

Ministry of Education

Minister

315 Front Street West
Toronto ON M7A 0B8

Ministère de l'Éducation

Ministre

315, rue Front Ouest
Toronto ON M7A 0B8



January 30, 2024

Ms. Beth Mai
Chair
Thames Valley District School Board
1250 Dundas Street
London ON N5W 5P2
b.mai@tvdsb.ca

Dear Ms. Mai,

Thank you for your predecessor's letter in which she expressed Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) Trustees' concerns about addressing student mental health challenges. I was encouraged by the update on the important work that TVDSB is doing to support the mental health of students and families.

Our government recognizes the critical importance that positive mental health plays in student academic achievement and overall well-being. For that reason, the Ministry of Education is investing more than \$114 million to support student mental health and well-being in 2023-24. This represents a 555 per cent increase from the previous government in 2017-18 and includes funding to further students' access to school-based mental health professionals and services year-round, with the aim of providing students with consistent and reliable support. Please note that the majority of this funding (\$87.7 million) is secured in the Grants for Student Needs which provides stable funding to support long term planning, staff retention and program continuity for students.

Schools are well positioned to support students with mild to moderate mental health needs. It is critical that schools and community partners continue to work together to ensure clear pathways to, through, and from, more intensive mental health services outside the school setting, as needed. This aligns with the aspiration articulated in *the Right Time, Right Care Report*, which sets out how to build a collective vision for a school-community system of care.

As you are aware, the ministry released [Policy/Program Memorandum 169](#) (PPM) in July 2023. This PPM outlines eleven requirements for school boards, school authorities, and the Consortium Centre Jules-Léger to provide culturally responsive, evidence-informed student mental health promotion, prevention, and early intervention services that respect students as complex individuals and provide appropriate supports for their diverse needs. The purpose of PPM 169 is to provide consistency in the delivery of mental health education and services across all school boards and takes effect January 1st, 2024. School boards are required to annually submit a report to the ministry on the implementation status of the PPM requirements. One of the requirements is as follows:

- **Joint Local Planning with Community Based Child and Youth Mental Health Providers:** To support a coordinated mental health care system in communities, the ministry expects school board leadership (e.g., Superintendents with Responsibility for Mental Health and Mental Health Leaders) to actively engage with and collaborate in local planning that is related to student mental health and wellness through activities such as establishing clear pathways to/through/from mental health care services for students who require services outside of the school setting.

The Ministry of Education continues to work closely with the Ministry of Health and their community child and youth mental health providers to align, plan, and integrate mental health services. Both ministries are committed to working collaboratively to build a continuum of care across the school, community, and hospital sectors that is coordinated, comprehensive and responsive to the needs of children and their families.

Through the *Roadmap to Wellness: A Plan to Build Ontario's Mental Health and Addictions System*, the Ministry of Health has flowed \$525 million in new base funding for mental health and addiction services and supports since 2019-20, including \$130 million dedicated to providing mental health services for children, youth and their families. These investments form part of the \$485 million the government allocates every year towards providing community-based child and youth mental health service across Ontario. Building on these investments, the government recently announced through the 2023 Budget a \$425 million investment over three years to support mental health and addictions services, including a five per cent increase in the base funding of community-based mental health and addictions services providers funded by the Ministry of Health.

I would like to extend my gratitude to you and TVDSB trustees for your tireless work and commitment to addressing student mental health.

Sincerely,



Hon. Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education