

Ministry of Education

Minister

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Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1L2**Ministère de l'Éducation**

Ministre

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Queen's Park
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Ontario

June 28, 2017

Dear Colleagues,

We are writing as a follow-up to our letter from March 6, to inform you of the launch of Ontario's Plan to Strengthen Rural and Northern Education. The details of this announcement will be made available shortly online at the Ministry of Education's [website](#).

As you may know, from April 21 to June 9, our government hosted a provincewide engagement to seek input from parents, students, communities, school boards and municipal governments on how to strengthen education in rural and Northern communities in Ontario. Input was also gathered through an online survey and email submissions.

Throughout this engagement process, we heard the concerns and ideas of rural and Northern families and communities. Addressing this feedback has been central to the development of the Plan to Strengthen Rural and Northern Education. That's why we are pleased to tell you that, beginning in September 2017, our government will support students and communities through a suite of complementary process improvements and funding enhancements, including:

- Overhauling the process that school boards use to review schools through the Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline. While the process is under review, school boards will not begin any new reviews, with the exception of those reviews which would support joint-use projects between boards. School boards will not have to reconsider past decisions. We will work closely with partner ministries and key stakeholders, including school boards and municipal governments, to ensure the process will give consideration to the impact on communities and student well-being, longer timelines and clearer roles for students, as well as staff and elected officials from both school boards and municipal governments;
- Reviewing the Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline to better encourage joint responsibility for integrated local planning, with a focus on communication between school boards, municipal governments and other community partners;

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- Providing school boards with \$20 million in additional funding through the new Rural and Northern Education Fund to further support the learning experience in rural and Northern schools. This funding will be generated based on a new rural funding formula, and must be used on supports for schools serving rural and Northern students;
- Continuing investments in broadband speed, special education supports and experiential learning opportunities for rural and Northern students; and
- Additional supports for school boards to share space with each other and with community partners to help ensure a sustainable presence within a community. In addition to reviewing all school board capital requests for joint-use opportunities, the ministry will fund joint-use schools at a higher rate, and provide more ongoing project support for these opportunities.

We want to thank you for the valuable contributions you have made to the development of this plan. By working together as partners, we are confident we can continue to ensure that rural and Northern communities thrive, and their students receive an excellent education.

Sincerely,



Mitzie Hunter, MBA
Minister of Education



Bob Chiarelli
Minister of Infrastructure