendations without the benefit of full public participation, or having the ability to balance the needs of communities and individuals. Furthermore, as per the *Education Act*, one of a Board of Trustees' main responsibilities is the effective stewardship of resources. The inability to conduct pupil accommodation reviews severely limits the Board's ability to be as effective and prudent as it can be in this regard.

While the board is appreciative of the Ministry's Capital Priorities Program and its continuation, we strongly believe that it is just one component in maintaining and building healthy, accessible and sustainable education infrastructure. It is the collective view of staff and the Board of Trustees that the pupil accommodation review is a vital planning component, especially during times of economic and fiscal challenges.

As earlier stated, as a board we recognize the need to update and improve the pupil accommodation review process in order to ensure consistency, integrate local planning at the community level, promote partnerships and to achieve Ministry directives and initiatives. However, on behalf of the SCDSB, I respectfully request that new Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines be implemented as soon as possible so that the board can effectively address its needs through a comprehensive and consistent process. In the meantime, the SCDSB will continue to work carefully and collaboratively with the Ministry through the Capital Priorities Program process in order to address the board's most urgent and pressing capital needs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jodi Lloyd
Chairperson
Simcoe County District School Board

c: Hon. Doug Downey, MPP, Barrie, Springwater, Oro-Medonte
Hon. Jill Dunlop, MPP, Simcoe North
Andrea Khanjin, MPP, Barrie, Innisfil
Jim Wilson, MPP, Simcoe Grey
Hon. Caroline Mulroney, MPP, York-Simcoe
Chairs, Ontario Public School Boards Association
Board of Trustees, SCDSB
Steve Blake, Director of Education, SCDSB
John Dance, Associate Director, SCDSB
Brian Jeffs, Superintendent of Business and Facilities, SCDSB