Nipissing­

Parry Sound

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December 23,2016

Honourable Mitzie Hunter  Minister of Education

22nd Floor, Mowat Block 900 Bay Street

Toronto ON M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Hunter:

**RE:** Special Education Funding Formula

On behalf of the Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board and its Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), I am writing in support of the concerns identified by the Toronto Catholic District School Board's SEAC regarding overall reductions in the Special Education Funding formula, in particular, reductions to the Special Education High Needs Amount (HNA). These reductions to funding over time have had a drastic impact on our students with special education needs as we strive to support them to reach their full potential.

With the introduction of the new funding model in 2014-15 that replaced the HNA with the Differentiated Special Education Needs Amount (DSENA), there has been a reduction to our HNA grants each year of the four year phase-in. By the end of the phase-in, in 2017-2018, it is projected to total over $500,000, representing a reduction of almost 20%. This reduction is having a tremendous impact on our ability to provide the full range of services for our students with special education needs. Although we have been able to access the Special Incident Portion (SIP) grant and use other sources of funding to provide services to students, the cost of providing these intensive supports, which are funded through the SIP, far exceed the SIP funding allocation. The overall impact is placing additional pressures on our system to fully meet the range of special education needs of our students.

Our board's percentage of students with special education needs receiving programs and services is currently 30% which far exceeds the provincial average of 17% (as reported through OnSIS for the 2014-2015 school year). Over the past several years, this percentage has been consistent in our Board, and is similar to other Boards in Northern Ontario. This, in addition to our geographic circumstances, puts our students at a further disadvantage, and efficiency of service is a challenge.

Providing a range of special education programs and services, regardless of identification, is in direct alignment with our Board's mission and vision to support *i!l)* students to reach their full potential, experience a sense of well­ being, and to grow spiritually, emotionally, physically and academically. The overall reduction in the high needs portion of the Special Education grant our Board has experienced places a serious pressure on our ability to provide a full range of inclusive services to meet the complex needs of our students.

We respectfully request that the Ministry review the high needs (DSENA) portion of the Special Education funding calculation and reconsider the reductions to funding as a result.

Thank you in advance for consideration of our concerns. Sincerely,

Barbara McCool Chair

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cc. Ontario District School Board SEACs

 Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association

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