

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, May 20, 2026, at 6:00 pm

Hybrid Meeting: [Join the meeting](#)

In-Person: St. Francis Room (2nd Floor) Catholic Education Centre

Online:

WCDSB Mission Statement

*As disciples of Christ,
we educate and nurture hope
in all learners
to realize their full potential
to transform God's world.*

Co-chairs: Cindy Benedetti and Laura Shoemaker

MEMBERS

WCDSB Trustee - **Bob Sikora**

WCDSB Trustee – **Conrad Stanley**

Waterloo Regional Down Syndrome Society - **Kim Murphy**

Waterloo Regional Police - **Amanda Hennig**

Family and Children's Services of Waterloo Region - **Cindy Benedetti**

Waterloo Region Family Network – **Karen Applebee**

International Dyslexia Association Ontario - **Laura Shoemaker**

Autism Ontario - **Monica Wenzlaff**

Member at Large - **Jeanne Gravelle**



**Waterloo Catholic
District School Board**
Quality, Inclusive, Faith Based Education

35 Weber St. W., Unit A
Kitchener, ON, Canada N2H 3Z1
519-578-3660
info@wcdsb.ca



SEAC Committee Meeting Agenda

Date& Time:	May 20, 2026 @ 6:00 pm
Location (Hybrid)	In-Person: St. Francis Room (2 nd Floor), Catholic Education Centre Online: Via Teams: Join the meeting
Next Meeting:	T.B.D. – Depending on the budget release timing
Committee Members: Kim Murphy, Amanda Hennig, Cindy Benedetti, Karen Applebee, Laura Shoemaker, Jeanne Gravelle, Monica Wenzlaff, Bob Sikora, Conrad Stanley	
Administrative Officials: Gerald Foran, Erin Lemak	

1. Opening Prayer Welcome	Erin Lemak
2. Approval of Agenda Motion by: Seconded:	
3. Declared Pecuniary Interest	
4. Approval of the April minutes: Motion by: Seconded:	
5. School System Operational Business: 5.1. Discovery Day 5.2. Special Olympics	Stephanie Garibaldi Secondary Teacher Tara Farias Parent Representative Jennifer Findlay Associate Director
6. Ministry Updates (10 min) 6.1 Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board (KPR) SEAC expressing concern regarding the impact of Bill 33, Supporting Children and Students Act 2025 and its potential impact on school boards. 6.2 Toronto DSB SEAC Letter to the Minister re: Recurring Unmet Needs of K-12 Students with Disabilities/Special Education Needs 6.3. Hastings and Prince Edwards DSB SEAC to Ministry of Education Re: Provincial Proposal to Replace Trustees with Provincially Appointed Supervisors. 6.4.	G. Foran



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Waterloo DSB letter of Support to Simcoe Catholic DSB Re: Funding Priorities for Students with Special Education and Mental Health Needs• Waterloo DSB letter of Support to Durham DSB Re: Provincial Proposal to Replace Trustees with Provincially Appointed Supervisors• Waterloo DSB letter of Support to Toronto DSB: Re: Current state of special education funding and the protection of student rights under the Ontario Human Rights Code.	
7. SEAC Committee Functions: 7.1. Budget Presentation Discussion	G. Foran
8. Policy Advice to the Board	
9. Updates	
10. Pending Items	
11. Adjournment Motion by: Seconded:	
12. Action Items Place Holder	



SEAC Committee Meeting Minutes

Date& Time:	April 1, 2026 @ 6:00 pm
Location (Hybrid)	In-Person: St. Francis Room (2 nd Floor), Catholic Education Centre Online: Via Teams: Join the meeting
Next Meeting:	T.B.D. – Possibly May 20 th , 2026
Committee Members: Kim Murphy, Amanda Hennig, Cindy Benedetti, Karen Applebee, Laura Shoemaker, Jeanne Gravelle, Monica Wenzlaff, Bob Sikora, Conrad Stanley	
Administrative Officials: Gerald Foran, Erin Lemak	

