

Province targets bullying

School boards and three police forces, London, Toronto and Hamilton, will get new funds.

By RANDY RICHMOND, SUN MEDIA

London school boards will get about \$500,000 and London police will get a chance to hire more officers so the two bodies can tackle bullying together.

"It is great news for us," Barry Wagner, superintendent of the Thames Valley district school board, said yesterday.

"This money will enhance our programs. Whatever we can (get) to support our schools and the kids is fantastic."

In the latest in a series of funding announcements as the Oct. 10 election approaches, Education Minister Kathleen Wynne said school boards will get \$10.5 million a year and three police forces -- London, Toronto and Hamilton -- will get a one-time offer of \$1.7 million for efforts to make schools safer.

The provincial funding will target programs to prevent bullying and other inappropriate behaviour, Wynne said.

The school board funding will help pay for 170 psychologists, social workers, child and youth workers and attendance counsellors, she said.

Ministry spokesperson Patricia MacNeil said the Thames Valley board is getting about \$379,000 and the London and District Catholic school board about \$117,000 for safe school projects.

That's in addition to about \$830,000 for the public board and \$260,000 for the Catholic board announced in April, when the province released \$24 million for safe school programs, she said.

"This announcement is for the human resources needed to run the projects," MacNeil said. "The boards will determine how the money flows."

The province also announced the London, Hamilton and Toronto police departments will get 18 more officers in total to work with school boards to prevent bullying.

How much each force gets will depend on their proposals for preventing bullying, said Tony Brown, spokesperson for the ministry of community safety.

The London police department already has six officers involved in elementary school safety and more than a year ago, assigned five constables to work in the city's high schools.

But their efforts aren't focused solely on bullying, said police spokesperson Const. Amy Phillipou.

"It's a small part of it. The program keeps evolving."

Neither police nor the boards had received details about the announcement yesterday.

A spokesperson for the London Catholic board could not be reached for comment.