

Ministry of Education

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April 22, 2015

Krista Wylie
emandkrista@sympatico.ca

Dear Ms. Wylie,

Thank you for your follow up letter about the Toronto District School Board (TDSB).

As referenced in my letter dated February 4, 2015, the government has and continues to make significant investments in renewing Ontario schools to ensure that students have safe and healthy environments in which to learn.

As you know, in 2014, the Ministry of Education announced an investment of \$1.25 billion in School Condition Improvement (SCI) funding over three years for school boards. School boards can use this funding to address their highest priority renewal needs for health and safety, facility condition, energy efficiency, accessibility and program updates. The ministry recently announced the 2015-16 allocations for SCI Funding. In 2015-16, funding for SCI will increase to \$500 million — double the amount allocated to school boards in 2014-15 — to help boards address their renewal needs.

SCI funding has been allocated in proportion to a school board's total assessed renewal needs as determined through the ministry's Condition Assessment Program. For 2015-16, all school boards will be required to direct 80 per cent of their SCI funding to critical building components such as foundations and roofs and use the remaining 20 per cent to address any locally-identified renewal needs. For 2015-16, the ministry is providing \$112 million of SCI funding to the TDSB — an increase of 282 per cent of funding from the 2014-15 school year — which will allow the board to address its highest priority renewal needs.

School boards are expected to regularly undertake capital planning exercises as they review their facilities. Before undertaking a review, boards are required to first look at the viability of partnership opportunities in underutilized schools. If a partnership is feasible, the board should seek out opportunities with their municipality or a third party as a way to make better use of empty space alongside viable school programs. If a board is unable to maintain a viable school program through a partnership, it may need to undertake an accommodation review.

The province provides funding to support the costs of operating, maintaining and renewing child care facilities and school space used by all students, including continuing education and adult education students. It is important to point out that the utilization rate does take into account the use of schools for these purposes, such as child care and continuing education.

The utilization rate is determined by dividing the school's elementary or secondary enrolment by its capacity for elementary or secondary instruction. School boards report the capacity of their schools to the ministry. Boards should be reducing the reported capacity of their schools if the space is no longer being permanently used by elementary or secondary students, such as a long-term lease with a child care provider or classrooms used for continuing education students. This ensures that the utilization rate accurately depicts school space available for elementary and secondary instruction.

Our government recognizes school boards have and continue to form successful facility partnerships with municipalities and other community organizations. You may be interested to know that the ministry recently reviewed *Community Planning and Partnership Guideline* encourages facility partnership and supports effective planning with community partners, including land use and green space/park planning. Premier Kathleen Wynne also recently appointed Karen Pitre as a Special Advisor on community hubs.

It is important that school boards continue to be capable of purchasing new sites when they are experiencing growth in enrolment. This is accomplished in two ways: direct funding from the Ministry of Education for new land, and through Education Development Charges (EDC). EDCs enable school boards with inadequate capacity to collect revenues from new development to support land acquisition and preparation costs for sites required as a result of new development only. The Ministry of Education regularly undertakes policy reviews; your feedback in this regard will be taken into consideration.

As you point out, I have also appointed a Governance Advisory Panel to explore options for ending the "culture of fear" that has been identified in multiple reviews of the TDSB. The panel is independent and will report their findings this summer. I look forward to reading their recommendations for how the TDSB can more effectively serve all parents, students and school communities and increase public confidence.

Thank you again for taking the time to write. I trust that this information is helpful.

Sincerely,



Liz Sandals
Minister