RECOMMENDATIONS

SP25.05.6 Urgent Advocacy on Education Funding: PIAC Letters to the Ministry of Education and TDSB Trustees

Date: May 06, 2025
To: Parent Involvement Advisory Committee (PIAC)
From: Strategic Planning Working Group

SUMMARY

The Strategic Planning Working Group recommends that PIAC take urgent action to address the chronic underfunding of public education in Ontario by sending formal advocacy letters to the Ministry of Education and TDSB Trustees. The letter to the Ministry calls for immediate in-person consultation with all Ontario Parent Involvement Committees (PICs) regarding the education funding formula and its implications for student equity and school board sustainability. The letter to the TDSB Trustees urges them to adopt a firm “No Cuts” position in response to ongoing budget pressures, and to reject any budget that compromises student safety, well-being, and learning. These actions reflect widespread parent concern and call for greater transparency, accountability, and bold leadership.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Strategic Planning Working Group proposes that PIAC make the following motions/recommendations:

Motions to PIAC

1. That PIAC approve the attached letter to be sent to the Deputy Minister of Education and the Director of the Enrolment, Funding and Labour Policy Branch.
2. That PIAC approve the attached letter to be sent to the TDSB Trustees.
3. That PIAC authorize the Co-Chairs to send the letters on behalf of the Committee by email and courier.
4. That PIAC request a written response from the Ministry of Education and the TDSB Trustees, and that these responses be shared with PIAC upon receipt.
5. That PIAC prioritize an urgent meeting with the Ministry-assigned TDSB investigator to communicate parent concerns and demand transparency in the review process.

Motions to the TDSB
None at this time.

Recommendations to the Director of Education
None at this time.

Recommendations to Ministry of Education
1. That the Minister of Education initiate urgent consultation with Ontario Parent Involvement Committees on the education funding formula and its implications for student equity and school board sustainability.

Recommendations to [External Party]
None at this time.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is minimal financial impact from the adoption of the recommendations in this report. The only cost associated is the courier fee to ensure timely and formal delivery of letters to the Ministry and TDSB Trustees. This nominal expense can be accommodated within existing PIAC operational funds.

DECISION HISTORY

Approved by the Strategic Planning Working Group on April 17, 2025.

COMMENTS

N/A

SPONSORS CO-SPONSORS

Sponsor: Mercy Charles, Strategic Planning Working Group Co-lead, Ward 6 Co-Rep

Co-sponsors:
- Eden Hagos, School Council Support Working Group Co-Lead, Ward 16 Co-Rep
- Katrina Matheson, Ward 10 Co-Rep
- Nicole Di Wu, Consultations Working Group Co-Lead, Ward 12 Co-Rep
- Gordon Harvey, School Council Support Working Group Co-Lead, Ward 3 Co-Rep
- Andrew Waters, Membership Working Group Co-Lead, Ward 3 Co-Rep

SIGNATURE

Full Name: Mercy Charles
Title of Official (Ward ##) Strategic Planning Working Group Co-lead, Ward 6 Co-Rep

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft letter to the Ministry of Education
2. Draft letter to the TDSB Trustees

Parent Involvement Advisory Committee (PIAC)
Regulated as a Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)
Toronto District School Board
5050 Yonge Street
North York, ON M2N 7H3

Date: [Insert Date]

Denise Cole, Deputy Minister of Education and
Romina Di Pasquale, Director
Enrolment, Funding and Labour Policy Branch
Ministry of Education
VIA EMAIL AND COURIER

RE: RECOMMENDATION FOR URGENT CONSULTATION WITH ONTARIO PARENT INVOLVEMENT COUNCILS WITH RESPECT TO THE FUNDING FORMULA

Dear Deputy Minister Cole and Director Di Pasquale, ,

The Parent Involvement Advisory Committee (PIAC) supports parents/caregivers as partners in education. PIAC is a provincially mandated Statutory Advisory Committee of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). The purpose of PIAC as per the Education Act Regulation 612/00 is:

27. (1) The purpose of a parent involvement committee is to support, encourage and enhance parent/[caregiver] engagement at the board level in order to improve student achievement and well-being.

