

DATE

Via Email

Hon. Jill Dunlop Ministry of Education

Re: Pressing Need to Substantially Increase Provincial Funding for K-12 Students with Disabilities/Special Education Needs

Dear Minister Dunlop,

We the undersigned are Chairs of a number of Special Education Advisory Committees around Ontario. Our committees are appointed under provincial law. We draw on the frontline experience of students with disabilities/special education needs, to give advice to school boards on how they can better serve the learning needs of these vulnerable students.

There are at least a third of a million students with disabilities/special education needs in Ontario-funded schools. Our direct experience, as well as one official report after the next, reveals that these students are too often second-class citizens in Ontario-funded schools. For example, [the 2022 final report](#) of the Government-appointed K-12 Education Standards Development Committee revealed that these students confront many serious accessibility barriers in Ontario's K-12 schools.

Frontline educators want to effectively teach all learners. However, their ability to do so is seriously hampered. This requires immediate and strong provincial action.

Among other needed reforms, these students require the Ontario Government to immediately and substantially increase its funding for these students. We on SEACs and these students get caught in an unfortunate multi-year back-and-forth verbal tennis match between school boards and the Ontario Government over the need for more funding. School boards say they need more. Government after Government says it is spending more in this area than ever before.

What is beyond dispute is that these vulnerable students are too often underserved in Ontario-funded schools. For example, there are not enough education staff, such as specialized teachers with disability/special education expertise, educational assistants and special needs assistants. Too many teachers lack the training to effectively teach all students. The recurring disability barriers documented in the [K-12 Education Standards Development Committee final report](#) make it harder and more costly for schools and school boards to serve these students, since each school board too often must re-invent the accessibility wheel.

We call on the Ontario Government to immediately and substantially increase its funding for students with disabilities/special education needs, and to ensure that this funding is stable and predictable from year to year. We also ask you to arrange a virtual meeting with the Chairs of Ontario's Special Education Advisory Committees, so you can learn directly from those of us who are very close to the problem.

We welcome any opportunity to collaborate with you.

Sincerely,