



**UPPER GRAND  
DISTRICT SCHOOL  
BOARD**

**Martha MacNeil**

*Board Chair, Upper Grand District School Board*

Board Office: 500 Victoria Road N. Guelph, ON N1E 6K2

Email: [martha.macneil@ugdsb.on.ca](mailto:martha.macneil@ugdsb.on.ca)

Tel: 519-822-4420 ext. 735 or Toll Free: 1-800-321-4025

---

February 26, 2020

The Honourable Stephen Lecce  
Minister of Education  
Ministry of Education  
5th Floor  
438 University Avenue  
Toronto, ON M5G 2K8

Dear Minister Lecce,

At the February 25, 2020, meeting of the Upper Grand District School Board, the Board of Trustees passed a motion to write a letter to the province, advocating for our students and for a strong, publicly-funded education system.

As a Board, student well-being and achievement are the focus of everything we do.

We continue to advocate for stable and predictable funding, in order to continue to provide the world-class education system that we have developed here in Ontario. We take great pride in our education system and, based on the communication that we have received from our staff, we know that they also share this pride and the desire to make "Achieving Excellence" something that is within reach for all students. We have concerns that if funding is cut, this will no longer be a goal toward which we can strive. We also have concerns that it will mean our highest needs students will not be supported properly and will have greater difficulty being successful.

We are advocating for the restoration of the Local Priorities Fund, which we used to hire additional staff to support students with special needs, unique learning needs, and mental health issues, all of which worry our hardworking teachers and support staff. Trustees also believe that our staff deserve fair compensation in line with the cost of living.

We have serious concerns regarding the increase in class size ratios. In the Upper Grand DSB, we have already seen an impact on our students and schools as a result of higher class sizes. Moving from a local class size ratio in secondary of 21.4:1 to 23.18:1 has already resulted in cancelled programs and fewer course options for our secondary students. Any further increase in class sizes would continue to limit course options for our students and strain our secondary schools. Our local secondary collective agreement has class size caps, which we must adhere to. We need to ensure sufficient funding in order to prevent further program and course cancellations.

---

**Upper Grand District School Board**

• Martha MacNeil; Chair  
• Barbara Lustgarten Evoy; Vice-Chair

• Mark Bailey  
• Jen Edwards

• Jolly Bedi  
• Mike Foley

• Linda Busuttill  
• Robin Ross

• Gail Campbell  
• Lynn Topping

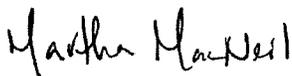
We know that the government has committed to the current Full Day Kindergarten model with one full time teacher and one early childhood educator working together, and we support this decision.

We are in support of the concept of e-learning as we know it is an important part of curriculum delivery in our province today. We also recognize the changing world we are living in and the need for students to have familiarity with learning in an online environment. However, the Board is not in support of mandatory e-learning without important changes to the delivery. We believe strongly in the value of a blended style of teaching that would include both an in-person component with an Ontario certified teacher as well as an online component, supported by the teacher. We also believe that any mandatory e-learning will need to be accompanied by a generous exemption policy to allow for students with learning styles that aren't suited to e-learning, as well as students who do not have access to technology and Internet connection due to location and/or family priorities.

A recent poll from the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) revealed that the majority of Ontarians agree that spending in public education is an investment in the future and that spending on public education is more important than eliminating the provincial deficit. We agree that a predictable and sustained funding model is essential to the future of our province.

As a member of OPSBA, we will continue to advocate on behalf of our staff, students, and families. We will continue to put the achievement and well-being of our students at the centre of everything we do. Through the work of the Board and all of the highly skilled staff it employs, we will continue to advocate for a strong, publicly-funded education system that supports the success of our students and staff and retains its status as being among the best in the world.

Sincerely,



Martha MacNeil  
Chairperson  
Upper Grand District School Board

cc: Premier Doug Ford  
Ted Arnott, MPP Wellington-Halton Hills  
Sylvia Jones, MPP Dufferin-Caledon  
Mike Schreiner, MPP Guelph  
Randy Pettapiece, MPP Perth-Wellington  
OSSTF District 18 and Upper Grand ETFO  
T. J. Goertz, Senior Communications and Policy Officer, OSBA  
All Public Board Chairs  
Ontario Public School Boards' Association  
UGDSB Board of Trustees  
Martha Rogers, Director of Education, UGDSB

---

**Upper Grand District School Board**

• Martha MacNeil; Chair	• Mark Bailey	• Jolly Bedi	• Linda Busuttill	• Gail Campbell
• Barbara Lustgarten Evoy; Vice-Chair	• Jen Edwards	• Mike Foley	• Robin Ross	• Lynn Topping