

This document is a consolidation of the questions submitted during the Public Budget Information Session which took place on April 24, 2024. Questions are outlined in blue below and are followed by responses. School-specific questions should be directed to the respective school.

A recording of the Session and a copy of the presentation can be found on the DPCDSB website.

1. If the funds are already earmarked for specific items, why would parent/community engagement be needed or encouraged? Are there specific areas where the board is seeking input?

Response

It is important for DPCDSB to hear from our school communities, parents/guardians and other stakeholders. As a result of a deficit position, there are limitations with regard to increasing budget allocations, however, there are opportunities to highlight needs and consider redistribution of budget funds to those areas. The budget development process involves discussion and input to ensure the Board of Trustees approve a budget that meets the needs and goals of DPCDSB as best it can. Comments and input are encouraged.

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full funding to Catholic school boards for all secondary grades, there was a requirement to allow access to all students, not just Catholics. DPCDSB Secondary schools generally retain the enrolment of all grade 8 students moving into secondary age in 30% of secondary students from the Peel District School Board.

3. [How does DPCDSB manage the impact of declining enrolment on funding when students enrol in other boards?](#)

Response

Many grants are tied to enrolment so as enrolment goes down overall funding is reduced. However, some of these reductions can be offset by expenditure reductions. For example, with a reduced number of students there are fewer classes required so the board can adjust the level of staffing. There are some central, overhead expenditures and staffing that cannot be reduced as easily because most of that activity stays the same even though enrolment is declining, such as providing IT networks or the payroll function.

The initial budget allocations are based on projected enrolment. In the fall, the allocations are revised based on actual enrollment for the number of students in school.

4. [Has DPCDSB made requests to the Ministry to possibly close schools and buildings not in use?](#)

Response

DPCDSB has made requests to close school buildings. Provincially there is a moratorium on school closures impacting all school boards. The Ministry is not willing to exempt DPCDSB or any other school board from the moratorium at this time. If and when the moratorium is lifted, there is a required Pupil Accommodation Review (PAR) process that school boards must follow when identifying and preparing to close a school. There are also Ministry regulations around how surplus properties can be sold.

5. [For schools that are not fully utilized, can space be rented out to daycare providers, theater school boards, converted to community centres or other uses? When space is rented out, where does the revenue go?](#)

Response

Underutilized space, or empty pupil spaces, is an ongoing conversation. On an annual basis, the DPCDSB holds a Community Planning and Partnerships public meeting to solicit interest in sharing facilities. There have been a limited number of organizations that come forward and DPCDSB does have some current space lease arrangements in place. DPCDSB is always cognizant that sharing our school facilities with outside organizations has to be the right fit given the proximity of students. The majority of space use comes from permits and short term rentals. DPCDSB responds to requests from community groups and members and will try and match their needs to the spaces we have available.

The costs for utilities, custodians and the oversight of rentals and leases are all central costs of the board. When the spaces are rented out in schools, the proceeds from these rentals go to the central

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operating accounts to offset these costs and to address the extra wear and tear on facilities caused by the extra use. Fees charged are based on cost recovery, as required under the [D] v [] • [] Community Use of Schools program, with the exception of certain for-profit organizations.

6. How does the board fund facility maintenance projects? Do all schools receive the same amount? How are facility maintenance and enhancement needs prioritized?

Response

DPCDSB receives funding from the Ministry for School Renewal and School Condition Improvements both are capital streams of funding. On an annual basis, DPCDSB receives approximately \$30 million, however the long term projected needs of the board amount to over \$345 million for the next five years.

A Long Term Facilities Master Plan/Facilities Conditions Report can be found on the DPCDSB website in the Administration and Finance Committee meeting agenda of April 9, 2024.

A recent initiative of the DPCDSB is the replacement of exterior signs for all schools. This initiative is funded through School Renewal funding that is part of the capital funding from the Ministry. Given the limitations in funding, the initiative has been spread across a number of years.

The DPCDSB facilities team is aware of the challenges with all 151 schools and understands that facility enhancement needs must be balanced against maintenance and repairs of existing facilities in this challenging funding environment.

7. How does the budget allocation process work for special education funds? Are these funds also used

Response

Special education funding from the Ministry of Education is enveloped, meaning that the board can only spend this funding on special education related expenditures and not reallocate funds to other areas. Despite this restriction, DPCDSB has fully spent all special education funding allocated each year over the past several years and additionally contributes \$2 million in excess of the grant as the board recognizes the need for these supports. The projected special education envelope funding for the 2023-2024 fiscal year is \$117 million: projected special education envelope expenditures are \$120 million. Financial information is presented to the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) annually as part of the budget planning cycle. The majority of ERWs are funded out of special education funds with small amounts of funding coming from other grants. ECEs are funded through the JK/SK classroom funding allocation of the pupil foundation grant.

8. In the classroom, there are pressures to increase the use of technology/online tools/resources. In addition, parent councils are funding technology for schools. Why is the board choosing not to allocate funds to refreshing/replacing technology devices?

