



:. ontario school library association

November 21, 2019

Hon. Stephen Lecce
Minister, Ministry of Education
438 University Avenue, 5th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2A5

Sent by email: minister.edu@ontario.ca

Minister Lecce,

RE: Enhancing Accountability and Transparency to Protect Ontario's School Libraries

The Ontario School Library Association (OSLA) and its more than 1,300 members are front-line educators essential for delivering Ontario's primary and secondary curriculum, making sure students have the digital and critical thinking skills they need to succeed in college, university or a career in the skilled trades.

Over the past two decades, hundreds of thousands of students across Ontario have lost access to school libraries and the critical resources they provide. The changes announced this past spring to Ontario's class sizes further amplified this trend, as several school boards opted to close school libraries and repurpose trained teacher-librarians in anticipation of managing the expanded class sizes. Despite the Ministry of Education's updated direction on this matter, we've seen no reversal of this accelerating decline at the local level.

Despite a well-established, provincial per-student funding formula (GSN) for school libraries through the Pupil Foundation Grant, school boards are not required to spend the funds as intended by the ministry formula. Funds earmarked for school libraries are used to fund other priorities, directly leading to fewer library staff as well as the closing of school libraries altogether. We estimate that as much as half of funds - up to \$100 million annually - earmarked by the Ministry of Education for school libraries is being otherwise used.

We strongly urge the Ministry of Education to enhance the accountability and transparency of this provincial investment by mandating that the annual funds currently allocated by the Ministry of Education to school boards for school libraries and library staff are spent on these priorities. Enhancing transparency and accountability from school boards for the use of these allocated funds will protect and restore access for all Ontario students – no matter where they live. This can be achieved while respecting the independence of school boards and ensuring sufficient local flexibility on how best to apply this funding.

We are enclosing a recent copy of our organization's magazine, ***The Teaching Librarian***. The feature article of this issue looks at the state of Ontario's school libraries. It illustrates the current reality of declining school libraries, especially in Northern, Southwestern and Eastern Ontario. Even as the issue was going to print, another school board made the decision to eliminate nearly all library staff. Since publication, more boards have reduced school library learning commons programs. We are concerned that this is and will continue to have a substantial impact on achieving the province's objectives for student success.



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OSLA continues its work to ensure Ontario students receive a world-class education. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and your team as we continue to work together to ensure that our students have the best chance of success, no matter where they live or what path they pursue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J Brown".

Jennifer Brown

OSLA President and on behalf of [2019 OSLA Council Members](#)