

September 1, 2026

Honourable Paul Calandra
Minister of Education

Subject: Special Education Funding

Minister Calandra,

On June 16th, the Board of Trustees passed the following motion unanimously, during our deliberations on the 2026-2027 school year budget:

Be it resolved that the Chair of the Board write a letter to the Minister of Education to advocate for increased and sustainable funding for special education.

Current Provincial funding, specifically for Special Education, does not fully cover the cost of providing the necessary programs and services required by students with special education needs. This has been a significant issue for school boards throughout Ontario for several years, resulting in larger class sizes, fewer educational assistants and other specialized staffing positions, along with a reduced number of self-contained classes for students who struggle in a traditional classroom setting.

Here in Halton, the Centre for Diverse Learners (CDL) voted against the 2026-2027 Special Education Plan at their June Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) meeting. In their Minority Report, they cited that, "Our decision is based on concerns regarding the cumulative impact of increased class sizes, reductions in specialized staffing, and decreased access to professional supports for students with special education needs." The report outlines "reductions in special education teaching positions, educational assistants, psychoeducational consultants, speech and language consultants, social workers, child and youth care practitioners, structured reading supports, and assistive technology supports" as concerning.

The 2026 Independent Ontario Auditor General's Performance Audit of Special Education Needs found that "existing resources are often insufficient to ensure consistent implementation of accommodations and programming". This is consistent with the concerns expressed by the CDL. For declining enrolment boards this is especially concerning because most special education funding is based on overall enrolment while the number of students with special education needs continues to increase disproportionately.

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In their Minority Report, the CDL recommends that the HDSB, “formally advocate to the Ministry of Education for increased and sustainable special education funding that reflects the complexity and growth of student needs,” and added that their “decision to oppose the proposed plan should not be interpreted as criticism of Board staff or the Special Education Department.

Like many school boards across Ontario, the HDSB spends significantly more on Special Education than we receive from the province. HDSB Trustees would also like to echo the sentiments expressed earlier this year by the Limestone and Thames Valley school boards, and **request that additional funding be made available to school boards to ensure our students with special education needs are able to access the intensive supports they need in order to reach their potential.**

We recommend implementing a provincial working group composed of representatives from school boards across the province who have special education expertise, and members of agencies that support students with special education needs, alongside Ministry representatives tasked with developing a more realistic funding model that will meet the current system’s needs.

Sincerely,

Amy Collard
Chair, Halton District School Board
Trustee, Burlington Ward 5

CC:
MPPs
Ontario Public School Boards' Association Member Boards