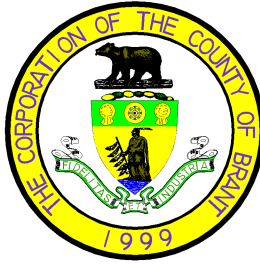


County of Brant
Police Services Board

Chair: Jennifer Haley
Secretary: Nancy Davis
Phone: (519) 442-7268 x2220
Fax: (519) 449-2454
e-mail: nancy.davis@brant.ca
Web Site: www.brant.ca



County Administrative Building
26 Park Avenue
Burford, Ontario
Mailing Address:
P.O Box 160
Burford, Ontario
N0E 1A0

The Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister
Ministry of Education
5th Floor
438 University Ave.
Toronto, ON
M5G 2K8

May 18, 2023

Sent by email: minister.edu@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Lecce,

On behalf of the County of Brant Police Services Board, I would like to thank you for your support of law enforcement and police officers being able to proudly wear their uniforms and be permitted to participate in their children's in-classroom school activities. Your decisive and clear directive to school administrators is very much appreciated and is a great first step to restoring this important relationship with our community's youth.

However, there is more that needs to be done to reinstate the respected status that law enforcement deserves as trusted community partners. Minister Lecce, I respectfully ask that you also consider the mandatory reinstatement of all School Resource Officer programs effective immediately and require all school boards to develop a collaborative plan with their respective police services for ongoing monitoring and discussions to ensure programs are reflective of their communities and evolving with the changing needs of our youth.

As you may know, in 2020 the Grand Erie District School Board (GEDSB) suspended the School Resource Officer (SRO) program indefinitely while they conduct their own internal review of the program. There has been no indication of the direction that the review will take or the timeline for a decision. Since this suspension, the Brant Detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) continues to field requests from schools for presentations and participation at school events which unfortunately they have had to decline because of the GEDSB's decision.

At the same time, the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board has continued to uphold the SRO program in all of their schools throughout this time for the benefit of their school communities, creating a confusing disparity for Brant's students and the OPP.

Youth is an identified priority within the provincially mandated *Community Safety and Well Being Plan* for the County of Brant and the plan identifies strategies to interact and engage with youth. As part of this plan, the OPP SRO provides a proactive critical link to the youth in the County of Brant. As well, the SRO program shares and highlights important personal health and community safety topics and messages that benefits the students, their families, the school community, and the community at large. This progressive program through the elementary and secondary schools also provides an important

opportunity for students and officers to develop positive relationships, provide mentoring opportunities and maintain open lines of communications. The activities of the SRO extend beyond the classroom with positive engagements with youth in programs like Safety Patrol, Tim Horton's leadership camp, youth Pride events, Special Olympics, mental health support, and supporting students to attend special events like graduation and prom.

As a community volunteer with a number of youth programs and as a parent, I have seen first-hand the value of positive and interactive relationships between youth and police officers. The trusted knowledge source that comes from a conversation with a police officer is a critical component of understanding the importance of citizenship and your role in the community in which you live. It is also important to remember that police officers are also vital community volunteers themselves raising awareness and important funds for a number of different programs and initiatives, coaching minor sports, sitting on committees, and providing input and advice to a number of social programs benefitting our communities.

I respect and understand that there are many communities in Ontario that may need customized solutions to issues that they are facing, and they will require the flexibility and support to do so. However, removing police officers from the schools all together and eliminating the SRO program is not the solution. Violence in schools continues to escalate, a general lack of respect for one another continues to grow and now is the time to support and build upon the SRO program. Newly immigrated students may have come from war torn countries and have experienced militarized policing but here in Ontario we have the opportunity to welcome all new Canadians and show them what it truly means to be free and safe by building trust and respect together with our community partners including police officers.

Let's remove the politicization and activist agenda of removing police from our schools and let's really talk seriously about how to keep our youth safe in their communities by developing, supporting, and evolving the SRO program. We need to nurture the mutual respect of one another and honour the service and commitment our police officers demonstrate every day that they serve on the frontline keeping all of us safe.

Thank you again for your support of police officers in our schools and I look forward to hearing more about how your Ministry can embed the SRO program into the mandatory requirements for school boards across the province.

Yours truly,



Jennifer Haley,
Chair

Cc: Hon. Michael Kerzner, Solicitor General
Mr. Will Bouma, Member of Provincial Parliament- Brantford/Brant
Mr. David Bailey, Mayor, County of Brant
Commissioner Thomas Carrique, Ontario Provincial Police
Chief Superintendent Dwight Thib, West Region, Ontario Provincial Police
Ms. Lisa Darling, Executive Director, Ontario Association of Police Services Boards
City of Brantford Police Services Board
Norfolk County Police Services Board
Haldimand County Police Services Board