

Trustee Update

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Questions and Answers: TDSB Staff Proposed Balanced Budget 2019-20 and Budget Decision-Making Process and Time Lines

The Toronto District School Board is projecting a budget shortfall of \$67.8 million for 2019-20. The budget shortfall is caused by TDSB's structural annual budget shortfall of \$25.7 million and Ministry of Education grant reductions (revenue) of \$42.1 million. To balance the 2019-20 budget, staff have presented to the Trustees a [proposed balanced operating budget plan](#) that includes budget reductions, proposals to deliver some programs and services differently to reduce costs, and proposed budget areas with no funding reductions. School boards are required by law to balance their budgets.

Q: Why does the TDSB have a structural deficit and what causes it?

A: The TDSB has many programs and services that respond to the unique needs of urban education – programs that are not part of the Ministry funding allocation to school boards. Many other school boards do not offer these programs and services or deliver them differently. In the past, the Board has made up the funding shortfall by finding savings and efficiencies during the year in other areas of the budget – cuts that have for the most part not affected classrooms and students. To keep the programs and services that our students and parents value, we have been cutting costs in other areas of the budget for some time. The staff proposed balanced budget is bringing the TDSB more in line with the Ministry of Education funding allocation in some areas as reduced funding through the years continues to limit our flexibility. That's why the staff proposed balanced budget recommends reducing costs further in central administration and central support for schools by \$15 million.

Q: What are the Ministry of Education grants (funding) reductions?

A: The Ministry of Education is reducing funding to school boards, including the TDSB. For the TDSB, the Ministry funding will be \$42.1 million less than last year. [Learn more about the TDSB structural deficit and the Ministry grant reductions.](#)

Q: I have heard that the Ministry of Education says the reductions are less than \$42.1 million. Why is their grant reduction different?

A: The Ministry numbers have attributed (or netted-out) revenue to school boards, including the TDSB, but those funds are for compensation and cannot be used to fund school programs and services.

Q: Does the proposed budget eliminate any programs for students?

No. The proposed balanced budget does not eliminate any programs or professional staff functions. Some will be reduced in scope, some will have fewer professional staff and some will be reorganized with a different delivery model to achieve budget savings and/or more effective service delivery or changing needs. [Review all the proposed budget](#)

Q: Does the proposed budget eliminate any services?

A: Yes. The staff proposed balanced budget does impact some services, such as the elimination of TTC tokens for students in French Immersion/Extended French (Grades 9-12) and Gifted (Grades 9-12) effective September 2019. The staff recommendation also proposes eliminating busing services for French Immersion/Extended French (Grades SK-9) and Gifted (Grades 4-9) in 2020-21. [Read more about the changes and staff's rationale for these service reductions.](#)

Q: Are there areas of the budget that will not be reduced?

A: Yes. The proposed balanced operating budget includes a number of programs and services that will continue to receive full or additional funding. They include special education, early years strategies to improve students' reading, writing and math skills, school safety, and many other areas. [Read more about these investments.](#)

Q: Are the staff proposed budget reductions final?

A: No. The staff proposed budget reductions are not final. The Committee of Trustees will deliberate on the proposed reductions and may reject, change or approve some of the recommendations.

Q: What happens if the Board does not balance the budget?

A: By Ontario law, school boards are required to balance the budget.

Q: What is the role of Trustees in the budget process?

A: No Trustee wants to reduce programs and services to students and schools but that is our challenge. Our role is to do our best to ensure that the funding we receive is aligned with the board's priorities for improving student achievement and well-being, supporting our classroom teachers and minimizing the impact on schools and students, and ensuring that all legislated and contractual obligations are taken into consideration. A board is legally required to file a balanced budget by June 30. We also want an equitable allocation of resources so that all students across Toronto, including those with special needs, receive the support they need to be successful. The budget decisions of Trustees are also guided by the Strategic Budget Drivers that were approved by the Board after extensive on-line consultation with parents, staff and students. Trustees will also hear the view of the community who make presentations to the committee in person or in written form or contact Trustees directly to express their views.

Q: What are the next steps in the budget process?

A: In the days to come, the Finance, Budget and Enrolment Committee (FBEC) will hold several [meetings](#) to discuss the budget. The committee will recommend a proposed budget to the Board of Trustees who will also deliberate and eventually approve a budget. The Board is expected to make a final decision on the budget expected at the June 19 Board meeting.

Q: How can the community have input on the committee deliberations?

A: The TDSB conducted on-line consultations in April to get feedback on the priorities of the parents, staff and students with respect to the budget. More than 15,000 participated in the survey. There will be a number of opportunities for [public input](#), including the opportunity to make presentations to the committee or submit written presentations.

Q: How can I get more information on the proposed budget and the budget process?

A: There is a lot of information on the proposed budget available on our [website](#), including how to schedule a presentation to our Finance, Budget and Enrolment Committee. You can make a presentation in person or submit it to the committee in writing. Upcoming meetings are May 27 – 4:30 p.m. and June 3 – 4:30 p.m. All meetings are in the TDSB Boardroom. For more information on how to participate in this consultation, please visit [TDSB Budget Consultations](#).

You can also watch our FBEC meeting live on a web broadcast. Visit our website just before meeting start time and follow the *watch meeting live* link. If you want to watch past meetings please [click](#) here and scroll down to *watch our meetings live*.

In the meantime, feel free to contact me at any time if you would like to share your views or concerns about the proposed staff budget.

You can reach me at: Chris.Tonks@tdsb.on.ca or 416-395-8787.