
CLERK'S DEPARTMENT

April 25, 2017

The Honourable Mitzie Hunter
Minister of Education
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Dear Honourable Minister Hunter:

Re: Request to Re-write the Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline (PARG) & Place an Immediate & Retroactive Moratorium on School Closures until the PARG is Rewritten

This is to confirm that on Monday, April 24, 2017 West Lincoln Township Council adopted the following resolution and we respectfully request your attention to this matter:

WHEREAS the current Accommodation Review process is not reflective of the reality of rural school and community life;

AND WHEREAS rural schools are integral to the future of rural communities;

AND WHEREAS the Province of Ontario recognizes that it is critical that continued student achievement and well-being form part of the review process for school closures;

AND WHEREAS school closures impact single-school small rural communities in educational, social and economic aspects to a far greater degree than those who would be impacted in multi-school urban communities;

AND WHEREAS the Township of West Lincoln is a small rural community who is deeply concerned that the current process to consider rural school closures is not inclusive and the timelines do not provide for adequate community input;

AND WHEREAS the Township of West Lincoln and its schools should be considered to be part of a rural community;

AND WHEREAS the District School Board of Niagara (DSBN) is not defined as a rural school board because of having larger urban communities within its jurisdiction (i.e. City of St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Port Colborne and Welland) and that the Province should have different guidelines with respect to the closure of schools in rural areas versus urban centres;

AND WHEREAS the length of time that rural student(s) could be on a bus to travel from their home to school and vice versa would, in a lot of cases be very lengthy and an unacceptable duration of time;

AND WHEREAS the Province of Ontario is not adhering to their own policies/guidelines with respect to developing complete communities (i.e. Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's Provincial Policy Statement and Places to Grow Act) and that all ministries, including the Ministry of Education, should follow the same Provincial policies/guidelines that municipalities are required to adhere to with respect to future intensification, development and growth;

AND WHEREAS prior to any scheduled or proposed closures of schools, the Province of Ontario needs to ensure that School Boards have thoroughly investigated and taken into account those municipalities that have received approvals for intensification/growth so that schools are not closed prematurely without having proper discussions with both Municipal and Regional Planning & Development staff as it relates to future growth projections;

AND WHEREAS the Township of West Lincoln supports the actions that have been taken by many municipalities within the Province of Ontario as well as the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) through their correspondence to the Minister of Education dated January 5, 2017 and the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) in their correspondence dated March 15, 2017 with respect to, but not limited to, school closures, Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline and the Accommodation Review Process;

AND WHEREAS the Province of Ontario should be concerned for the health of all our children, for the quality of education of all children in Ontario as well as the viability of our towns, villages and neighbourhoods which are negatively impacted by reducing access to schools within each community; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Municipality of the Township of West Lincoln hereby requests that the Minister of Education establish an immediate moratorium on the Accommodation Review Process in all school boards until such time as a review of the above mentioned impacts on small rural communities is studied, completed and the results and recommendations are implemented; and

THAT, the Minister of Education rewrite the Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline (PARG), in order to take into consideration community and economic value consideration of rural communities and provide for a more democratic process; and,

THAT, the Minister of Education place a retroactive moratorium on those school closures that are to occur during the current year and over the next couple of years until such time as the Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline is rewritten and the recommendations applied to all current and proposed school closures; and,

THAT, this resolution be circulated to the Minister of Education, Premier Kathleen Wynne, Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Municipal Affairs, the District School Board of Niagara, the Niagara Catholic District School Board, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA), MPP Sam Oosterhoff (Niagara West-Glanbrook) and all municipalities in Ontario.

Your attention to this matter is greatly appreciated and we trust that our Council's request will be taken into consideration.

If you have any questions regarding the above, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned at 905-957-3346 ext. 6720.

Sincerely



Carolyn Langley
Clerk

cc. The Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario, Email: premier@ontario.ca
The Honourable Bob Chiarelli, Minister of Infrastructure - bchiarelli.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org
The Honourable Bill Mauro, Minister of Municipal Affairs - bmauro.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org
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All Ontario Municipalities