

Friday, June 26, 2020

Supervisor Bruce Rodrigues
Peel District School Board
5650 Hurontario Street
Mississauga, Ontario
L5R 1C6

Dear Supervisor Rodrigues,

As the proud President of the Peel Elementary Teachers' Local, representing more than 7,300 public elementary teachers in Peel, I bring greetings on behalf of my members as you begin in your role as supervisor of the Peel District School Board.

I am writing today to convey our local's clear and unequivocal support for the immediate elimination of the board's School Resource Officer (SRO) program.

As the last several weeks and months (and, truly, decades) have shown, our society and its institutions are plagued with racial injustice. Systemic racism and discrimination play themselves out, every single day, in every aspect of our lived experience. For our children – our *students* – this is a reality that they begin to grapple with from a very young age. It is a reality that disproportionately impacts our Black and Indigenous students, and it is a reality that lays the groundwork for gross disparity in social outcomes.

Education is, arguably, our most foundational social institution. We have a collective responsibility to do everything we can to ensure that our schools are places of justice and fairness. Our students – particularly our Black and Indigenous students – deserve schools and an education system that actively seek to eliminate inequities, disproportionality of experience, and disparity of outcomes. Our schools must be places of safety and learning. They *cannot* be sites that reproduce racial and class inequality.

As institutions in their own rite, criminal justice and policing have long served to reproduce systemic racism and discrimination. It is a well-documented and data-proven truth that Black and Indigenous communities are over-policed and over-surveilled, and that that police target communities living in poverty and economic precarity. As state agents equipped only with tools of violence, it is, therefore, completely and utterly unacceptable that the police should continue to have any presence, whatsoever, in our schools – except in cases of emergency.

Indeed, where political decision-makers consider it necessary for the police to have a continued presence in our schools through a formal arrangement like the PDSB's SRO program, all citizens should see this as an abject political failure to address the underlying conditions that make it necessary in the first place. Teachers and education workers have a long and incredibly proud history in this province, and in the Region of Peel, of pushing for funding that gives all students, families, and communities the schools they deserve. To this end, any funds saved through the immediate and complete elimination of the PDSB's SRO program should be reinvested in our schools to support our students.

We urge you, Supervisor Rodrigues, to bring a swift end to this program that serves only to further institutionalize anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism in our schools and to forcefully lobby regional and provincial levels of government to redirect those funds to where they have long belonged – in our schools.

Yours sincerely,

Gail Bannister-Clarke
President

GBC:FP

cc: Jaspal Gill, Interim Director of Education
PDSB Trustees
Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education
Sylvia Jones, Solicitor General
Nishan Duraipappah, Chief of Police, Peel Regional Police
Nando Iannicca, Chair, Region of Peel Council
Peel Education Workers United Affiliates