

Statement from Chair of the Board Brad MacDonald and Director of Education Peter Joshua

As a Board of Trustees and senior leadership team, we are united in our commitment to address and take urgent action on each of the Ministry of Education's directives. Our clear expectation is that our colleagues across the Peel District School Board will take action on the directives, and fully engage in the professional learning and initiatives that are implemented in the coming days, weeks and months. Together, we will work to eliminate anti-Black racism, uproot systemic discrimination, and use an accountability framework to drive and deliver positive change. The action we take will be swift, bold and transformative—those we serve deserve nothing less.

We would like to thank Minister of Education Stephen Lecce, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Ministry's Educational Equity Secretariat Patrick Case, and reviewers Ena Chadha, Suzanne Herbert and Shawn Richard for conducting the review, and for amplifying the voices and perspectives of the Peel board community. The report will help us move forward to restore good governance, rebuild trust, establish strong accountability measures and responsibilities, and model equity-focused leadership at all levels with a specific focus on eradicating anti-Black racism and inequities throughout the board. Your expertise and support, to date and moving forward, are appreciated.

Throughout the review process, painful narratives were shared by Peel board students, staff, families and community members who believe our system is racist and that some of our practices are discriminatory. It is clear that many individuals have been negatively affected over the years, and we apologize for the trauma and hurt they have experienced. But apologies mean nothing if we don't take action to address and correct systemic issues that result in marginalization and oppression. To do this, we cannot centre issues of equity on the discomfort of people in positions of power. We must centre those who are being marginalized, lean into our discomfort and choose to do what is right and just by those we serve. We must put our commitment to equity and inclusion into meaningful and authentic practice.

For years, the community has challenged us from the outside to get work done on the inside, and although we have put a number of things in place, we haven't made enough progress that demonstrates measureable results. And for that we are accountable.

We also acknowledge that trust has been lost between the board, staff, students and members of the community, especially members of the Black community and others who have experienced marginalization and discrimination. We have much to do to undertake the remedial work necessary to seek reconciliation so that we can regain trust and public confidence.

We are taking this report and its directives very seriously, and we want everyone in our community to be assured that we will not dismiss any of the findings or recommendations. We will work diligently to improve board governance and leadership practices so that we can continue to work to achieve inclusion for all through continuous progress on equity. We owe it to the communities we serve to be responsive, accountable and transparent, and to ensure we safeguard the success and well-being of students and staff. They have every right to demand this from us.

Chief Commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission Renu Mandhane says this about equity, “We’re not talking about treating everyone the same. We’re talking about how you treat different people appropriately so that they can achieve equitable outcomes.” In the short- and long-term, we will ensure that equity and human rights are foundational to our work.

We will redefine and clearly communicate our equity mission, implement organizational changes, set accountability measures, and assess our progress to drive meaningful and transformative improvements throughout the system. We also commit to changing practices and organizational structures to ensure that educators, administrators and senior leadership work in inclusive and respectful workplaces that uphold and advance principles of equity and human rights.

We must do better, as a system, to be genuinely engaged in dismantling systemic discrimination to significantly improve the experiences and outcomes of students, families and staff, especially those who have experienced and continue to experience anti-Black racism and other forms of marginalization in Peel schools and work sites. The success and well-being of everyone we serve is of paramount importance.

Through our new Annual Equity Accountability Report Card, we will establish accountability measures and responsibilities for school and senior board leadership, and we will reach out to the community regularly to assess our progress and make any necessary adjustments. This report card will be made available annually as part of the Director of Education’s Annual Report.

We will not be able to do any of this necessary work if we do not work as cohesive units. As a team, we have much work to do to rebuild our relationships with each other and the community, and we must do this respectfully to effect positive system changes. This Board will not be able to navigate its way through urgent and complex issues if we continue to struggle with dysfunction and governance. Supported by the professional learning, we will establish policies, procedures and practices to ensure that effective, respectful and transparent governance is in place. We must return to a focus on student-centred matters.

We thank those who shared their experiences with the ministry reviewers. Again, we apologize for the inequities and disparities that have caused so much harm. Your voices will help us address and alleviate injustice in the system, and will help us pave a way forward for those we serve.

As we make progress on the directives that provide voice, support and a way forward, we will share updates to the community on our board website. Our goal will be to be as transparent as possible.

Thank you for continuing to hold this board and system leaders accountable.