

2018-19 Budget notes

Janet McDougald, Chair of the Board

Good evening. As we sit tonight as a board to deliberate on the 2018-19 budget, I liken it to watching Prince Harry marry Duchess of Sussex Meghan Markle a couple of weekends ago—with a few less paparazzi.

When millions around the world watched the Royal Wedding, what they saw was the final product—essentially, what came after months of preparation. For the Royal Family, much of that prep work was done by staff, individuals committed to ensuring every detail is meticulously considered and planned for. Their efforts helped ready Harry and Meghan for their big day.

For the Board, this is our “Big Day”—a day when we approve crucial budget decisions that will help us to inspire success, confidence and hope in each student. Our budget conversations did not start tonight—or even weeks ago when we had our preliminary budget presentation to the board. For months, staff and trustees have been diligently working towards tonight’s budget meeting, starting with our community budget consultation process, which began in March. We, as trustees, appreciate the work.

The budget we have before us tonight—and the last budget we will approve this term as trustees—was prepared by staff, under the leadership of Director Peter Joshua, Associate Directors Jaspal Gill, Wendy Dowling and Poleen Grewal, Controller of Finance Tania Alatishe-Charles and the senior finance team. I want to thank them for their diligence, guidance and partnership during this process.

Again this year, we have had an efficient and collaborative budget process—this is a great point of pride and one we all share. Like the team of little Royal Wedding attendants trying to walk perfectly down the aisle behind Meghan, we too work together, focusing on one main goal: student success. And sometimes it's hard not to stray outside of the aisle. If we could, the board would fund every program and resource that supports student success. But we must stay within the parameters of the funding we receive from the Ministry of Education.

Our budget process included a business case review that allowed the board to respond to new and emerging system and school priorities. The 2018-19 budget was developed through an extensive consultation process that included employee group leaders, principals and vice-principals, the senior leadership team and trustees.

In addition to working with Peel staff to develop the budget, we also sought input from staff, families, School Council members, students and community members. To gather input, we used an online survey and received close to 500 responses. What we heard from our community were repeated calls for increased funding for special education, mental health supports, technology, transportation, facilities upgrades and professional development for staff.

And so, tonight, I'm very pleased to report that the budget before you includes enhancements in all of these areas and more. But before I share the highlights with you, I would like to clarify that most of the \$1.9 billion budget is allocated to operational costs—salaries and benefits, busing, classroom resources and technology, maintenance, utilities and other day-to-day costs.

\$1.8 million from Board reserves were needed to support one-time business cases in order to balance the budget. The following significant enhancements for our students will be approved:

- Steadfast in our commitment to achieving inclusion through continuous progress on equity, we will hire an equity and inclusion coordinator to support board equity initiatives, including being the lead, point person for our *We Rise Together* action plan which was created to identify, understand, minimize and eliminate the marginalization experienced by Black male students in Peel schools. This individual will also support the board's anti-poverty initiatives and will work alongside existing Equity staff to deliver a comprehensive strategy to support students from other marginalized communities including students living in poverty, and students who identify as Indigenous and/or LGBTQ+.
- We will still spend more than our allocated funding to support students with special education needs because these needs continue to grow. This is the case across the province, which tells me that the overall funding for special education is insufficient. Some of the funding will be used towards special education staffing. For the fifth consecutive year, we will increase the number of teaching assistants (TAs) in our schools. We will add additional TA support for students with special education needs, including 26 new TA positions, conversion of 44 long-term occasional (LTO) TA positions to permanent, and the addition of 31 new LTO TAs to support fall transitions. In Special Education, we will also add a coordinating principal of TA allocation, five new PSSP positions (Psychologist/Social Worker/Speech Language Pathologist) positions, two additional transition facilitators, an additional teacher for home instruction, an additional IT analyst to support special education equipment.
- Additional funding will be used towards staffing. We will add six resource teachers to support the board's We Welcome the World Centres, an additional experiential

learning coordinator, an additional instructional resource teacher for eLearning, two additional Student Success SHSM program support teachers, two additional staff to support employee wellness, Human Resources recruitment staff to help us attract and retain staff, an additional technology resource teacher, and an assistive technology coordinator.

- Additional secondary and elementary teachers will be hired to support enrolment increases, special education and other emerging needs.
- \$400,000 will be dedicated to support the creation of dynamic, outdoor learning spaces for kindergarten.

We came to the table, focused on the projects in our *Plan for Student Success*, bringing the voices of our community with us. Every decision we made, each item added to the budget, each taken away, all reflect the plan's four priority areas:

- High expectations for achievement
- Parent, community and staff engagement
- Equity and inclusion and
- Safe, positive, healthy climate/well-being

These have truly guided our work, and our budget reflects these *Plan for Student Success* priority areas and key projects. Our investments are intended to have the greatest, positive impact on students possible.

But we're not in this alone as trustees. Our budget decisions would be left on the Board Room floor if not for the outstanding contributions of Peel staff and volunteers. Every staff member, no matter what department or role, works to support schools and to support our mission to inspire success, confidence and hope in each student.

I'm very pleased that we have remained, throughout the years, a board that is steadfast in its student-focus, setting budget priorities that put students first, always.

Thank you all for your ongoing commitment to this focus.