



*Office of the Chair of the Board*

October 16, 2017

Honourable Mitzie Hunter, M.P.P.  
Minister of Education  
900 Bay Street, 22<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Hunter:

**Re: Toronto Catholic District School Board**

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We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing commitment to students at the Toronto Catholic District School Board through the critical funding provided under the Ministry's Focus on Youth (FOY) Summer Program. Established in 2007, the program has become a cornerstone of our Board's plan to promote learning through play, healthy lifestyle and positive self-image for children and youth, while also supporting student achievement and wellbeing during the school year.

By offering our young people summer job experience and activities for children, the program extends learning beyond the classroom in safe and supportive environments that are essential to life-long learning and social skills development. The program has become even more important to student success since the Ministry extended the FOY program as part of the Priority Schools Initiative (PSI) in 2010. Targeting funding to PSI-identified communities based on socioeconomic data has enabled the TCDSB to optimize its programming in order to reach at-risk families and students living in our inner city and urban neighbourhoods.

The FOY program is a perfect community partnership where 75 non-profit community organizations are actively engaged with the TCDSB in delivering this essential public service to high needs neighbourhoods during the summer months. These are not just summer jobs, but much needed leadership training for youth. For our students this is a unique, life-changing opportunity to act as community leaders, advocates, mentors, positive role models and change agents as they fulfill the program's motto that "The Journey Never Ends." Most of our students go on to assume significant leadership positions during their post-secondary education and subsequent work careers.

Despite these successful outcomes, we know we can and must do more. Our Board greatly appreciates the modest 5 percent increase in funding last year. However, as one of the school boards in the largest, most diverse city in Ontario, the \$1,167,000 received is not enough to meet the burgeoning and exponential growth in demand to serve our most vulnerable school

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communities. In 2017, we received 867 applicants for 304 positions. Next summer, we anticipate that more than 1,000 students will apply for the limited number of FOY summer jobs.

We believe the goals of the FOY program truly reflect our values as a society. Your Ministry's continued support of the program exemplifies Ontario's commitment to providing opportunities and advantages for our young people to develop their talents and skills. It is for these reasons that I respectfully request, on behalf of the TCDSB Board of Trustees, that the Ministry of Education increase the funding directed to the Focus on Youth program.

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Increased investment by the Ministry in the FOY program would be a tangible demonstration of this government's compassion and belief that the future of this great province lies in the hands of the next generation of leaders who currently learn, work and play in our school communities. The TCDSB hopes it can count on you to help us continue this mission, as we empower our students to transform the world through witness, faith, innovation and action.

Sincerely,



Angela Kennedy  
Chair of the Board

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Cc: TCDSB Board of Trustees  
R. McGuckin, Director of Education  
Education Council