

2016-17 Budget notes

Janet McDougald, Chair of the Board

Good evening. As we sit tonight as a board to deliberate on the 2016-17 budget, I liken it to going to watch my four-year-old grandson play soccer with his little teammates for the very first time last weekend—and understand, I use the words “play soccer” very loosely!

When you attend a soccer match, what you see is the end result—the game—essentially, what comes after all of the preparation. In the case of four-year-olds, training usually involves persuading them to leave their parents’ laps and encouraging them to stop picking dandelions. Whatever that preparation looks like, it’s an important step in readying them for the beautiful game.

And for us, the lead-up to the budget meeting is when the important work is done—our preparation matters. Our budget conversations did not start tonight—or even weeks ago when we had our preliminary budget presentation to board. Our process began months ago, and like a strong team, we worked long, hard and well...together...to develop the budget trustees have before them tonight.

Again this year, we have had a smooth and tremendously collaborative budget process—this is a great point of pride and one we all share. Like a team of four-year-olds together chasing the same ball around the field, we too travel in packs focused on one main goal always...student success. 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.

Our budget process included a business case review that allowed the board to respond to new and emerging system and school priorities. The 2016-17 budget was developed through an extensive consultation process that included employee group leaders, principals and vice-principals, the senior leadership team and trustees.

I want to thank Director Tony Pontes, Associate Director Jaspal Gill, Associate Director Scott Moreash, Controller Tania Alatishe (A-LA-TI-SHAY) and the senior Finance team for their diligence, guidance and collaboration during this process.

In addition to working with Peel staff to develop the budget, we also sought input from staff, parents, School Council members, students and community members. To gather input, we used an online survey and received close to 300 responses. What we heard from our community were repeated calls for increased funding for special education, technology, classroom resources, extracurriculars, facilities upgrades and transportation.

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 \$1.77 billion budget is allocated to operational costs—salaries and benefits, busing, classroom resources and technology, maintenance, utilities and other day-to-day costs. What is left, after those funds are allocated, is approximately \$4.3 million.

Guided by our consultation process, the \$4.3 million and \$2.4 million from our Board reserves will be used to support the following significant enhancements for our students:

- Special Education funding has increased as a direct result of our *Fix the Formula* campaign, thanks to the efforts of staff, parents, partners and community members. As a direct result of the campaign's success, we'll receive the third of a four-year phase-in of Special Education High Needs Amount funding now called Differentiated Special Education Needs Amount, close to an additional \$3.4 million in 2016-17, that more accurately reflects our needs. This will bring Special Education funding closer to actual spending, but we will still spend more than our allocated funding to support students because the special education needs of our students continue to grow. This is the case across the province, which tells me that the overall funding for special education is insufficient.
- For the third consecutive year, we will be significantly increasing the number of teaching assistants in our schools. Next year, we will add 21 new teaching assistants to support students' complex physical, development, emotional and behavioural needs. We will also convert 50 long-term occasional TA positions to permanent and add 10 new LTO TAs to support fall transitions. One additional psychologist, social worker and speech language pathologist will also be added, as well as two itinerant teachers to support students in Autism Spectrum Disorder or Developmental Disabilities programs who are integrated into classrooms.

- Based on feedback from parents and community members, we will reduce the transportation distance eligibility for students in grades 7 and 8 from 3.2 km to 2 km effective the 2016-17 school year—\$950,000 will be dedicated to support this reduction. Enhancements in the provision of transportation continue to be a goal of this board.
- Renewing our commitment to extracurriculars, \$800,000 has been dedicated to support extracurricular activities in schools, such as athletics, the arts and other clubs.
- Steadfast in our commitment to equity, we will be adding a new coordinating principal of First Nations, Métis and Inuit focused on equity. It continues to be important that students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected.
- Additional funding will be used towards staffing. We will add seven English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and two additional ESL resource teachers, a new assistant manager of health and safety, and an additional PC LAN specialist. Funding will also be provided to continue to support the

continuous recruitment and hiring of occasional teachers, designated early childhood educators and TAs to ensure coverage during staff absences.

- To streamline processes and better monitor the status of work orders, custodial and maintenance staff will be provided with access to digital tablets.
- In addition, the Board will approve \$5 million out of reserves and \$10 million out of renewal funds to be used towards the creation of a \$50 million Facilities Improvement to Support Program Needs initiative. Improvements will be made to areas such as science labs, technology shops, digital spaces and libraries. Fifty thousand dollars has also been allocated to provide additional resources to new kindergarten classrooms.

We came to the table, focused on the projects in our Report Card for Student Success, bringing the voices of our community with us while guided by our mission statement—to inspire success, confidence and hope in each student. And make no mistake—each decision we make, each item added to the budget, each taken away, all reflect that mission and what is best for students. These are not just words—they're how we do our work together.

But I know that we're not in this alone as trustees. I know that our 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, is working to support schools and—support our mission, to inspire students to be confident, successful and hopeful.

Thank you all for your ongoing commitment to this mission.