

June 30, 2022

The Honourable Stephen Lecce
900 Bay Street, 14th Floor
Toronto, ON
M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Lecce,

The Ministry of Education's Memo 2017: B15 *New Vision for Student Transportation – Discussion* and the associated *December 2017: Discussion paper on a new vision for student transportation in Ontario* recognized both the value of student transportation in supporting student success, and the challenges that exist with the current student transportation delivery model in Ontario.

The Simcoe County Student Transportation Consortium (SCSTC) provides transportation services for approximately 26,000 students enrolled in Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) schools, as well as students from our coterminous school board. The SCSTC delivers effective and efficient student transportation services and regularly seeks out and implements cost-saving measures that put these efficiencies in place.

The cost of student transportation contracts, which have been competitively procured in compliance with the Government of Ontario Broader Public Sector (BPS) Procurement Directive, have continued to increase annually. Over the last five years, the SCSTC has experienced an average annual contractual increase of 4.84 percent. These contractual increases continue to outpace student transportation funding allocations provided by the Ministry of Education. Cost pressures related to operator contracts along with specialized and program transportation requirements, continue to put significant financial strain on the SCDSB.

The SCDSB provides transportation to students, including those with special education needs, who attend their home school and reside beyond the walking zone as defined by [Policy 2410 – Transportation of Students](#). To ensure equitable access to programs for all students, the SCDSB provides transportation to students in our special education county classes, as well as students participating in French Immersion and Extended French programs.

In reviewing the budget projections from the SCSTC, it is anticipated that an increasing deficit, which could lead to an annual amount of \$4.6M by 2026-2027 will result should current funding continue. This spring, the SCDSB moved substantial support funding from reserves to cover the SCSTC's transportation deficit. Continued emergency steps of this nature are not sustainable, as these needed funds are being diverted from other key areas of focus aligned with our SCDSB Strategic Priorities.

A balanced student transportation budget is not feasible under the current model, as the student transportation funding allocation does not adequately address increasing transportation contract costs, or the increasing student transportation requirements. As such, we respectfully request that you revisit the transportation funding formula as soon as possible to address the inadequate level of funding currently provided to transportation consortia and/or school boards across the province.

Respectfully,



Jodi Lloyd
Chairperson
Simcoe County District School Board

c: Cathy Abraham, President, Ontario Public School Boards' Association
Chairs, Ontario Public School Boards' Association
Chair, Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board
Simcoe County Student Transportation Consortium
Board of Trustees, SCDSB
John Dance, Director of Education, SCDSB