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Per-student funding in Peel is third-lowest in province

Peel board approves balanced budget, despite \$124 million funding gap

Trustees of the Peel District School Board approved a budget of \$1.2 billion for the 2007-08 school year. This balanced budget is a \$73 million increase in Ministry of Education funding from last year. However, the funding gap between grants and actual costs in areas such as transportation and staff costs is \$45 million.

"Obviously, there is some good news. Our funding is up about seven per cent. There are positive provincial initiatives," said Janet McDougald, chair of the board. "But—and it is a big one—the fact remains that the Peel District School Board, the children of Peel, receive a grant that is the third lowest in the province. This funding level translates into a funding gap of \$883 less for each and every Peel student. It totals over \$120 million."

The increase in the board's budget is to several factors.

- Enrolment growth of 1.8 per cent accounts for about \$20 million.
- The board has built five new elementary schools and one new secondary school, along with 27 major additions—14 of which are for primary class size reduction.
- The funding of \$9 million for primary class size will allow the board to hire 112 new teachers in 2007-08. This funding will allow the Peel board to meet the ministry expectation of 90 per cent of primary classrooms having no more than 20 students.
- The funding will provide a three per cent salary benchmark increase, cover the full cost of teacher preparation time, and provide additional elementary and secondary specialist teachers.

The ministry funding for 2007-08 raises the following concerns for the Peel board.

- The gap between ministry grants and actual salary and benefit costs remains at \$20 million.
- Actual transportation costs still exceed grants by \$6.5 million. Transportation in the Peel board has been under-funded for the past decade.
- There is no grant to cover the relocation of portables, which is expected to cost the board \$5.5 million in 2007-08.
- The cost of special education programs is \$5 million more than the grants provided.
- Changes to the funding formula designed to support smaller schools have had the unintended impact of reducing the grant for principals and vice-principals in Peel by \$4.6 million.
- The Peel board has a funding shortfall of \$4 million for supply teachers, despite spending less than the provincial average in this area.

For more information about the Peel board budget, go to www.peelschools.org. For a complete copy of the budget, call 905-890-1010 (or 1-800-668-1146) ext. 2012.

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