



Bluewater District School Board

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Sent by email: stephen.lecce@pc.ola.org

April 27, 2022

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

Dear Minister Lecce:

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we are reaching out to echo the concerns in the letter you received dated April 14, 2022 from Avon Maitland District School Board regarding a recent trend of increased absenteeism and lack of staff to cover these absences. Similar concerns outlining the gravity of the situation in Bluewater District School Board were also expressed by our director of education in an email to the deputy minister.

We are struggling on a regular basis to keep our schools open with the increased number of staff who are absent due to illness, isolation, and other reasons. While our staff have been extremely supportive and creative in finding ways to mitigate the various impacts of this surge in absenteeism, our current situation is simply not sustainable.

Many of our teachers have sacrificed their preparation periods, schools have had to cancel resource and other support time, and staff are taking on additional teaching duties. This has extended to administrators, including principals, vice-principals, and central system level staff, who are covering classes daily after all efforts have been exhausted to fill positions with qualified staff and emergency workers.

With administrators working increased hours to manage this shortage, and teachers often losing their preparation and break times, we are deeply concerned about the inevitability of staff burn-out, and other negative impacts to student and staff safety and well-being. Staffing shortages are compounding stress-related absences and are also preventing us from providing professional development this year.

This high level of absenteeism is evident in other staff groups who are just as important to the safe operation of our schools, such as educational assistants, office professionals, and custodians. Continuing along this trajectory will lead to difficult decisions, including requiring school and classroom closures due to insufficient staffing.

As always, our commitment remains focused on providing a quality education for every student in a safe, accepting, and caring environment.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Jane Thomson in black ink.

Jane Thomson
Chair

Handwritten signature of Jan Johnstone in black ink.

Jan Johnstone
Vice-Chair

cc: The Honourable Bill Walker, MPP, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound

The Honourable Lisa Thompson, MPP, Huron-Bruce
Ontario Public School Boards' Association
Chairs of Ontario English Public School Boards