

June 17, 2008

**Per-student funding in Peel board \$1,000 below provincial average**  
***Trustees approve balanced budget, despite \$136-million funding gap***

Trustees of the Peel District School Board approved a budget of \$1.26 billion for the 2008-09 school year. This balanced budget is a \$41 million, or 3.7 per cent, increase in provincial grants from last year. However, the funding gap between grants and actual costs in areas such as transportation and staff costs is \$24.5 million.

"Our budget is balanced, but the real issue is the per-student funding gap," said Janet McDougald, chair of the board. "Here is the truly bad news. Each and every Peel District School Board student receives \$973 less than the provincial average, putting us third lowest in Ontario in per-student funding. That must change. If we were funded at the provincial average, it would mean an extra \$136 million for the children of Peel."

The Peel board budget for 2008-09 is based on the same enrolment as the previous year, because of overestimating enrolment growth the previous year. McDougald explained that "The entire provincial funding model, with the unrelenting focus on supporting districts with declining enrolment, puts the Peel board at a disadvantage. Now that our rate of growth is slower, we are less able to mask the problem. Of course we must live within our means, but the province needs to understand and respond to the unique nature of this board as a growth board, a diverse board, a suburban board."

The ministry funding for 2008-09 raises the following concerns for the Peel board.

- The gap between ministry grants and actual salary and benefit costs remains at about \$20 million, down slightly from \$26.6 million last year.
- Actual transportation costs still exceed grants by \$4.7 million, despite an increase in funding of \$2.3 million. Transportation in the Peel board has been under-funded for more than a decade.
- There is no grant to cover the relocation of portables, which is expected to cost the board \$5.5 million in 2008-09. The board covers this cost from its renewal grant, which reduces how much the board can afford to maintain and repair older schools.
- The cost of special education programs is \$10 million more than the grants provided.

"There is also an area of uncertainty when it comes to the provincial labour framework. Virtually all of our employee group contracts come due this fall, and we are waiting for the provincial funding levels to be set so we can begin local negotiations," McDougald said. "Our goal will be to reach fair, negotiated and student-centered agreements with our groups—but strictly within the funding provided by the province."

For more information about the Peel board budget, go to [www.peelschools.org](http://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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**Note to media:** See the text of Janet McDougald's [budget remarks](#), or call 905-890-1010 (or 1-800-668-1146) ext. 2809.