1. Opening Prayer Welcome	Erin Lemak
2. Approval of Agenda Motion by: Karen Applebee Seconded: Monica Wenzlaff	
3. Declared Pecuniary Interest N/A	
4. Approval of the March minutes: Motion by: Monica Wenzlaff Seconded: Amanda Hennig	
5. School System Operational Business: 5.1. Active and Community Living – Pathways <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of programs • School representatives and parents asked for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ More opportunities for Co-op placements ➢ More focus on Literacy • Students may participate until June of the year they turn 21. • Word of Work – K Coded Course Q&A	E. Lemak G. Foran
6. Ministry Updates (10 min) 6.1. Durham DSB Letter to the Minister re: Provincial Proposal to Replace Trustees with Provincially Appointed Supervisors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A letter presented to the Committee at the previous meeting. The Committee had requested information on the potential impact on SEAC; however, the Ministry confirmed that it does not have insight into how this would impact SEAC. 6.2. Response from the Ministry re: WCDSB SEAC letters to the Ministry pertaining to Special Education Transition Navigators and Summer Learning funds.	G. Foran



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation that the letters were received and that the Ministry is looking into the requests. 	
<p>7. SEAC Committee Functions:</p> <p>7.1. Security for SEAC meetings – update</p> <p>7.2. Feedback from the Grace for All event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses received were very highly rated. To receive more feedback next time, send the follow up email to the attendees or add it as the agenda item at the end of the event. 	<p>G. Foran E. Lemak</p>
<p>8. Policy Advice to the Board N/A</p>	
<p>9. Updates</p> <p>9.1. Trustee Updates Trustee Sikora shared Trustee updates.</p> <p>9.2. WWDSS Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 13: Schools across the region recognized World Down Syndrome Day prior to March Break. The Society extends its appreciation to Waterloo Catholic District School Board for its participation and support. April 25: WWDSS Spring Mini Conference and Annual General Meeting. June 15: 12th Annual Upside-Down Charity Golf Tournament at Ariss Valley Golf Club. <p>9.3. Autism Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kitchener - Playdate and Pizza for Preschoolers (ages 2-6 years old) April 19, 11:00 am - 1:00 pm - Join us at Bingemans in Kitchener for a fun playdate of independent play, featuring an awesome three-level indoor play structure! Then, families will gather for a pizza lunch with the group. Cost: \$3 Registration link - Playdate and Pizza Guelph - Family Pickleball May 3, 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm - Families from around the Central West region are invited to join our Pickleball event to learn the game, have a fun day, and meet other families from the surrounding area. Beginners and novice players are welcome to join. Everything you need to play will be supplied and the program will be led by a professional pickleball coordination team. Led by experienced instructors, it focuses on teaching the essential skills required to play pickleball, such as proper grips, paddle positions, and serving techniques. Cost: \$5 Registration Link - Family Pickleball Waterloo - Micro: Bit Makers Club (ages 10-14 years old) May 14, 21, 28, June 4, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm - This is a brand new 4-week adventure in creative coding and hands-on tech led by the University of Waterloo! Across four sessions, we will explore 	



<p>building interactive projects, experimenting with sensors and LEDs, and designing simple AI-enhanced creations that bring ideas to life. Everyone gets their own Micro: Bit to keep. No prior coding experience is needed - just bring your curiosity and enthusiasm! Note: Parking fees will be covered by the University. Cost: \$10 Registration Link - Micro Bit Makers Club</p> <p>9.4. WRFN Updates ➤ Annual Event Evening of Elegance on April 24th</p> <p>9.5. WRPS Updates ➤ Accessibility Tradeshow and Conference will take place on June 1 and 2, 2026</p>	
<p>10. Pending Items N/A</p>	
<p>11. Adjournment Motion by: Jeanne Gravelle Seconded: Kim Murphy</p>	
<p>12. Action Items Place Holder N/A</p>	



Date: May 20, 2026
To: Board of Trustees
From: Director of Education
Subject: Discovery Day and Special Olympics Ontario

Type of Report:

- Decision-Making
- Monitoring
- Incidental Information concerning day-to-day operations

Type of Information:

