



July 13, 2021

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

Subject: Curriculum Supports & Resources for Educations to Address Islamophobia

Dear Minister Lecce:

On behalf of the Thames Valley District School Board of Trustees, I am writing to you in support of the creation of curriculum supports and resources for educators to address Islamophobia in Ontario's schools. (See Appendix 1)

As you know, on June 6, 2021, a Muslim family of five in London, Ontario was targeted in a tragic car attack that killed four members and injured one. We are sad to report that one of the victims who passed was a student at Thames Valley's own Oakridge Secondary School.

Hate has no place in our schools or in our community. The Thames Valley District School Board stands with the Muslim community during this difficult time. As you also may be aware, this is unfortunately not the only incident of hate-motivated crime against the Muslim community in Ontario. Over the past several years, there has been a disturbing rise in Islamophobia in Canada. In 2019, there was a nine per cent increase in anti-Muslim attacks compared to the previous year, according to Statistics Canada. A 2020 report by the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group also shows that 46 per cent of Canadians have an unfavourable view of Islam, while 42 per cent of Canadians think that discrimination against Muslims is 'mainly their fault.'

These attitudes are not just wrong, but as we have seen with the rise in Islamophobic attacks, they present a clear and present danger to our Muslim neighbours, friends, and family members across Canada. TVDSB remains steadfastly committed to combatting racism, Islamophobia, and discrimination in all its forms and creating a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students and staff.

While we welcome the recent commitment of \$300,000 to the Muslim Association of Canada and the National Council of Canadian Muslims, we strongly urge the Ministry of Education itself to make a direct investment in changes to the Ontario

Thames Valley District School Board - Office of the Chairperson

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curriculum. We would also strongly support staff training and capacity-building to help educators address Islamophobia in Ontario's schools.

Providing educators with the necessary supports and resources to teach them about the Islamic faith and the dangers racism poses to our communities will go a long way towards combatting Islamophobia and promoting safe and inclusive school environments.

Furthermore, we welcome recent news from the federal government to hold a national summit on Islamophobia before the end of July. We would strongly urge you and your colleagues from the province to attend, listen, and contribute, where possible. Addressing this issue at all levels of government will require a true Team Canada approach.

We are happy to provide additional information as needed and would welcome the opportunity to work with you on these important initiatives.

Sincerely,



Lori-Ann Pizzolato
Chair, Board of Trustees
Thames Valley District School Board

CC: Mark Fisher, Director of Education
Trustees
Student Trustees
Cathy Abraham, President, Ontario Public School Boards' Association

Appendix 1: Board Motion

Whereas: Canadians and the world have seen the devastating impact of Anti-Muslim hate through the tragic deaths of 4 Londoners and injury of a child from the same family, this included a member of our own TVDSB community who was a beloved student from Oakridge Secondary School.

Whereas: Students in Thames Valley have come together in a show of overwhelming support and solidarity against Anti-Muslim hate.

Whereas: A 2020 report submitted to UN by the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group outlines that 46% of Canadians have an unfavorable view of Islam, 52% of Canadians believe that Muslims can only be trusted 'a little' or 'not at

all'; and 42% of Canadians think that discrimination against Muslims is 'mainly their fault'.

Whereas: Islamophobia has been on the rise in Canada since the onset of COVID-19 and Islamophobia intersects with other systems of racism.

Whereas: There are a number of policies that focus on equity and inclusion at TVDSB, including the Strategic Plan, anti-black racism/anti-racism strategy, anti-racism training for staff etc. and that the Board is committed to ensure equitable opportunities for students and staff.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Chair write a letter to the Prime Minister, copied to OPSBA, OSTA-AECO and the CSBA and Thames Valley MPs supporting the call for an immediate National Action Summit on Islamophobia, where federal, provincial, and municipal/territorial leaders come together to take immediate action on dismantling both violent forms of Islamophobia and systemic Islamophobia. These actions are necessary to ensure that no one else suffers the way #OurLondonFamily has suffered.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Chair write a letter to the Minister of Education, to support the creation of curriculum supports and resources for educators to address Islamophobia.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Trustees of the Board affirm by way of this motion, their commitment to address Islamophobia and continue to work to dismantle systemic racism in education.