

APPENDIX A

Chair of the Board

To Minister of Education

RE: Providing School Boards with Funding to Address Non-Air Conditioned Schools

Dear Minister Naidoo-Harris:

I am writing on behalf of the Toronto Catholic District School Board regarding the growing public concern related to the dramatic negative health impact of extreme, hot weather temperatures on students and staff in non-air conditioned schools.

As you may be aware, an overwhelming majority (84%) TCDSB elementary schools do not have air conditioning. Some 35% of secondary schools have partial or no air conditioning. In a recent study of air temperatures conducted by the TCDSB, digital data loggers placed in thirteen sample schools during May, June and September, 2017 recorded very high air temperature readings that could potentially compromise the health and safety of students and staff. For example, the indoor air temperature recorded during the heat wave in September, reached temperatures above 28°C for over 100 hours. Classrooms with south or south-west exposure had over 160 hours of high temperatures recorded between 6 am and 6 pm.

In response to this concern, the TCDSB recently approved a phased program to install air conditioning in the Learning Commons of 155 non-air conditioned schools. This program is anticipated to take four years to implement, at a cost of \$3M per year – funded through the Board's School Renewal program. Other school boards are also recognizing this as a potential health issue and are installing air conditioning in gymnasiums. However, as the majority of TCDSB gymnasiums are under 2,000 square feet in size, the Learning Commons is often the larger space in the building and can therefore accommodate more than one classroom at a time.

Despite approving this program, many parents and school staff have expressed concerns to Trustees that the provision of a cooling centre is not enough to address the impact of hot weather in non-air conditioned schools. They worry about their children's well-being as well as their ability to focus and learn in classrooms that are over 28°C throughout the day. Unfortunately, at this point, the Board does not want to use more Renewal funding to add more air-conditioning to schools, given the very large Deferred Maintenance Backlog and the need to maintain and upgrade our existing schools.

Therefore, I am writing to ask if the Ministry to provide additional funding to boards, in order to support and expand the installation of air conditioning in schools. It is important to bring some consistency to this initiative as across the province, as many boards with newer schools may have more air conditioned buildings.

Thank you for your consideration regarding this issue and I look forward to hearing from you, as will many of our students, staff and parents when the warmer weather returns in the spring.

Regards

Chair of the Board

Cc all the Trustees, Director, Associate Director of Education, CFO & Superintendents