



Randy Hillier, MPP
Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston

An Open Letter to the Minister of Education

Hon. Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
438 University Ave, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2A5

15 August 2019

Dear Minister,

Resolving the problems within our public education system must be undertaken with thoughtful discourse in order to understand the perspectives of others, and to speak constructively across differences.

The ongoing and public dispute between your Ministry and members of Cabinet with the Upper Canada District School Board (UCDSB) is inconsistent with, and an anathema to, sound administration and representation.

Both sides, and indeed *all sides* in this controversy have legitimate concerns that must be first recognized, and secondly resolved, if we intend to advance the education of all our students.

The UCDSB is facing a serious financial challenge in large part by complying with the previous administration's policy on tendering school bus transportation. The shortfall amounts to an unanticipated \$10 million added expense. The Ministry has a duty to recognize the hardships created by past administration(s).

Unions and the School Board must also recognize the significant financial pressures the current government faces, and in which it was given an electoral mandate to rectify/mitigate.

Just as it is important to recognize the consequences of past policies regarding school bus transportation procurement; we must recognize that many past policies have contributed to less than desirable outcomes educating our students, fiscally prudent and sound administration, appropriate representation, and developing curriculum.

Addressing the provinces financial concerns on funding public education and student outcomes would require the following subjects to be constructively examined:

1. problems and additional costs created by province wide collective bargaining;

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2. problems created by school board amalgamations, including the diminished role of elected trustees and parents;
3. educating students with special needs and learning disabilities;
4. the increasing role and influence of teachers unions on classroom education;
5. the increasing mental health challenges young people face; and
6. violence in the classroom.

The Ministry ought to consider the initiatives underway at the Ministry of Health to address health care reforms as a model to follow with public education, and bring all interested parties and stakeholders together in constructive dialogue.

I look forward to participating in, assisting and/or facilitating discussions on these subjects and reducing any hostility or distrust between parties, and cultivating a recognition that it is in all our best interests to collaborate to improve student outcomes and public education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Randy Hillier". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Randy Hillier