



Mail Correspondence to:

Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB
210 Mead Boulevard
Espanola ON
P5E 1R9

Manitoulin Hub
Little Current Public
School
18 Draper Street
Little Current ON
POP 1K0

Sudbury East Hub
École St. Antoine
28 Rue St. Antoine
Noëlville ON
P0M 2N0

LaCloche Hub
Sacred Heart School
273 Mead Boulevard
Espanola ON
P5E 1B3

Sudbury North Hub
Chapleau Child Care
28 Golf Road
Chapleau ON
P0M 1K0

December 19, 2012

The Honorable Dalton McGuinty
Premier of Ontario
Room 281, Main Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1A1

Dear Premier McGuinty:

On behalf of the Manitoulin Sudbury Best Start Network we wish to bring to your attention a number of concerning trends we are witnessing in our catchment area affecting the well being of children and families.

Our catchment covers a large rural landmass comprised of small widely dispersed communities and unorganized townships. Transportation is commonly a barrier for low income families needing access to goods and services.

Economic security for our population has been impacted over recent years by industry closures and minimal job creation.

Principals in the schools in our area are reporting increasing food security issues for their students and growing demand for nutrition programs and breakfast programs. Increased demands for these programs of late have meant that the annual program budgets are expended by mid-year. The community agencies responding to the increased needs are finding that the demand is outstripping their capacity.

These anecdotal reports from educators seem to be corroborated by our Early Development Instrument data for 2011. Children in our area have made significant improvements in the language and cognitive development domain, and communications skills and general knowledge; however our percentage of vulnerable children in the physical health and well being domain has increased markedly over the last three reporting periods. In 2005 9.9 % of our children were rated as vulnerable in the physical health domain. In 2008 it

increased to 13.5 and with the most recent 2011 report it has climbed to 19.9 percent. This latter score compares to the provincial average of 12.9%. Typical indicators in this domain include children attending school hungry, tired or having flagging energy levels.

As a network we recognize that there is no single or immediate solution for these alarming trends.

We urge however, that your government in concert with Ministries that have an interest in poverty reduction attend to these indicators and advance policy and direction that will allow us as a province to reverse the trend for our youngest citizens.

All of Ontario's children deserve a best start. This involves more than just school readiness; it involves economic security, family supportive social policy and a secure safety net when families require it.

Yours Truly,



Jane Bauer, Co-Chair
Chair

Manitoulin-Sudbury District Best Start Network



Ray Hannah, Co-

C.c. Honorable Chris Bentley
Honorable John Milloy
Honorable Laurel Broten