

Ministry of Education

Minister

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Ministère de l'Éducation

Ministre

315, rue Front Ouest
Toronto ON M7A 0B8



July 8, 2020

Mr. Chris Day
Chair
Ontario Educational Communications Authority (TVO)
Box 200, Station Q
Toronto ON M4T 2T1

Dear Mr. Day,

Thank you for your continuing leadership and support for public education in Ontario. TVO's expertise in engaging, innovative digital learning is widely recognized as world-class across the province and internationally. From the high-quality online education provided through the Independent Learning Centre, to the interactive, modern digital resources you have developed in mPower and Mathify, TVO's work demonstrates the potential of technology to stimulate students' curiosity, teach them important employable skills, and prepare them for the global economy.

It is because of TVO's excellence and expertise that I am writing today. We would like to work with you to build on these world class foundations and expand TVO's mandate, along with that of TFO, to take on a central leadership role in supporting online learning in the publicly-funded education system.

As you know, on November 21, 2019, the Ministry of Education announced that students will be required to take two online credits to graduate from secondary school, starting with the cohort of students entering Grade 9 in September 2020. The purpose of this graduation requirement is to prepare students with the digital literacy and other transferrable skills they will need to succeed in the digital and data economy.

The education system will need to change as this requirement is implemented. As of 2018-19, about 60,000 students took online courses through their local school board. By 2023-24, when the first cohort of students subject to the online learning graduation requirement begins to graduate, the system will need to accommodate up to 250,000 students in online courses annually. Expanding to meet this demand while also maintaining a consistent, high-quality educational experience for students will be challenging without centralized coordination and support.

To enable TVO to provide this support for English-language school boards, the government has introduced amendments to the *Ontario Educational Communications Authority Act* this summer. These include changes which, if passed, would enable the Minister to prescribe

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TVO's expanded duties and responsibilities, which may include working with partners such as school boards, consortia, or other parties. The government has also introduced amendments to the *Ontario French-language Educational Communications Authority Act, 2008* to enable a similar role for TFO for the French-language education system.

Note that these changes would not be effective until proclaimed, and no changes would be made to TVO and TFO's mandate until there has been consultation with education sector partners. The proposed amendments set the stage for these consultations, and to provide government, TVO and TFO with the authority to move forward quickly with next steps if partners identify a need in the coming school year.

Consultations will begin this summer, and will include school boards and school board consortia, teachers' unions, Catholic stakeholders, French-language stakeholders, and Indigenous partners. The ministry recognizes the importance of working closely with the sector to ensure that any changes to the education system meet the needs of educators, families, and students before proceeding.

While the specifics are pending consultation in the coming weeks and months, the overall objective of TVO and TFO's expanded mandate will be to support a more coordinated, robust provincial online learning system that will allow students to access the high-quality, teacher-taught online courses they need or wish to take, no matter where they live or go to school. Some of our ideas, which we will be discussing in the consultation, include:

- Establishing a centralized course catalogue of system-wide online course offerings that will make it easier for students to find and register for these courses.
- Developing and maintaining a library of high-quality, engaging online courses in the ministry Virtual Learning Environment that teachers across the system can use to deliver online and remote education.
- Expanding student access to online learning through centralized coordination and delivery of online learning courses taught by qualified teachers certified by the Ontario College of Teachers.

TVO and TFO will be directed to work together and with education sector partners to develop a business case to be submitted to the ministry by December 2020. The business case will be required to detail how the agencies propose to work in collaboration to implement their new roles beginning in the 2021-22 school year, including:

- the roles and responsibilities of TVO, TFO, school boards and other partners.
- how TFO and TVO propose to maximize the use of existing resources in the sector and minimize additional costs, including any potential revenue generation strategies.
- governance structures that ensure minority-language and denominational rights are respected.

- opportunities for TVO and TFO to collaborate on the development of high-quality online course content that is engaging, interactive, and accessible for students with special education needs.
- how TFO and TVO propose to jointly leverage and coordinate shared resources (for example, IT infrastructure), while respecting the working language of each agency.
- staffing impacts/requirements and multi-year financial requirement.
- outcomes and performance measures.

Overall, TVO and TFO would be expected to work closely in partnership with the ministry, school boards, and other partners to ensure students will receive the online education they need, while respecting collective agreements as well as minority-language and denominational rights.

Ontario's board-governed agencies, such as TVO, are vital partners in ensuring the delivery of high-quality services to Ontarians. I look forward to ongoing partnership with you as we support transformation in Ontario's education system and ensure that students have the educational opportunities and skills they need to prepare them to thrive in a competitive, globally connected economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Lecce', with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education