Response

DPCDSB is working on a process to define the device-to-student ratio that can support the needs of schools and each grade level. The plan has to include a refresh model that is sustainable and achievable. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic years, there was a heightened awareness and need for technology related devices and resources and security including enhanced network infrastructure, devices for students/staff, internet access and online learning resources. The Ministry of Education provided one time funds to invest in technology which was welcome relief for all school boards, however time funding is not sustainable over time. The DPCDSB has 63,000 devices of which more than half are older than four years or have reached end of useful life. The current Ministry funding for technology and network infrastructure needs does not support the refresh/replacement resource or security needs for our system and this is common across all school boards.

9. The Long Term Disability (LTD) plan is causing significant financial pressures for DPCDSB. What is the board doing to analyze the root cause of this budget pressure and what strategies can be put in place to address this as a main factor contributing to the budget deficit? Can stakeholders get access to data regarding LTD costs and cases? Are Long COVID cases numbers as well as other post viral conditions being tracked?

Response

The LTD issue that DPCDSB is facing is complex and one that the board cannot solve on its own. The LTD benefit is tied to the collective bargaining process which is bargained at the provincial level mandatory that all collective agreement articles that are monetary are necessarily deemed central items. This means that any negotiations tied to cost sharing or employee contributions to the LTD plan must be negotiated by the parties at the central bargaining table.

The Ministry of Education is fully aware of the DPCDSB issue and is committed to work with DPCDSB toward a resolution under a Multi-Year Financial Recovery Plan (MYFRP).

DPCDSB continues to look for ways to mitigate the LTD impact on the financial position through a recent change in plan provider and utilization reviews. Details of approved LTD cases remain with the LTD plan provider, who has responsibility for adjudication and oversight. As evidenced in the 5-year financial history, increasing costs associated with the LTD plan started just prior and during the COVID-19 pandemic years. The LTD plan is the major contributing factor to the deficit that continues to weigh heavily on DPCDSB financial resources.

DPCDSB enters into most large contracts for a period of three to five years. Most vendors are not interested in entertaining a one or two year contract due to the commitment required and upfront investments to fulfill the contractual obligations.

11. Can you please expand on the National Food Program?

Response

On April 1, 2024, the federal government announced a \$1 billion investment over five years for a national school food program that would deliver meals to students starting in the 2024-2025 school year. There have been no specific details shared with DPCDSB regarding funding at the local level or how the program will work. Information is expected soon in order for DPCDSB to implement the program for 2024-2025. Many schools have nutrition program funding through other partnerships and so it is expected that the national program will be an enhancement to what is already in place.

12. Can there be consideration to more flexibility given to school fundraising. How does the board determine where schools can raise funds versus what items are funded by the board? Many fundraisers are food related sales and our family is concerned about healthy eating.

Response

DPCDSB recognizes the great work that Catholic School Councils, parents/guardians and staff/students contribute to fundraising initiatives that support schools and student needs. Fundraising is informed and guided by the DPCDSB mission and vision and Multi-Strategic Plan (MYSP) and must comply with municipal, provincial and federal legislation as well as the Ministry of Education Fundraising Guidelines [School Fundraising Guideline](#)

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Under the Pupil Foundation Grant and School Foundation Grant, all school boards are funded based on the same model. These grants are based strictly on enrolment and number of facilities. In addition to the Foundation grants, there are special purposes grants. The special purpose grants recognize the differences that exist across all school boards and thus, funding is based on different criteria, such as rural vs urban settings, transportation needs, special education and language needs.

The breakdown of funding for DPCDSB across all grants can be seen in [table below](#).

stakeholders around the challenges that DPCDSB is facing and to understand how education funding works

DPCDSB working with the Ministry of Education under the MYFRP Ministry support is essential as the accumulated deficits are not a problem that can be solved locally.

15. Has the board considered elevating programming in schools such as enhanced arts programming, robotics and other enrichment programs to increase appeal?

Response

There are many programs currently offered at DPCDSB schools, including local and regional programs such as Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) programs, International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement (AP), French immersion, Extended French and several regional programs. Please connect with the Guidance department or principal of your local school for more information.

16. Who is responsible for advocating for more funds from the ministry and how successful have they been in the last 5 years?

Response

Advocacy happens in many forms from parents/guardians, community members, students, school board staff and trustees. A number of provincial organizations work together to advocate to the Ministry on behalf of all school boards in Ontario. This includes the Board of Trustees as members of the Ontario Catholic School Trustee Association (OCSTA) and the Director of Education member of the Council of Directors of Education (CODE). Additionally, the Council of Senior Business Officials (COSBO) and the Ontario Association of School Business Officials (OASBO) are staff from all school boards that bring information forward to the Ministry for consideration. The Board of Trustees of the DPCDSB have many letters to the Minister of Education to address specific issues and concerns of DPCDSB.

In the last few years, the Ministry of Education has issued Education Funding Consultation Guide to address education funding reform; through a series of guided questions, the Ministry receives feedback