- Information for Board of Trustees Decision-Making
- Monitoring Information of Board Policy XX XXX
- Information only of day-to-day operational matters delegated to the CEO

Origin: (cite Education Act and/or Board Policy or other legislation)

Regulation 306 Special Education Programs and Services

Policy Statement and/or Education Act/other Legislation citation:

Policy 1001 – Ends

Alignment to the MYSP:

Learning

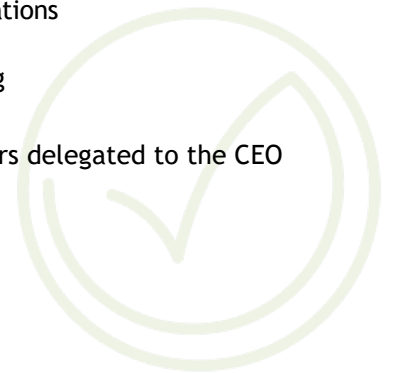
- Support multiple pathways & tools for success
- Accelerate excellence & innovation while building transferable, future-ready skills
- Engage students as co-creators in their learning
- Transform learning through leadership & staff support & development

Serving

- Celebrate & promote our distinct Catholic identity
- Develop faith & live gospel values
- Strengthen connections between home, school, & parish
- Connect faith formation to learning

Belonging

- Create safe, welcoming environments that reflect our diversity
- Promote a sense of mattering & dignity
- Foster equitable, inclusive, & barrier-free learning & work environments
- Engage families & build community partnerships



Background/Comments:

Our recent pilot “**Discovery Day**” with Cambridge Memorial Hospital was a highly successful pilot connecting our Community Living, ACTIVE, and Project SEARCH pathways to meaningful real-world experiences. This was not simply a field trip, but an intentional effort to bridge classroom life skills with authentic community participation, including using Grand River Transit to access the site. Through four engaging medical stations, students explored hospital spaces, interacted with staff, and learned how to navigate an important community setting in a safe and welcoming way. For our students, independence means feeling safe, knowing where they are, understanding who can help, and being able to advocate for themselves; skills reinforced throughout the day. By making CMH a familiar and comfortable place rather than a crisis-only environment, we are not just teaching skills; we are fostering independence, self-advocacy, and lifelong participation in the community.

For over 50 years, **Special Olympics Ontario** has evolved into a cornerstone of the global movement for inclusion, dedicated to enriching the lives of Ontarians with intellectual disabilities through the transformative power of sport. By prioritizing healthy, active lifestyles, the organization significantly improves individual well-being while relentlessly expanding the accessibility and quality of its programming. Guided by core values of empowerment, excellence, respect, diversity, and inclusion, the organization fosters a culture where volunteers think globally and act locally to build community awareness. Ultimately, Special Olympics Ontario envisions a future where sport serves as a catalyst for opening hearts and minds, driving the creation of truly inclusive communities across the province.

Recommendation:

Presented for your information.

Prepared/Reviewed By: Annalisa Varano
Director of Education
Gerald Foran
Superintendent of Learning: Special Education
Erin Lemak
Principal of Student Services & Care and Treatment Education Programs

*4.2 DIRECTOR Monitoring Reports: Where the Board receives from the CEO a monitoring report that flows from a responsibility delegated to the Director under Board Policy - except where approval is required by the Board on a matter delegated by policy to the Board - the minutes of the Meeting at which the Report is received shall expressly provide that the Board has received and approved of the Report as an action consistent with the authority delegated to the CEO, subject in all instances to what otherwise actually occurred.



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Website: www.kprschools.ca

March 3, 2026

The Honourable Paul Calandra
Minister of Education
5th Floor 438 University Avenue,
Toronto, ON. M7A 2A5

Dear Minister Calandra,

On behalf of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) for the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board (KPR) I am writing to express concern regarding the impact of Bill 33, Supporting Children and Students Act 2025 and its potential impact on school boards.

