

March 6, 2006

Thank you to the parents/guardians, students, staff and members of the Dufferin-Peel faith community

On Tuesday, February 21, a delegation representing the parents/guardians, students, staff and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board's faith community journeyed to Queen's Park to deliver more than 32,000 signed postcards to Premier Dalton McGuinty.

Two trustees and two parent representatives turned over to a representative from the Premier's office, nine boxes full of postcards that had been signed and returned to schools in support of your Catholic school board's efforts to bring the issue of chronic, historic underfunding of schools to the attention of the Premier. We acknowledge and thank MPP Linda Jeffrey for her support and assistance in organizing the delivery of the postcards to the Premier.

Your tremendous response to the board's public information campaign, *Mr. Premier, Help Us, Don't Hurt Our Schools*, gained the attention of the Premier, the Minister of Education, local and national media and every school board in the province, particularly those who are, or will soon be, in budget deficit positions similar to Dufferin-Peel. We believe that your response, through the postcards and by contacting your local MPP, the Minister of Education and/or the Premier had a positive impact.

The Minister of Education recently appointed investigators to review the board's finances. We have been co-operating fully with the investigation. We were hopeful that the investigation would include a look at our strong contention that the root cause of our deficit is chronic, historic underfunding. The investigators' report has not yet been received by the board, nor to our knowledge, even completed. In this regard, we are concerned about comments attributed to the lead investigator in recent media articles that suggested service cuts will have to be made. Making comments of this nature before the process is completed suggests that the outcome of the investigation may have been predetermined.

What we do know is that our public information campaign, in which you played an integral role, has brought to light that this is a widespread issue, not just for Dufferin-Peel, but for many school boards across the province. We are just the tip of the iceberg – the first and most vocal to come forward. Expect to hear about others in the coming weeks and months.

We stand firm in our position that the province must fix the gaps in funding for transportation, salaries/benefits and special education. Cuts to existing programs, services and staff to balance this year's budget are not the answer. We need sustainable funding, something the government-commissioned Rozanski Report called for back in 2002.

The Minister of Education indicated that the investigators' report will be made public upon completion. Like you, we await these results. Cuts will affect our ability to provide the quality Catholic education that you expect and that our students deserve.

From the Trustees and Executive Council of the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board