



Government of Ontario Budget Consultations

Toronto District School Board (TDSB)

Special Education and Mental Health Support

The TDSB has consistently spent more than the government funding provided for Special Education and the number of students requiring this support continues to increase. Last year, the TDSB spent an additional \$47.4M on Special Education.

We urge the province to modify the Special Education funding model and provide enhancements to meet the financial needs of school boards and the educational needs of students.

It's also critical that the province provide additional resources to support the mental health of students and to help them cope with stress, anxiety, depression and the negative impacts of the pandemic.

Technology

Funding for technology is vital for school boards to provide sustainable, equitable and collaborative communication platforms as well as digital devices, tools and resources for students and staff. The need for technology has been accentuated by the pandemic.

We ask that your government provide funding for hardware and services to close the digital divide between students; one device per student; and digital content resources and program materials.

Pandemic Impacts

Over the past 10 months, the TDSB provided students with regular and meaningful learning opportunities while maintaining safe, learning environments.

In the spring, we shifted to remote learning and provided access to technology for 245,000 learners. In September, we opened two Virtual Schools for 80,000 of these learners. Due to the socioeconomical diversity of our communities, we have provided 70,000 devices to students and has helped families with internet connectivity and purchasing digital resources.

We also recognize the emotional, social and physical strains of the pandemic on students and learning gaps it has created.

We are asking for funding to support mental health; addressing learning gaps; hiring of additional teachers, support learners and professional support services; IT infrastructure; virtual curriculum materials; and research to further identify gaps and develop action plans to support students.

Capital Needs

The TDSB is the largest school board in the province with hundreds of aging building infrastructures, with an average age of 64 years.

We ask that you consider the size of the school board when determining the number of submissions for Capital Priorities Projects; expedite the Approval to Proceed process for capital construction; eliminate the school closure moratorium to address over capacity and program issues and reduce renewal needs and operating costs; and update construction benchmarks to consider urban building costs.

We also ask for funding to modernize schools; reduce repair backlog; and to support school repairs and our long-term accommodation plan.

Education Development Charges

The TDSB doesn't qualify for Education Development Charges because it has excess capacity when assessed on a district-wide basis, regardless of capacity pressures and challenges faced in many neighborhood schools.

We believe developers should contribute to education like they pay for roads, transit and community centres. EDCs could generate approximately \$500M in additional revenue from developers over the next 15 years to help meet growth-related infrastructure needs.

We continue to advocate for school boards to qualify for EDCs.



Alexander Brown
Chair, Toronto District School Board