We understand that the Minister has indicated that the intent of the legislation is to improve oversight and accountability within Ontario's education system, however, we believe the removal of Trustees undermines the principles of equity, inclusion and local collaboration that are essential in supporting students with special education needs. These principles take on an even greater level of importance for those students with special education needs and where community services such as mental health supports, therapy providers, transportation options and health care partnerships varies widely from region to region.

We are very concerned that Bill 33 allows the Minister to assume supervision of school boards. The bypass of local governance is of greatest concern. In every school board, trustees and SEACs work together to make decisions designed to ensure that the needs of the students and families in our communities that we both serve have the best opportunity to have their needs met in their local communities. We know that for some, access is limited and we work together to minimize that impact. We do this with meaningful and robust discussion with our SEAC members who represent many families and our trustees who represent their communities. It is about meaningful dialogue and community engagement.

As a board that serves a vast area of rural Ontario and three First Nation communities, we know that some of our families rely on our school board as the only source of support services. For other areas of the board our families and children rely on the strong network of local services. The local context for this work is essential for success. We believe that local context must continue to inform decision making.

The Honourable Paul Calandra, Minister of Education

March 3, 2026

Page 2

We respect the intention to promote consistency and equity across Ontario; however, we believe that the local context must be an important aspect of informed decision making. Like our local board, this province is a combination of rural, urban, large, and small communities, and no two school boards just as no two communities are the same. Decision making is best kept local to best serve the needs of our students.

We respectfully request that the Minister reconsider the removal of locally, democratically elected Trustees. Further we request that the Ministry undertake a large and broad consultation that would include SEACs, educators, stakeholders, and families.

We believe that a system that includes local partnerships, which invests in evidence-based supports, and provides additional and necessary resources would be a path to your intended goals of accountability and greater student success for all.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. We are concerned that the removal of Trustees may have a negative impact on all students for many years to come and we would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the Ministry in the best interest of students.

Sincerely,

Melanie Brynaert

Melaine Brynaert
Chairperson, Special Education Advisory Committee
Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board

- C. Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Hon. Dave Smith, MPP, Peterborough-Kawartha
Todd J. McCarthy, MPP Durham
Hon. David Piccini, MPP Northumberland - Peterborough South
Laurie Scott, MPP Haliburton – Kawartha Lakes – Brock
Tyler Allsopp, Bay of Quinte
Ontario Public School Boards
Chairs of all Ontario Special Advisory Committees
Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA)



David Lepofsky, Chair, TDSB Special Education Advisory Committee
mdl.seac@gmail.com

February 25, 2026

To: The hon. Paul Calandra, Minister of Education minister.edu@ontario.ca
Ministry of Education
14th Floor, 315 Front Street West
Toronto, ON M7A 0B8
Canada

Dear Minister,

Re: Recurring Unmet Needs of K-12 Students with Disabilities/Special Education Needs

I write on behalf of the Toronto District School Board's Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC. We seek your help for TDSB's 40,000 students with disabilities/special education needs, because you are now the elected official with ultimate responsibility for TDSB operations while under provincial supervision.

Under longstanding provincial law, each school board must appoint a SEAC to advise it on the development and implementation of special education, including, among other things, on the board's special education budget and Special Education Plan. Our SEAC members bring to bear extensive community connections and lived experience with the challenges in the school system facing students with disabilities/special education needs and their parents/guardians.

Too often, students with disabilities/special education needs face recurring barriers in Ontario's K-12 schools. The Government received [a comprehensive report](#) over four years ago from a Government-appointed panel that extensively documented these barriers and recommended reforms to remove and prevent them. TDSB's student population comes from Canada's largest and most diverse city. The intersectional disadvantages that its students with disabilities/special education needs are thereby intensified.

Since the Government removed the TDSB's school board trustees and appointed the provincial TDSB Supervisor, the situation facing TDSB students with disabilities/special education needs has not demonstrably improved. In several ways, things have gotten worse for them.

Please direct the TDSB Supervisor to attend TDSB SEAC meetings. The representatives of parents of students with disabilities/special education needs wish an opportunity to address him directly, to have him hear of their concerns and to work collaboratively with him on finding solutions.

