



2020 July 29

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

Dear Minister Lecce,

The Thames Valley District School Board is grateful for your leadership and commitment to the safety and well-being of students across Ontario during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the challenges posed by the pandemic have raised significant financial concerns for our school board.

At its meeting of July 21, 2020, Thames Valley Trustees passed the following important motions:

1. That our Chair write a letter on behalf of TVDSB to the Minister of Education expressing concerns related to unfunded expenses attributed to COVID-19 and the utmost importance of keeping our students and staff safe and healthy during the pandemic.
2. That our Chair write a letter on behalf of TVDSB to the Minister of Education regarding increased flexibility in balancing the budget for the fiscal year 2020-2021 through Regulation 280.

To change the requirement for a compliant in-year deficit by one percent to a two percent total. The additional one percent year-in deficit (2020-2021 fiscal year), is a one-time stop gap measure to only fund COVID-related expenses from accumulated surplus, providing the in-year deficit is less than 50 percent of the Board's accumulated surplus. This will ensure deficit recovery as a one-time expense in the 2020-2021 fiscal year and financial stewardship.

We are grateful for the Ministry's commitment to provide \$25 million in new funding to support extraordinary expenses related to mental health and technology needs, but we have significant concerns about a number of other costs, such as:

- temporary custodial staff to disinfect touch points and high traffic areas during school operations, expected to cost at least \$7 million
- replacement costs for absences of teachers, administrators and support staff
- ongoing purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE), hand sanitizer and disinfectant

While we are grateful for the assistance of the Ontario Ministry of Government and Consumer Services (MGCS) to procure PPE at significantly lower costs, ongoing costs are expected to be significant.

Based on jobs/functions, PPE can include masks, face shield, gowns and gloves. The minimum expectation is to provide disposable medical-grade masks and a reusable face shield to every school-based employee. Additional PPE will be required for some positions based on specific circumstances.

All of these costs are currently not funded and will require school boards to use accumulated surplus (if available) or re-allocate in-year savings (if any other areas can be reduced). We strongly urge the Ministry to fund these extraordinary costs required to protect the health and well-being of all students and staff

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Morell', written in a cursive style.

Arlene Morell, Chair
Thames Valley District School Board

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CC Trustees
M. Fisher, Director of Education