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Ontario  
Book Publishers  
Organization

Hon. Stephen Lecce  
Minister of Education  
5th Floor, 438 University Ave  
Toronto, ON M7A 2A5

September 30, 2020

Dear Minister Lecce:

I am writing to express Ontario publishers' concern about the decision made by numerous Ontario school boards including York Region District School Board, Toronto District School Board, and Durham District School to move school library staff into classrooms and close access to school libraries as part of their fall 2020 re-opening plan.

We understand that school boards are making difficult decisions during these unprecedented times, but we are concerned that the decision to close school libraries is short-sighted and will have long-lasting negative impacts on student literacy and progress. Test scores and other indicators of student progress are significantly higher in schools that employ certified Teacher Librarians. With 25% of Canadian households containing no books, access to library resources, both print and digital, is a crucial element of student achievement. Multiple studies have proven that access to books and developing the "love of reading" that libraries foster is amongst the best predictors of academic success and later economic success.

Additionally, with school boards offering full-time online learning options for Ontario students, lack of access to library resources will be a major obstacle; the early months of the pandemic showed that school libraries resources are an important element of online learning for teachers, students, and parents.

We support the recommendations put forward by the Ontario Library Association and Ontario School Library Association Ontario publishers and urge the Ministry of Education to work with school boards to revise their re-opening plans to ensure that Ontario students will have access to school libraries, Teacher Librarians, and library programming.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Holly Kent', written in a cursive style.

Holly Kent  
Executive Director  
Ontario Book Publishers Organization