

Racism allegations lead to immediate review of Peel District School Board

Written By ALYSSA PARKHILL

Ontario Education Minister Stephen Lecce responded on Nov 7 to a request for ministry intervention of the Peel District School Board (PDSB) that was requested on Oct 17.

Lecce commented in the announcement of concerns that have been raised by students, families, PDSB Board Director of Education, board of trustees and members of the broader community.

'Schools must feel safe, inclusive and welcoming places for students, staff and the entire community. Allegations related to equity in the Peel District School Board have raised concerns specifically related to anti-Black racism and lack of adherence to governance, leadership and human resource practices,' states Lecce in the news release.

Lecce explains that discrimination and prejudice is unacceptable and 'that is why I am confirming our government will take action.'

The Ministry has, thus far, been rather vague regarding whether the investigation will target high schools only, or if elementary schools will be included.

Here in Caledon, there are two high schools under PDSB jurisdiction - Humberview Secondary School and Mayfield Secondary School. In total, there are 16 PDSB elementary schools in the Caledon area.

While not necessarily related to racism, students at Humberview Secondary School are coming together next Friday (Nov. 22) for the second-annual Anti-Bullying Blitz. The event will take place from 11:15 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.

After receiving word that the Ministry would be taking action, The Peel Board of Trustees noted they were grateful for the support being shown by Minister Lecce.

Chair Stan Cameron and vice-chair Susan Lawton announced in an issued statement, 'we are thankful for the Ministry of Education's support and continue to be committed to working alongside Peel District School Board staff, students, families and community members to ensure student success and well-being.'

Lecce plans to appoint reviewers to do an immediate review on the PDSB and to provide a report to allow proper and appropriate recommendations on improvements the PDSB can make to ensure an 'effective board governance that promotes equity, increases accountability and transparency and safeguards the success and well-being of students' irrespective of heritage, faith, colour of skin, orientation or socio-economic status.'

There is no announced date of completion of review at this time.

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