Previously, we had trustees attending every SEAC meeting, some as members, and often, simply as interested trustees. At some of the school boards that the Ontario Government has taken control over, your appointed Supervisor has attended at least some of their SEAC meetings. In sharp contrast, the TDSB Supervisor has not attended any of the monthly TDSB Special Education Advisory Committee Meetings, even though he stepped into the shoes of the school board trustees. Several trustees were members of SEAC. The Supervisor has been invited to attend each of our monthly SEAC meetings since He assumed his role last year.

Since the Supervisor was appointed, we have raised several issues with him in writing that are major concerns for students with disabilities/special education needs. We have asked him to take action to address these concerns. He has not taken any of the actions that SEAC requested. He has given no reasons for this.

Under Ontario Regulation 464/97, the elected trustees must afford SEAC an opportunity to be heard before making a decision on a SEAC recommendation. Trustees make those decisions in public, after a SEAC representative gets a chance to address the trustees, also in public. Trustees' discussions and decisions on any SEAC recommendation were conducted in public meetings, and live streamed to the public. In contrast, in several cases, the provincial Supervisor has made adverse decisions on SEAC recommendations without affording SEAC a chance to be heard before the decision was made. Each such adverse decision was made behind closed doors. No reasons were given.

Making this worse, the provincial TDSB Supervisor has made decisions that are adverse to the needs of students with disabilities/special education needs, overturning earlier decisions of the trustees. He increased the maximum size of two categories of special education classes. He also overturned the ceiling of 32 students which the trustees had set for the size of any individual Grade 4 to 8 class. As long as TDSB maintains the overall average size of those classes, there is now no limit on the maximum size of any individual Grade 4 to 8 class. This can only hurt individual students with special education needs who are placed in a mainstream Grade 4 to 8 class.

TDSB's SEAC has repeatedly emphasized that there is need for more staff to support the learning needs of students with disabilities/special education needs. TDSB budget officials have told SEAC every year that provincial funding for special education is less than the amount TDSB actually must spend to serve students with disabilities/special education needs. We have no indication that the provincial Supervisor has attempted to get any increase in provincial funding for TDSB.

It has become much harder for TDSB's SEAC to reach parents of students with disabilities/special education needs. For years, TDSB live streamed SEAC meetings. This helped SEAC and TDSB staff reach more parents of students with disabilities/special education needs and get helpful feedback from them. It helped SEAC members, TDSB staff and members of the public who missed a SEAC meeting but want to see what happened at it. Last October, you banned TDSB from live streaming SEAC meeting. This has made things worse for parents of students with disabilities/special education needs.

Under the provincial Supervisor, TDSB has now cut back on the scope/content of its much-needed multi-year Special Education Review. This hurts students with disabilities/special education needs. SEAC was never consulted on this cutback, nor were parents of students with disabilities/special education needs. If anything, TDSB needs to far more inclusively involve SEAC in the plans for this Special Education Review and to expand that Review, not further limit it.

In SEAC's experience, it is important for there to be broad public accountability for the management of TDSB. The removal of the trustees and the elimination of their public meetings substantially undermine this, to the disadvantage of all students, and especially to the disadvantage of vulnerable students with disabilities/special education needs. It would benefit students with disabilities/special education needs for there to be far stronger and more effective democratic oversight of the school board.

We urge you to broadly consult with parents of students with disabilities/special education needs, including with TDSB SEAC and other SEACs, about any future changes being considered to the governance and oversight of the publicly-funded school system. We are eager to work with you on this.

TDSB's Student and Family Support Office requires important additions to ensure that it effectively serves the learning needs of students with disabilities/special education needs and the accessibility needs of parents with disabilities. A staff complement as low as two at the TDSB's Student and Family Support Office, reported on City TV, is far too small to serve 250,000 students including 40,000 students with disabilities/special education needs. The Student and Family Support Office staff should have expertise in education of students with disabilities. The Student and Family Support Office should offer to accommodate the needs of parents with disabilities in using its services.

Any delay in rectifying this situation can only compound the disadvantages that these vulnerable students too often face. We seek your intervention now to repair this situation. We welcome any opportunity to assist you in doing so.

