

**Ontario Ministry of Finance – Community Budget Consultation  
Written Submission – Toronto District School Board**

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In many ways, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way that the TDSB operates, and it continues to have a significant financial impact on our board. As we look ahead to next year, we have significant concerns about the residual impacts of the pandemic and the costs that we will continue to face. The following areas are of particular concern:

**Virtual Learning**

- The TDSB has ultimately been operating two separate school systems since September – one for in-person learners and one for the more than 80,000 virtual learners we now support.
- This has resulted in an increase in costs due to the duplication of many functions.
- There has also been a significant cost related to ensuring equity of access for all students. This year, the TDSB will spend approximately \$15M to ensure that students have the appropriate technology to continue their learning virtually.

**Special Education**

- The TDSB has consistently spent more than our full grant to support students with Special Education needs (20-21 estimated at \$59M).
- There are also additional costs associated with ensuring that these students are fully supported during the pandemic.

**Mental Health and Well-Being**

- Additional mental health and well-being resources are needed to support students and staff during the pandemic, and will continue to be needed as we look beyond this school year.
- We will need additional resources for social workers, Child and Youth Workers, Guidance Counsellors, Student Equity Program Advisors, and K-12 Equity coaches.

**PPE and Cleaning Supplies**

- This year, the TDSB was provided with \$460K in funding for PPE and Cleaning Supplies from the province. Since March, we have already spent more than \$8M dollars on PPE and cleaning supplies to ensure that our learning environments are safe for students and staff.

**Supply Teacher Costs**

- Current funding levels do not adequately support school boards actual costs in all areas of staffing.
- Collective agreements allow for 130 days of absence with staff only being reduced to 90% of earnings after 11 days of absence.
- There has been an increase in usage of sick time since this new policy was established, and an even further increase this year with COVID-19.

- These costs will continue to increase, and school boards must receive additional funding support to address this shortfall.

Lastly, the TDSB continues to advocate for additional funding and access to funds in these two areas:

**Renewal Funding Backlog**

- The TDSB's current repair backlog sits at \$3.5 billion as a result of years of inadequate funding.
- Funding improvements have been made in recent years, allowing the TDSB to address emergency issues in our schools. Unfortunately, the additional funding has not been enough to decrease the TDSB's backlog.
- We ask that the province commit to providing predictable and sustainable funding for school repairs. This has become even more important in light of the pandemic and the TDSB's need to improve HVAC systems in our older schools.

**Education Development Charges**

- The TDSB continues to advocate for access to Education Development Charges (EDCs).
- We do not qualify for EDCs because we have excess capacity when assessed on a district-wide basis, even though there are significant capacity pressures facing many neighborhood schools.
- If the TDSB qualified, we could expect to have \$500-million over the next 15 years to meet growth-related infrastructure needs.
- We ask that the province modify or remove the restrictions in Section 10 of Ontario Regulation 20/98 to allow all school boards to qualify for EDCs and be able to use those funds for expansion of existing schools or building of new schools.

We recognized that this is an incredibly challenging time in our province, and recovering from the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will not be easy. However, now more than ever, it is importance that the students of this province are prioritized with strong, predictable and equitable education funding to support their needs.