

August 6, 2020

Dear Principal Karailiadis, Trustee Aarts, Superintendent Persaud, Acting TDSB Director of Education Jackson, and Minister of Education Hon. Stephen Lecce:

cc. MPP Rima Berns-McGown, Premier Rob Ford

We are writing on behalf of Earl Beatty Public School's school council ("EBSAC") to express our concerns regarding the Ministry of Education's recently announced return to school direction and the subsequent TDSB Returning to School guide that was presented to the TDSB Committee of the Whole on August 4th.

Our priority is for schools to reopen in a manner that prioritizes the health and safety of all students, teachers, and staff. We are profoundly disappointed in the inadequate funding committed by the Ontario government to support a safe reopening. Given the Ministry of Education's direction to open elementary schools for conventional in-person delivery of teaching and instruction, five days a week, we ask Minister Lecce and Premier Ford to provide sufficient funding to support "Elementary Model 1A" (Regular School Day Routine, Five Days Per Week, Face-to-Face with Enhanced Public Health Protocols and Cohorts of 15 Students) as outlined and costed in the TDSB's July 15<sup>th</sup> Returning to School preliminary plans.

Earl Beatty parents have expressed a number of concerns with the Ministry of Education's and TDSB's reopening plans, including: insufficient ventilation; inadequate handwashing facilities; class sizes larger than the 10-15 students recommended by the Hospital for Sick Children's July 29<sup>th</sup> Guidance for School Reopening; and lack of space for physical distancing. The health and safety of students, teachers, and staff is the TDSB's responsibility. We call on Trustee Aarts and Director Jackson to take full responsibility for a safe reopening and advocate for adequate funding from the Ministry of Education. If funding is not forthcoming, then the TDSB must take responsibility to find creative solutions to keep students, staff, and teachers safe (e.g. using community spaces or outdoor classrooms to facilitate physical distancing).

As the start of the school year draws nearer, more frequent and more detailed communications with parents are essential. TDSB parents will be asked to elect in-person or remote learning during the week of August 10<sup>th</sup>; however, to date, there has been no clear communication on what those two options entail. In order to make an informed choice for their children, parents need to know details such as:

- How safety measures (hand hygiene, physical distancing, mask wearing) will be implemented and enforced in their home school.
- If some students elect remote learning, then will in-person class sizes be smaller, or will teacher allocations be reduced and classes combined? What class size is expected for remote learning?
- Details on whether remote learning be provided by central teachers or teachers from the students' home school.

- The TDSB must ensure that there are multiple re-entry points throughout the year, at which students who initial opt for remote learning can opt back into in-school learning. These dates must be communicated well in advance, to give families a clear picture of their options. In order to maintain social connections among students in the home school, the TDSB should, wherever practical, have remote learning students participate in virtual activities that connect them to the school community.

In addition to communications from the TDSB, we would encourage Trustee Aarts, Superintendent Persaud, and Principal Karailiadis to put in place a communication plan at the local level. This could include virtual Ward forums, informational emails from the Trustee and school administration, and virtual Q&A sessions for parents with the school administration in the weeks leading up to the start of school. A special focus should be put on communicating with families of incoming kindergarten students, to enable a smooth transition into the school community.

EBSAC recognizes the vital importance of in-person education for young students. Every child at Earl Beatty Public School, in the TDSB, and in Ontario has the right to education in a safe environment, and every teacher and staff member has the right to a safe working environment. Our children deserve an appropriately funded, well-thought-out return to school, and we call on the TDSB and the Ministry of Education to work cooperatively to ensure that this happens.

Sincerely,

Earl Beatty School Advisory Council