Sincerely,

David Lepofsky CM, O. Ont
Chair Toronto District School Board's Special Education Advisory Committee

CC: Chairs of each Ontario school board's Special Education Advisory Committee.
Denise Cole Deputy Minister of Education denise.cole@ontario.ca
Stacey Zucker, Interim TDSB Director of Education Stacey.zucker@tdsb.on.ca
Rohit Gupta TDSB Supervisor supervisor@tdsb.on.ca

April 13, 2026

Ashley Card
Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)
Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board (HPEDSB)
156 Ann Street, Belleville, ON K8N 3L3

The Honourable Paul Calandra
Minister of Education
Mowat Block, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 0B8

Dear Minister Calandra:

Re: Provincial Proposal to Replace Trustees with Provincially Appointed Supervisors

On behalf of the Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board (HPEDSB) Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), I am writing to advise that our committee has reviewed correspondence issued by the Durham District School Board (February 19, 2026) and Durham Catholic District School Board (March 4, 2026), regarding the provincial proposal to replace trustees, with provincially-appointed supervisors. We share their profound disappointment and concern that such a move would undermine the local democratic control of education and diminish the voices of our most vulnerable students.

In HPEDSB, our mission is to educate and empower students with skills for success. We believe that every student can benefit from and contribute to the school community. Achieving this mission requires a governance structure that is deeply rooted in the local community, one that understands the unique needs and culture of the families we serve. The vital role of local trustees in Special Education serves as a direct, non-partisan voice for families and students, particularly those requiring special education supports.

At HPEDSB, we recognize that while instructional strategies are "good for all," they are "necessary for some". Trustees ensure that these necessary supports remain a priority by holding the Board accountable - unlike appointed supervisors who are accountable to Queen's Park, trustees are directly accountable to their constituents. This accountability is essential for parents of students with special education needs who rely on trustees to ensure the Board appropriately delivers required accommodations.

Our SEAC works collaboratively to advise the Board on special education programs and services. The removal of elected trustees disrupts this local advocacy structure, which is vital to ensuring students receive tailored supports enabling their success.

As noted by our colleagues at DDSB, replacing multiple trustees with a single supervisor often results in higher costs to the taxpayer. In our view, redirecting funds from local governance to provincially appointed salaries provides no benefit to the students in our classrooms.

The HPEDSB 2025–2030 Strategic Plan prioritizes Promoting Citizenship, Well-being, and Safe Environments. We believe that transparency and collaboration are the cornerstones of building trust within our community. We are concerned that under provincial supervision, critical transparency mechanisms such as regular trustee-parent communication, could be curtailed, as seen in other boards.

While the Ministry proposes Parent/Student Support Offices staffed by Board employees, these are not a replacement for trustee advocacy. Board staff are accountable to the Board itself, they cannot provide the same independent representation for families navigating complex special education processes.

Our committee believes that students should be educated in the most enabling, least restrictive setting that meets their needs. For this to be effective, education policies must be shaped by those who are directly impacted by them. We urge the Ministry to uphold the principles of PPM 170 by strengthening, not weakening, the voices of local parents and caregivers. Local advocacy is not a barrier to student achievement, it is a prerequisite for it. Removing trustees would silence the only direct, elected voice that families currently have in public education. Changes to democratic governance should never occur without the informed consent and input of communities most affected.

Thank you for your consideration of this vital matter.

Sincerely,



Ashley Card, Chair
Special Education Advisory Committee

c.c. Chairs of Ontario Special Education Advisory Committees
Chandra Pasma, Shadow Minister of Education (cpasma-qp@ndp.on.ca)
John Fraser, Education Critic (jfraser.mpp-co@liberal.ola.org)
Katherine MacIver, Director of Education, Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board



Waterloo Region District School Board

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wrdsb.ca

April 27, 2026

The Honourable Paul Calandra
Minister of Education
Ministry of Education
438 University Avenue, 15th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M5G 2K8
minister.edu@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Calandra,

Re: Support for Funding Priorities for Students with Special Education and Mental Health Needs

On behalf of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) of the Waterloo Region District School Board, we are writing to express our support for the priorities outlined in the recent correspondence submitted by the Special Education Advisory Committee of the Simcoe County District School Board regarding funding support for students with special education and mental health needs.

