

May 23, 2019

The Honourable Lisa Thompson, Minister of Education  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor, 438 University Ave  
Toronto, ON  
M7A 2A5

email: [minister.edu@ontario.ca](mailto:minister.edu@ontario.ca)

Dear Minister:

**Re: Consultation on Class Sizes in Ontario and Education Funding**

On behalf of the Council of the Municipality of North Middlesex and our Local School Advisory Committee, we would like to take this opportunity to provide feedback with respect to the government's recent announcements that are of particular interest to our small rural Ontario municipality.

The Municipality, through establishing its Local School Advisory Committee, which is made up of elected municipal officials, concerned and dedicated parents and school trustee, works very closely with the elected Thames Valley School Board Trustees in order to understand the issues being faced by the Board and, in turn, the local schools. The proposed increased class size averages directly impact our small rural schools due to declining population in our area which in turn affects the enrollment. Due to that factor, which is beyond the control of the Municipality, our understanding with the proposed increase in the class size averages, the funding allocation significantly impacts rural educational opportunities for students. This reduction in funding directly impacts the schools' ability to maintain an acceptable level of teacher to student ratio and the resources to offer additional programs to the students outside of the curriculum. The municipality acknowledges our collective responsibility as steward of tax dollars and this acknowledgement needs to be at all levels of government.

As elected leaders we have intimate knowledge our communities and welcome the opportunity to work alongside MPP's in seeking the right solutions for our schools and communities, honouring fiscal goals while making investments in rural Ontario. We need to collectively share the common goal of safeguarding public education.

The proposed changes to class size will result in:

- Potential increases to empty pupil places and OTG "On The Ground" Capacity
- Adversely impacting rural schools in providing course options including the core curriculum, or courses required for post-secondary opportunities this including skilled trades and agriculture sector
- Students leaving small schools to seek program opportunities in larger urban schools
- Reduce the options available to students keeping students in locally developed classes which often have small class size thus better meeting the learning, social and emotional need to students
- Lower enrollment classes – results in less program offerings for secondary students
- Cookie cutter approach – one size fits all



Through our Municipal Council in collaboration with Local School Advisory Committee we offer some solutions for consideration:

- Support a rural school strategy that is locally developed in collaboration with the Ontario government, Ministry of Education
- Develop a sliding scale for teacher to student ratio in terms of class size averages as this relates to the rural location of the school inclusive of those schools identified through the Rural and Northern Education Fund
- Four-year phase-in allowing for community collaboration and localized approaches
- Enhance rural collaborations with school board and municipalities in sharing resources
- Promote creative solutions, farmers feed families and farm families must be supported by local community-based education opportunities

The North Middlesex Council strongly urges you to carefully review these concerns as well as the possible solutions. The direct effect on our small rural municipality and schools will be detrimental to our students, their families and the economic viability of our community if these programs and resources are not maintained or increased. Young families want to move to rural areas where housing is affordable however if the schools do not have the program choices they will move to areas that do provide them. Our tax payers deserve to have adequate funding allocations to our schools regardless of the average class sizes. The "One size fits all approach" is not working for rural Ontario.

Yours truly,

Brian Ropp, Mayor  
Municipality of North Middlesex

Cc: Monte McNaughton, M.P.P (email)  
Lambton-Kent-Middlesex

Thames Valley District School Board (email)

Doug Reycraft, Chair (email)  
Community Schools Alliance

Middlesex County and lower tier municipalities(email)

AMO (email)