



Bluewater District School Board

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

March 23, 2020

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

Dear Minister Lecce:

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to participate with other Ontario school board chairs in the teleconference held on Friday, March 20, 2020. It was extremely helpful to be able to open the lines of communication through a collaborative discussion where participants could ask questions and explore solutions to serve the best interests of our students. I would like to request that serious consideration be given to holding these teleconferences with Chairs on a weekly basis as boards attempt to manage many unknowns during these especially challenging times.

While there were many important items on the table during Friday's teleconference, there is one that I feel warrants some further thought should the decision be made to extend the school closure period. Regarding transportation and the possible use of school bus drivers to assist in the delivery of program materials, while a great idea in theory, I would caution that this would present several logistical complications in rural districts. With staff working from home, there would be many questions surrounding their ability to produce hard copy packages for students, in addition to ensuring that packages get to bus drivers for delivery. As many teachers do not live in the same communities as the schools in which they work, would there be a requirement for them to transport materials to their schools for pick-up? There is also the question of whether boards would be required to pay internet costs for staff to work from home, as well as for students. This extends to consideration for equipment provisions to staff and students (for those without it). I would also reiterate the need to work collaboratively with union partners, and to ensure collective agreements are respected during these unusual times.

I recognize that there are many lingering questions where answers are understandably still under investigation. As I am sure many other Chairs would agree, the continued efforts of our government officials and staff in working swiftly to manage the COVID-19 situation and protect citizens are truly appreciated. I want to assure you that Bluewater District School Board is here to work in the spirit of cooperation with you and Ministry of Education staff to be part of the solutions as we move forward.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jan Johnstone'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jan Johnstone
Chair

/jp