



Randy Hillier, MPP
Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson
Minister of Education
Mowat Block
22nd Floor
900 Bay St.
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

8 April 2019

Dear Minister;

On behalf of my constituents, it is appropriate to inform you of concerns regarding the government's recent proposals to our education policies, based upon both my own evaluation and feedback from my constituents.

Despite declining enrollment in our education system, taxpayer spending on public education has continued to increase well above the rate of inflation and achieves poor outcomes. This highlights a major failing that needs to be corrected in order to ensure that taxpayers' dollars are being spent to provide good value and improved learning outcomes. Regardless of the government in power, these fundamental problems need to be both recognized and resolved.

Changes to class sizes and the introduction of mandatory e-learning have been the major points of discussion between myself and local parents. Both unfortunately suffer from similar structural failures in your recent announcement, which will inevitably have negative impacts on any arguable benefit they are expected to achieve. In short it appears the cart has been placed before the horse.

After speaking with many teachers, a major concern brought to my attention is student behaviour issues, aggression, and violence in the classroom, which has been steadily increasing over the years. We have also seen an increase in the number of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and special needs in our classrooms, which will be amplified on a per teacher basis with larger class sizes. It is folly to build a structure of larger class sizes without first providing tools and solutions to teachers and principals that allow them to ensure their classrooms are free from disruption, and working in the interest of the vast majority of students who want to learn alongside added resources for students with special needs. Much like the tools and solutions needed to combat violence and negative behaviour, you cannot increase class sizes without first giving educators the foundational resources required to properly work with the new structure.

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Mandating e-learning in the curriculum suffers from a similar foundational problem as well. E-learning is an inevitable development of our education system as online technologies and education strategies continue to improve, and offer many innovative solutions for students with different learning strengths through the use of tailored programming. It is important not only to embrace e-learning, but we must also facilitate e-learning, and this is where your proposal falls short.

E-learning requires a basic standard of internet connectivity across all areas of society before it can be properly deployed. In rural communities such as ours, many families do not have access to fast, reliable, or affordable internet service. In addition, many of our rural schools also do not have the computer resources to accommodate those students. Once again it is folly to roll out changes such as this, no matter how innovative they may be, without ensuring that the foundational resources are in place to support it.

I recommend these reforms be incorporated within any new legislative framework:

1. Ensure people who do not have access to fast, reliable and affordable internet access are not disadvantaged;
2. That each classroom and schools has additional resources available (EAs & TAs, social workers or clinicians etc) to assist students with special needs and/or Individualized Education Plans;
3. That teachers and principals have improved abilities that enable them to effectively manage aggressive or violent behaviours to improve the learning environments for all students and teachers.
4. End province wide bargaining on collective agreements and return to local bargaining
5. A comprehensive review and evaluation of amalgamated school boards
6. Evaluate alternative public funding models that improve education through expanding choices.

I do hope you will take seriously the recommendation I have brought forth, and I look forward to your timely reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Randy Hillier".

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