



Mark Fisher, Director of Education and Secretary

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June 3, 2020

The Honourable Doug Ford  
Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Building  
Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

The Honourable Stephen Lecce  
Minister of Education  
438 University Avenue, 5th Floor  
Toronto, ON M7A 2A5

Dear Premier Ford and Minister Lecce:

As Chair of the Board, I wish to begin by thanking you for your leadership during the coronavirus pandemic and applaud your Government's decision to close schools in the interests of the safety and well-being of students and all residents of Ontario.

Our Trustees also wish to offer our wholehearted support for Minister Lecce's recent open letter to the Prime Minister of Canada urging the federal government to expedite funding to address a lack of equitable access to broadband Internet service across Ontario.

This is an issue that is very important to families in our school district. At the May 26, 2020 regular meeting of the Thames Valley District School Board, Trustees passed the following motion moved by Trustee Hunt and seconded by Trustee Ruddock:

**"That the Chair write a letter to the Premier and the Minister of Education regarding closing the gap in access to rural broadband in Ontario's rural communities and address access in urban centres as well."**

With the government's support over the years, we are happy to tell you that all Thames Valley schools are serviced by high-speed Internet. However, our experience with emergency distance learning during the pandemic has revealed that many families do not have reliable access to the Internet, and therefore their children do not have equal opportunity to access public education.

Families in chronically underserved areas may be faced with weak or unreliable wireless signals due to locations of cellular towers or other cabling services in rural areas. Due to prohibitive costs, still other families may only be able to afford limited Internet bandwidth each month.

Thames Valley believes these issues must be addressed – especially if schools remain closed in the fall or if conditions require a blend of in-class and online learning. More than ever before, the Internet has become a common utility to which all citizens deserve universal access so that their children may learn and succeed in a prosperous and inclusive Province of Ontario.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A Morell".

Arlene Morell, Chair  
Thames Valley District School Board

cc. local MPPs, Wardens of Middlesex, Oxford and Elgin Counties

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**Thames Valley District School Board - Office of the Chairperson**

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