

June 12, 2023

Via email: minister.edu@ontario.ca

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

Dear Minister Lecce,

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) of the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) is writing to bring to your attention our ongoing concerns regarding funding for public school boards across the province. These funding concerns impact students with special education needs and thereby impact all students of the board.

We recognize the Ministry of Education's efforts to improve the delivery of funding to students with complex special education needs in public schools across Ontario through the change in model from Intensive Support Amount (ISA) funding to SIP (Special Incidence Portion) funding in 2005. The Minister, as well as Ministers before him, have heard from TVDSB's SEAC, other public school boards' SEACs, and special education advocates regarding concerns about Special Incidence Portion (SIP) over the years, and we regret to inform you that our concern that SIP funding remains inadequate to fund the actual cost of supporting some of our most vulnerable students has not been addressed.

The SIP funding benchmark for an eligible full-time student has increased only marginally over the years, while the costs of hiring and retaining qualified staff have risen significantly. For example, SIP funding for the 2022-2023 school year provides up to a **maximum** of \$28,803 per full time (1.0 Average Daily Enrolment) eligible student per year. The cost of one educational assistant in TVDSB is \$54,400. Where two educational assistants are required for the many students with complex needs, **SIP funding therefore provides only 26% of the funding** required to provide the additional support necessary for the health and safety of the eligible student and their fellow learners. Appropriate funding allows these students to be present and access the Ontario curriculum in meaningful ways in our schools.

Streamlining and simplifying the SIP funding application process to make it more efficient and transparent for school boards and parents/guardians is a key step in remedying concerns with SIP funding and we thank the Minister for taking steps this year to begin to address this. We encourage the Minister to continue working to further streamline the process for school boards to apply for SIP funding. In addition to this, TVDSB SEAC urges the Minister to take immediate

action to ensure that SIP funding is sufficient, equitable, and responsive to the diverse and complex needs of special education students.

Specifically, we request that the Minister:

- Increases the SIP funding benchmark to reflect the current costs of hiring and retaining qualified staff for special education programs and services;
- Reviews and revises the SIP funding eligibility criteria to make them more inclusive and flexible, considering the individual needs and circumstances of each student

These changes are overdue and necessary for the Minister to fulfill his responsibilities as the Minister of Education for the province of Ontario. We appreciate your leadership and commitment to this matter and ask that you act swiftly to improve SIP funding for special education students in TVDSB and all public schools in Ontario.

We hope to receive your acknowledgement of this letter and a commitment to resolving this concern.

Kind regards,

Beth Mai
Chair, TVDSB Special Education Advisory Committee
TVDSB Trustee

Craig Read
Vice-Chair, TVDSB Special Education Advisory Committee
Community Member

CC: Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health
Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community, and Social Services
Ernie Hardeman, MPP Oxford County
Monte McNaughton, MPP Lambton-Kent-Middlesex
Rob Flack, MPP Elgin-Middlesex-London
Teresa Armstrong, MPP London Fanshawe
Peggy Sattler, MPP London West
Terence Kernaghan, MPP London North Centre
Ontario Public School Boards' Association
Special Education Advisory Committee Chairs