



Dawn Danko
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Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
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August 24, 2021

Hon. Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
315 Front Street, 14th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 0B8

Re: COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing Policy Funding

Dear Minister Lecce,

This is a letter is to inform you of a [motion](#) that Trustees approved during an August 23, 2021 Special Board meeting at Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB). The motion relates to the COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing Policy coming for Ontario school boards.

The motion notes the dire situation facing the City of Hamilton in the fourth wave of the pandemic. With among the lowest COVID vaccination rates in the province, Hamilton recorded Ontario's highest COVID rate on August 11 and August 12.

Modelling predicts that the fourth wave will largely impact the young and unvaccinated. We know that vaccines, while an incredible protection for those eligible, are not yet possible for many younger students who are returning to school.

We must protect students under age 12, so that our schools can remain open and public education can continue to serve as the foundation of a healthy, vital and progressive society. Keeping schools open has been deemed a priority for children's learning, mental health and well-being.

One point of the motion extended the vaccination and testing policy so that it applies to HWDSB Trustees, as well as staff.

The second point of the motion is a sincere request that the province fully fund the costs of vaccination and testing policies.

This requirement will involve new and challenging work that boards cannot fund from their dwindling reserves. Full funding will also help school boards, and their public health partners, protect the privacy of students and staff as vaccination data is collected and reported publicly.

As Ontario continues its "last mile" approach to full vaccination of residents, our public health partners are informing us about communities with higher risk of infection. We also ask that the province release additional funds to target the health and safety needs of higher risk school communities.

HWDSB

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We all appreciate the extraordinary costs brought on by the pandemic. We don't want funding to be an obstacle to vaccination disclosure, testing, or being responsive to community needs.

Sincerely,



Dawn Danko
Chair, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board