

Ministry of Education

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October 24, 2016

Ms. Krista Wylie
Co-founder
Fix Our Schools Campaign
info@fixourschools.ca

Dear Ms. Wylie,

Thank you for your letter regarding the continued improvement of the condition of Ontario's schools. I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

Our government recognizes that improving learning environments for our students is one of the best infrastructure investments we can make. Improving school facilities is not only a key part of my mandate, but will also support Ontario's Renewed Vision for Education and our four-part economic plan. This demonstrates our government's commitment towards maintaining confidence in Ontario's public education system.

As you are aware, this government has made significant investments in renewing Ontario schools to ensure that students have safe and healthy environments in which to learn. Since 2003, the province has invested nearly \$15 billion in school infrastructure, of which almost \$5.5 billion met schools' renewal needs. We have also committed to investing an additional \$12 billion in school infrastructure over 10 years, including building new schools, improving the condition of existing schools and supporting school consolidations.

Our commitment is shown through the various steps we have taken to help school boards address their renewal needs and manage their facilities portfolio. For example,

- The ministry provides over \$300 million annually to school boards to manage day-to-day maintenance and repairs.
- Between 2011-12 and 2016-17 school year, the ministry will have invested \$2.7 billion through the School Condition Improvement program.
- The ministry introduced a new policy in 2015 requiring that proceeds of disposition (from sale of schools) be directed towards the improvement of the condition of existing schools or to replace a school if it is more cost-effective than repairing.

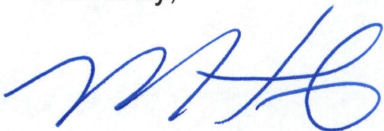
- School Consolidation Capital was introduced in the 2014-15 school year as a \$750 million program to support school consolidations that better match schools to community needs. This funding supports school consolidations by retrofitting schools, building additions to existing schools or constructing new facilities in order to close underutilized schools (which tend to have high renewal needs). This program has helped reduce boards' renewal needs.
- The ministry continues to engage a broad range of education partners in extensive discussions about funding to identify ways to improve the funding mechanisms that support the delivery of education in Ontario.

From the results of our five-year inspection of the condition of schools across the province, we know there are many schools that have a significant renewal backlog. It is worth noting that the 2011-2015 school assessment cycle of the Condition Assessment Program identified renewal needs – current and future – that range from critical to non-critical. Our recent investment of \$1.1 billion in funding over two years to address renewal and repair needs in schools certainly will lead to a significant improvement in our school facilities' condition. School boards will plan effectively and prioritize their renewal needs, targeting funding to where it is needed to provide students with safe and healthy environments in which to learn.

In terms of our continued commitment to the condition of schools, the ministry began a new five-year school assessment cycle in 2016 as part of our Condition Assessment Program and will continue to monitor the condition and renewal needs of all schools. As the government commits significant investments toward school repair and renewal, Ontarians have the right to a transparent resource for monitoring the results of these investments. This is why the government is planning to continue the release of information on the condition and renewal needs of Ontario's schools. This information will also allow the ministry to continue to provide school boards with sustainable, ongoing funding to address school renewal needs in order to conduct the necessary long-term planning to keep schools in a state of good repair.

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

Sincerely,



Mitzie Hunter, MBA
Minister