

The Honourable Paul Calandra
Ministry of Education
315 Front Street West, 14th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M7A 0B8

RE: Mega School in Parry Sound

Thursday, May 1, 2025

Dear Minister Calandra,

Congratulations on your new role as the Minister of Education. There is a lot of important work ahead of you this legislative session to ensure that student achievement remains a top priority and that every student in Ontario has the opportunity to reach their full learning potential. I wish you success with this.

As Deputy Leader of the Green Party of Ontario, a teacher, and a resident of Parry Sound–Muskoka, I’m writing to share the serious concerns from our community regarding the proposed plan to create a Kindergarten to Grade 12 “mega-school” in my riding, which I know you are aware of.

This plan, which was presented over a decade ago by a previous Ministry, sees the closure of Nobel and McDougall Public Schools and places those children with the secondary students of Parry Sound High School to form a K–12 in a mega-school.

The mega-school, not yet opened, is already projected to be too small due to more recent enrollment projections —**with a minimum of six portables required on day one.**

The people of Parry Sound and neighbouring communities have shared with me that they also feel the mega-school decision undermines their community’s voice and ability to advocate in the best interest of their own children. They feel that they have been silenced, as an inadequate and inefficient plan is being rigidly imposed upon them. In a time of fiscal constraint and public scrutiny, that outcome is neither responsible nor respectful of public input.

Fortunately, the people of Parry Sound, including many School Board Trustees, municipal and education leaders, are united in a preferred model which would concede to the closure of Nobel Public School but keep McDougall Public School open for children K-Grade 6, while dedicating the new facility for Grades 7 to 12 students. This is the most educationally sound and financially sustainable option. It preserves space for students to thrive, avoids the need for costly portables, and provides room for growth in line with actual population trends.

While we recognize that K–12 schools have been built in other parts of the province, and may have been the right fit for those communities, it is overwhelmingly clear that this is not one of those cases.

I urge you to pause the plan to impose a Kindergarten to Grade 12 mega-school on the people of Parry Sound, and take the time to do proper consultation and consider the **current** needs of the community. We all have the same end goal, to act in good faith for the best outcomes of students, families, and taxpayers. As you gather data, evidence, and lived experiences on this matter, I am certain that you will recognize how sensible and logical the preferred K-6 McDougall Public School and Grade 7 to 12 Parry Sound High School model is.

In Parry Sound–Muskoka, we are working across party lines and community sectors to advocate for a public education system that meets the needs of today and anticipates the needs of tomorrow. Our students deserve more than overcrowded classrooms and stopgap solutions. **They deserve thoughtful planning—and to be heard.**

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I am available to discuss further at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Richter', with a stylized, flowing script.

Matt Richter
Deputy Leader, Green Party of Ontario

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Cc: Hon. Min. Graydon Smith
MPP Mike Schreiner