

September 8, 2023

Hon. Stephen Lecce  
Minister of Education  
5th Flr, 438 University Ave.  
Toronto, ON M5G 2K8

Via email: [minister.edu@ontario.ca](mailto:minister.edu@ontario.ca)

**RE: Special Education Shortfalls**

Dear Minister Lecce,

On June 27, 2023, Thames Valley District School Board Trustees unanimously supported the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) recommendation that we write you letter about chronic shortfalls in provincial funding for special education.

SEAC's recommendation came as a response to their review of the TVDSB's 2023-24 Special Education Budget and Special Education Plan.

Thames Valley's Special Education Plan, which was developed in collaboration with SEAC, is a comprehensive document that is well-positioned to meet the complex needs of Thames Valley students. The Board of Trustees strongly agrees with SEAC's concern that the availability of financial resources may impact the board's ability to fully implement the Plan. We also stand with the committee in their request for Special Education program expansion, staffing improvements and reduced wait times for services.

Meeting Special Education needs has become more challenging as Thames Valley experiences rapid growth due to residential development and new families moving to the district.

An example of one of the many areas where we have seen an increase is programming for students formally identified through the IPRC (Identification, Placement, and Review Committee) process with a developmental disability. Thames Valley has approximately 11% of its exceptional students identified with a developmental disability, compared to the provincial average of 5.1%. Our data shows that we have an unprecedented

number of 1200 students choosing to stay in school until the age of 21. As a direct result, Thames Valley has needed to increase the number of Developmental Disability classes from 79 during the 2019-20 academic year to 89 for the 2023-24 school year. This adjustment has resulted in an additional cost of \$2.5 million.

Overall, TVDSB's Special Education expenses are budgeted to exceed the Grant for Student Needs by \$3.4 million in 2023-24 (consistent with the prior year). Additional resources are required if we are to successfully meet the needs of special education students and reduce barriers to accessing assessments and resources.

On behalf Thames Valley District School Board Trustees, thank you for your time and consideration of this matter. The Board looks forward to continuing this important conversation and working with the Ministry to provide critical supports to all Thames Valley students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "L. Pizzolato".

Lori-Ann Pizzolato  
Chair of the Board  
Thames Valley District School Board

cc: Trustees