SEAC appreciates the Ministry of Education's continued commitment to supporting students across Ontario and acknowledges the recent funding announcements. However, as school boards continue to respond to increasing complexity in student needs, sustained and responsive funding remains essential.

The Waterloo Region District School Board serves one of the fastest-growing regions in Ontario. Rapid population growth, changing demographics, and increased demand for specialized services have placed growing pressures on schools and support systems. Similar to the concerns identified by the Simcoe County District School Board SEAC, we continue to see significant increases in the complexity of student needs, particularly in areas related to special education, mental health, developmental disabilities, and behavioural support.

We support the priorities identified in the Simcoe County District School Board SEAC letter, including:

- Ensuring funding models reflect current demographic and enrollment data
- Sustained investment to address the increased complexity of student needs following the COVID-19 pandemic
- Continued progress toward meeting accessibility goals under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

- Adequate funding to support partnerships with community agencies providing mental health and therapeutic supports
- Continued investment in specialized staffing and Special Incidence Portion (SIP) funding to support students with complex needs

These priorities reflect challenges experienced across many Ontario school boards, including in Waterloo Region. Adequate and responsive funding is essential to ensure school boards can continue to provide inclusive, accessible, and supportive learning environments for all students.

The Waterloo Region District School Board SEAC appreciates your attention to these matters and your continued commitment to supporting Ontario's students with special education needs. We welcome ongoing dialogue and collaboration to ensure funding frameworks reflect the evolving needs of students and families across our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Roberta Thompson

SEAC Chair, Waterloo Region District School Board

Cc. Chairs of Ontario Special Education Advisory Committees

WRSDB Trustees

Catherine Fife, MPP Waterloo – cfife-qp@ndp.on.ca

Mike Harris Jr., MPP Kitchener—Conestoga – mike.harris@pc.ola.org

Aislinn Clancy, MPP Kitchener Centre – aclancy-co@ndp.on.ca

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Chandra Pasma, Education Critic – cpasma-qp@ndp.on.ca

Mike Morrice, MP Kitchener Centre – mike.morrice@parl.gc.ca

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Bryan May, MP Cambridge – bryan.may@parl.gc.ca



Waterloo Region District School Board

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April 27, 2026

The Honourable Paul Calandra
Minister of Education
Ministry of Education
438 University Avenue, 15th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M5G 2K8
minister.edu@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Calandra,

Re: Provincial Proposal to Replace Trustees with Provincially Appointed Supervisors

On behalf of the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), I am writing to express our support for the concerns outlined in correspondence from the Durham District School Board dated February 19, 2026, regarding the provincial proposal to replace elected school board trustees with provincially appointed supervisors.

Our Committee recognizes the important role that locally elected trustees play in representing community voices and ensuring accountability within Ontario's publicly funded education system. Trustees serve as a critical link between families, communities, and school boards, helping to ensure that local needs, including those of students receiving special education support, are understood and reflected in board decisions.

SEAC committees work closely with school boards to advocate for students with special education needs and their families. As such, we value governance structures that support strong local engagement, transparency, and responsiveness to the diverse needs of communities across Ontario.

We believe that maintaining locally elected trustees contributes to a system that promotes collaboration, accountability, and meaningful community participation, all of which are essential in supporting student success and well-being.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your continued commitment to supporting students with special education needs across Ontario.

