

Angela Keller-Herzog

FOR OTTAWA CENTRE | POUR OTTAWA CENTRE



Dear Directors of Education and Trustees, Ottawa

Open Letter: Call for School Boards to Support Climate Strikes

It is clear that you have a great interest in helping today's students to have the best possible future, or you would not have taken on the leadership roles that you have in Ottawa area boards of education. Like us, you want to make sure that your students have the tools to have happy lives with good jobs and an ability to bring up families in a healthy environment. Scientists around the globe have been extremely clear that if the governments and people of the world don't take serious action to cut carbon emissions very soon, your students will be impacted by massive climate change with devastating impacts on their abilities to have that wonderful future.

Your students know this. Youth around the world are building momentum as they no longer trust that those currently in power are acting to ensure a future with healthy people, a healthy economy and a healthy planet. I am sure that you have heard that various school boards and post secondary institutions in Canada and around the world are taking steps to accommodate students' desires to participate in the Global Climate Strikes, this Friday. It is shaping up to be the biggest day of climate action in the planet's history.

New York City's 1.1 million school students will be excused from class to participate in the global climate strike protests this Friday, as long as their parents agree. Quebec's largest school board has taken the unprecedented step of giving all of its 114,000 students this Friday off, to encourage them to participate in the international day of protest demanding government action on climate change. The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is taking measures to support students who plan to walk out of class as part of a global call to action. They have asked its schools to avoid scheduling tests and other assignments this Friday, to ensure students aren't penalized for attending a rally outside the Ontario legislature. This is admirable, and in line with your objectives in the education sector: to think critically, using evidence to make decisions, to have a sense of agency in the world, to empower students to engage in the public sphere and to build their leadership capacities.

Your students also deserve to be heard by today's politicians and industry leaders who are making far-reaching decisions. You can support them in this by, at the very least, ensuring that your students, teachers and staff are not be penalized for taking part in the Climate Strikes that take place on Fridays, and especially by releasing them to attend the strike this Friday. I would also encourage you to support teachers to do a class or undertake a thematic authorized field trip to a Climate Strike.

Our students' very future depends on adults arresting climate change in a timely fashion. The least we can do is support our students in ensuring that adults give them a future.

Yours Sincerely,

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