



July 15, 2021

The Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
315 Front Street, 14th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 0B8

Dear Minister Lecce,

On behalf of the Toronto District School Board, I am writing to you again to express our serious concerns regarding the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the TDSB's current and future operations. Keeping staff and students safe during the pandemic has been our top priority; However, this has resulted in a significant financial impact to the Board, and we call on the Ministry of Education to fully fund all pandemic costs and reimburse the use of reserves so that future operations are not impacted in a way that will negatively affect the students we serve.

On June 30, [Trustees approved the TDSB's 2021-22 Operating Budget](#). To address next year's projected deficit of \$59M, the TDSB will be required to use its reserves again to balance the budget. Since the start of the pandemic, the TDSB has been put in the position of using \$80.5M of its reserves to balance the 2020-21 and 2021-22 budgets.

For this year and next year, school boards are required to fund pandemic costs up to 2% of their operating allocation using reserves. The TDSB is forecasting to use up to \$42.57M of Board resources for COVID-related expenses in the 2020-21 school year to keep students and staff safe during the pandemic. Depending on the status of the pandemic situation and the results of the student selection process in August, the TDSB may also incur additional unfunded pandemic costs in 2021-22.

While pandemic costs make up a significant portion of the \$80.5M, this amount also includes the Board's structural deficit. It's very important to note that the decision to use reserves was made to avoid reducing programs and services for students during the pandemic. Had the pandemic not been a factor over these past two budgets, the TDSB would have had the flexibility to make different financial and programming decisions to balance the budget. The TDSB has significant concerns about using reserves for two consecutive years, specifically regarding how this may impede our ability to meet future programming and operating obligations as they arise.

As a result, I am writing to petition the Ministry of Education to fund the full cost of the pandemic and reimburse the TDSB for the use of its reserves. I am also requesting that the Ministry fully fund all costs necessary to implement the Board's [Pandemic Recovery Plan](#) to mitigate the long-term impacts on student learning for all ages and grade levels, as well as the impacts on students' mental health and well-being.

Thank you for your attention to these important matters. I am keenly interested in continuing this conversation with you to minimize the residual impact of the pandemic on school board operations so that the students of Toronto are not disadvantaged in the years ahead.



Alexander Brown
Chair, Toronto District School Board