We represent parents/caregivers of the TDSB to the Director of Education, the Board of Trustees and the Ministry of Education. We support parents/caregivers more effective engagement in their child's learning and to enhance the accountability of the education system.

We write to express our profound concern about the chronic provincial underfunding of schools in Ontario. This underfunding disproportionately affects the TDSB, due primarily to the

i) the high cost of goods and services in comparison to elsewhere in the province;

ii) bargaining agreement obligations that significantly exceed the provincial average;

iii) a disproportionately high number of high-needs students, including newcomers, asylum seekers, and refugee, special education, and English as a second language students (ESL); and

iv) older school buildings compared to elsewhere in the province and accordingly, aging infrastructure that still comprises a backlog of updates and repairs.

v) worsening overpopulation in many schools alongside the forced maintenance of underutilized facilities due to the Ministry's moratorium on school closures.

These discrepancies have contributed to an on-going structural deficit, whereby the province is failing to fund direct education costs incurred by the TDSB despite its funding obligations under the Education Act Section 234. The Ontario Auditor General urged prompt attention to understanding and correcting the structural deficit in the Fall 2024 report.

While we understand that this recommended conversation is taking place on an on-going basis as between the Ministry of Education and the TDSB, we have further concerns. Namely, we refer back to the 2017 Auditor General's report, which explicitly called for a periodic consultation process and readjustment to ensure that the funding formula is meeting student needs.

Moreover, the MInistry of Education's refusal to fully fund critical budget items, most egregiously the Canada Pension Plan payments and the full cost of teacher salaries under the bargaining agreement that the Ministry of Education itself negotiated, demonstrates a profound and perhaps willful failure to meet student needs.

Our teachers are not machines and our children are not widgets. Determining funding using a cold calculation completely divorced from the conditions our children are experiencing is not only unethical and illegal, but also dangerous.

I am sure you are aware that two Ontario children died last year from events at their public school: 16 year-old Landyn Ferris and 4 year-old Nayel Ahmed. Both of these deaths arguably could have been avoided with appropriate levels of special education and lunchtime supervision staff, respectively.

The Ministry response to parents recently circulated by Director Di Pasquale touts the Ministry's highest funding ever, but completely overlooks the reality that the funding is objectively not enough. Recent reports suggest that by your own Ministry documents, at least 41% of school boards have completely depleted their reserves. Accordingly, the Ministry has allowed school board funding to reach a breaking point, and as a result our precious children are at risk.

The Ministry of Education's moratorium on school closures, in place since 2017, has prevented school boards from consolidating schools—even when they are significantly underutilized. While intended to preserve local access to schools, the policy has had serious unintended consequences. For the TDSB, this moratorium means:

- Continued operational and maintenance costs for half-empty buildings
- Difficulty allocating limited staff and resources efficiently
- Reduced ability to offer comprehensive, enriched programming in all schools
- Heightened financial pressure in an already strained budget

We are calling for immediate action including:

- **The urgent public dissemination of the funding formula calculation used to calculate the upcoming 2025-2026 school year funding packages to school boards:** In accordance with the 2017 Ontario Auditor General's report, the Ministry of Education has an obligation to provide a transparent and detailed funding formula and extend to parents the opportunity for review and consultation.
- **An in-person consultation meeting of the Ministry with representatives from all Ontario PICS:** Although our school board is hard hit by underfunding, we recognize that school underfunding is a widespread problem affecting many boards and hundreds of thousands of children. We are not asking for special treatment for the TDSB; only that the province meet its obligations under law. This meeting should take place no later than May 12th, 2025 and should allow the PICS to make meaningful recommendations to the Ministry, which will inform revisions to the funding calculations. Please contact us at info@torontopiac.com

Endorsement by PIAC

The Parent Involvement Advisory Committee (PIAC) of the TDSB has formally endorsed this letter under Reg. 612/00.