Sincerely,

Roberta Thompson

SEAC Chair, Waterloo Region District School Board

Cc. Chairs of Ontario Special Education Advisory Committees

WRDSB Trustees

Catherine Fife, MPP Waterloo – cfife-gp@ndp.on.ca

Mike Harris Jr., MPP Kitchener—Conestoga – mike.harris@pc.ola.org

Aislinn Clancy, MPP Kitchener Centre – aclancy-co@ndp.on.ca

Brian Riddell, MPP Cambridge – brian.riddell@pc.ola.org

Chandra Pasma, Education Critic – cpasma-gp@ndp.on.ca

Mike Morrice, MP Kitchener Centre – mike.morrice@parl.gc.ca

Tim Louis, MP Kitchener—Conestoga – tim.louis@parl.gc.ca

Bardish Chagger, MP Waterloo – bardish.chagger@parl.gc.ca

Bryan May, MP Cambridge – bryan.may@parl.gc.ca



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April 27, 2026

Honourable Paul Calandra
Minister of Education
Ministry of Education
438 University Avenue, 15th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2A5
minister.edu@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Calandra,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC). We want to add our voice to the concerns being raised by other boards across Ontario regarding the current state of special education funding and the protection of student rights under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Students with special education needs are rights holders, not just recipients of a service. The Ontario Human Rights Code is very clear: every student with a disability has a right to an education free from discrimination and to receive meaningful accommodation. When the supports they need are delayed or simply don't exist, it calls into question whether they are actually accessing the education they are entitled to.

While school boards have a legal duty to uphold these rights, the current funding model makes it incredibly difficult to do so. Our system is under immense strain. We are trying to support more students with increasingly complex needs, but the resources haven't kept pace. This gap between what we are required to do and what we are actually funded to do is a major concern.

Across our region, families continue to experience significant and persistent barriers that limit this access. These include:

- Delays in accessing essential supports such as Speech and Language Pathology services
- Increasingly complex classroom environments without corresponding supports
- Gaps between identified needs and available resources
- Over-reliance on external services with long waitlists creates inequitable access

These aren't just abstract problems; they are systemic pressures that make it harder and harder for boards to meet their human rights obligations.

We are also worried about how the loss of local democratic governance is affecting our most vulnerable students.

Elected Trustees play a critical role in ensuring public accountability, transparency, and community voice within the education system. Trustees are accessible to families, participate in public decision-making, and provide an essential mechanism for concerns, particularly those related to special education, to be heard, understood, and acted upon.

The replacement of Trustees with a provincially appointed Supervisor significantly alters this dynamic. While we recognize the intent of provincial intervention, the current model does not provide the same level of transparency, responsiveness, or opportunity for meaningful engagement with families and advisory bodies such as SEAC.

From our perspective, this shift has created barriers to:

- Open and public dialogue on decisions impacting students with special education needs
- Direct engagement between SEAC and decision-makers
- Community trust in how decisions are made and implemented

While MACSE provides provincial advice, it cannot replace the critical role of local governance. Without elected Trustees and meaningful access to decision-makers, the system risks losing the transparency and responsiveness required to uphold the rights of students with disabilities.

When decisions affecting these students are made behind closed doors without a clear way for the public to weigh in, students' needs, especially the need for specific accommodations can easily be overlooked. This isn't just a governance issue; it's a human rights issue. Equitable education depends on a system that is transparent and actually listens to the families it serves.

As a SEAC, we are guided by both lived experience and community voice. We see firsthand the impact of these gaps on students and families. We also recognize that school boards require adequate, stable, and responsive funding models, alongside strong governance structures, to meet their legal and ethical responsibilities, and to do what they love: educate all students and set them up for success.

We respectfully call on the Ministry to:

- Ensure that funding models align with the actual needs of students, not projected averages

- Support integrated service delivery models that allow boards to provide in-house supports, reducing reliance on external waitlists
- Recognize special education as a human rights obligation, not a discretionary service
- Reinstate and protect the role of elected Trustees as a cornerstone of accountability and community engagement
- Ensure that SEACs have direct and meaningful access to decision-makers, including any appointed Supervisors
- Engage meaningfully with SEACs and communities as partners in identifying and addressing systemic barriers

A publicly funded education system must be one where all students can access learning in a way that respects their rights, identities, and potential and where the structures governing that system reflects the values of transparency, accountability, and inclusion. We remain committed to working collaboratively with the Ministry to support solutions that are equitable, sustainable, and grounded in human rights.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Roberta Thompson

SEAC Chair, Waterloo Region District School Board

Cc. Chairs of Ontario Special Education Advisory Committees

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