



2020 August 13

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 leaders in public education, Trustees of the Thames Valley District School Board are writing to you on behalf of parents and constituents to request that class sizes be reduced in elementary school settings, where possible, to reflect current social distancing guidelines required to decrease the risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Notwithstanding the considerable provincial investment that has already been made, further resources are necessary to provide sufficient physical distancing in all classrooms in alignment with advice contained in the Updated COVID-19: Guidance for School Reopening.

Thames Valley is grateful for your leadership and commitment to the safety and well-being of students across Ontario during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, parents and constituents have raised significant concerns regarding Ontario's plan for re-opening schools.

At its meeting of August 12, 2020, Thames Valley Trustees passed the following important motion:

"That the Chair write a letter to the Premier of Ontario, the Ontario Minister of Education to grant resources, such as sufficient funding, for school boards to effectively ensure staff and student safety and well-being is resourced. In addition, the letter advocate for the reduction of class sizes to reflect current social distancing guidelines. (And,) That the Director continue to work with the Ministry of Education to provide full funding to achieve lower elementary class sizes."

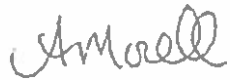
Central to parent concerns is the need for social distancing protocols at school to align with rules for social distancing in all other public spaces. According to the expert authors of COVID-19 Guidance for School Reopening (July 29, 2020):

"The ability of the public school system to effectively carry out its mission will depend in part on the resources made available to the schools. Personnel considerations include the potential need for trained screeners at school entry, health-care providers working with the schools (e.g. telephone or virtual support, on-site support), additional custodian and cleaning staff, and an expanded number of teachers, guidance counsellors, social workers, psychologists and support teachers."

Clearly, smaller class sizes positively contributes to safer learning and working environments. We urge government to provide school boards with the resources to support student and staff safety, and public confidence in public education.

Please be assured that we share the common goal for students and staff to return to school with confidence in September. We are committed to continue to work as collaborative partners to ensure this goal is achieved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "A. Morell".

Arlene Morell, Chair
Thames Valley District School Board

AM:sh

cc Trustees
M. Fisher, Director of Education