Call to Action: Join Us

We invite School Advisory Councils, Community Advisory Committees, and Parent Involvement Councils across Ontario to co-sign this letter and join us in demanding accountability and action from the provincial government. To co-sign or support this effort, please contact us at [Insert PIAC contact email].

Sincerely,
[Name(s)]
On behalf of the Parent Involvement Advisory Committee (PIAC)
Toronto District School Board
[Email / Phone / Website]

cc: TDSB Trustees, Minister of Education Paul Calandra, Ontario Auditor General

Parent Involvement Advisory Committee (PIAC)
Regulated as a Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)
Toronto District School Board
5050 Yonge Street
North York ON M2N 7H3

Date: [Insert Date]

To:
Trustees
Toronto District School Board
5050 Yonge Street
North York, ON M2N 7H3
VIA EMAIL

RE: Recommendation of a NO CUTS position

Dear Trustees,

The Parent Involvement Advisory Committee (PIAC) supports parents/caregivers as partners in education. PIAC is a provincially mandated Statutory Advisory Committee of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). The purpose of PIAC as per the Education Act Regulation 612/00 is:

27. (1) The purpose of a parent involvement committee is to support, encourage and enhance parent/[caregiver] engagement at the board level in order to improve student achievement and well-being.

We represent parents/caregivers of the TDSB to the Director of Education, the Board of Trustees and the Ministry of Education. We support parents/caregivers more effective engagement in their child's learning and to enhance the accountability of the education system.

We, members of the Parent Involvement Advisory Committee (PIAC) of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), formally submit this recommendation on behalf of families across Toronto who are deeply concerned about chronic provincial underfunding, the state of our schools, and what has been to this point a jarring lack of courage among our Trustees.

Whereas, our students and teachers face increasing violence in the classroom, with such incidents increasing from 244 in 2017-18, to 407 in 2022-23; and

Whereas, student referrals for mental health supports increased by 71% between 2017-18 and 2022-23, while corresponding staff only increased by 42% in the same period; and

Whereas, bullying is rampant, with up to 71% of students reporting that they have been verbally harassed at school, 23% have been physically bullied at school, and 14% have been cyberbullied in 2022-2023; and

Whereas, the most recent TDSB EQAO scores have fallen below the provincial standards;

Be it therefore resolved that further cuts to our schools, including program cuts, technology cuts, staffing cuts, and indirect cuts to permit holders and other third parties that provide care to our students constitutes a violation of your role as advocates for our children that should compel you to hold a NO CUTS position.

We are aware that Trustees are legally obligated to uphold their individual and collective duties by passing a budget before June 30th. However, that obligation reasonably presumes that the funding formula is fair and transparent, and based on the reality of what things cost. As you know, it is not. Instead, our schools have been increasingly starved of funding sufficient to meet student needs over the last two decades. As Chair Shan said last year, we can hardly recognize our schools anymore. To make more than $70 million in cuts this year would be a travesty that would crush the system.

We are calling for bold action:

- **Trustees must say NO to further cuts:** *Do not vote for a budget that compromises student safety, well-being, and learning, regardless of any risk of takeover of the board by the provincial government.*

Why This Matters

The Trustees are no longer able to credibly maintain the facade of a properly funded School Board. For example, well-resourced parents typically pay for private tutoring after school, and students are fleeing the TDSB for Catholic or private schools at an increasing rate. Let us be clear: among parents, the NO CUTS position is not a fringe position. Most parents are unwilling to endure more cuts and accordingly demand that the Trustees bravely vote against any budget that worsens already dysfunctional school conditions.

Motion for Endorsement by PIAC

The TDSB's Parent Involvement Advisory Committee (PIAC) formally endorses this letter.

Call to Action: Join Us

We invite School Councils, Community Advisory Committees, and Parent Advocacy Groups across Ontario to join us in demanding accountability and action from the TDSB by holding the No Cuts position.

Sincerely,
[Name(s)]
On behalf of the Parent Involvement Advisory Committee (PIAC)

Toronto District School Board
[Email / Phone / Website]

With electronic copy to: TDSB Trustees