



May 11, 2023

The Honourable Stephen Lecce
Ministry of Education
438 University Ave., 5th Floor,
Toronto, ON M5G 2K8

Dear Minister Lecce,

Re: Bill 98, Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, 2023

The intent of Bill 98 is to 'refocus' the education system and improve outcomes for students in Ontario. This Bill proposes some broad changes with respect to Student Achievement, Multi-Year Improvement Plans and School Sites and Other Property. The Halton District School Board is in full support of initiatives that support and promote student achievement and well-being. However, we have concerns over the proposed standardization of measures and focus on a traditional 'back to basics' approach in an education system that has evolved and needs to continue to evolve and embrace the many innovative 21st century approaches.

Bill 98 also suggests that the Minister has increased influence in relation to:

- Curriculum guidelines,
- Training of board members, directors of education, supervisory officers and superintendents;
- Board Reports and parent communications
- "Business Activities" (without providing a clear definition of the term "business activities" in the text of the bill)
- Codes of Conduct of Trustees

Areas of specific concerns are;

- The power to set provincial priorities for students without input from school boards;
- The power for the Minister to direct the sale of school board property; and
- The power to intervene in the performance assessment of local Directors of Education.

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Many of these recommendations ignore the contributions of the Trustee position and the experience and skills of the school boards' senior administrative teams. These recommendations are in direct conflict with the positive impact these roles have on our education system. They also lack input from all levels of stakeholders, including students, parents, post-secondary education and industry stakeholders. Consultation is required to ensure that everyone's voice is being heard.

Elected Boards of Trustees possess knowledge of their individual communities and of the unique needs of each community and therefore play a critical role in their school district. School boards provide district-specific perspectives and share successful and innovative strategies to help shape the education system at the provincial level and support the success of every Ontario student.

Trustees have the understanding of the local needs of the community and are able to negotiate and collaborate with key stakeholders to make knowledgeable decisions that will impact their schools and surrounding communities. School boards' senior administrative teams also have the 'within system' knowledge to ensure local priorities are addressed. In considering the proposed changes, we hope the government recognizes the benefits to the education system that a collaborative approach between locally elected trustees and the ministry has had on continuing to reduce the 'red tape' that often gets in the way of efficient and locally sensitive decisions school boards make.

As always we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Margo Shuttleworth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent flourish at the end.

Margo Shuttleworth
Chair of the Board of Trustees, Halton District School Board