

Ministry of Education

Minister

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Ministère de l'Éducation

Ministre

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Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1L2



April 18, 2018

Ms. Robin Pilkey
Chair
Toronto District School Board
robin.pilkey@tdsb.on.ca

Dear Ms. Pilkey,

Thank you for your letter to my predecessor, the Honourable Mitzie Hunter, about the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) ability to pass an Education Development Charges (EDC) bylaw under [Ontario Regulation 20/98 \(O. Reg 20/98\)](#). I understand that you have also written to Premier Kathleen Wynne on this matter, who has forwarded your letter to me. As Ontario's Minister of Education, I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

Our government recognizes the critical role that school infrastructure plays in advancing student achievement, well-being, equity and public confidence in our publicly funded education system. That is why we have committed \$16 billion over the next ten years to continue renewing and enhancing Ontario's schools. This builds on the \$2.5 billion the TDSB has received since 2003 for school renewal needs, as well as Capital Priorities funding for 12 new schools and 109 additions and major retrofits. We are committed to continuing our historic annual investment of \$1.4 billion in school renewal that meets the Auditor General of Ontario's recommendation to invest 2.5 per cent of schools' replacement value toward renewal.

We trust that school boards will continue to efficiently spend this historic funding to address their repair needs. I understand that, according to the latest information provided to the Ministry of Education, the TDSB still has over \$480 million of unspent renewal funding, or about 60 per cent of the \$814 million allocated through the School Condition Improvement program.

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As you know, EDCs may only pay for growth-related land acquisition and site-preparation costs. While your letter correctly states that the TDSB is not eligible to pass an EDC bylaw, the ministry's Land Priorities funding program and the annual Capital Priorities program both address growth-related funding needs using provincial revenue. These programs are available to support all school boards, including the TDSB and the 44 other Ontario school boards without access to EDCs.

Land Priorities funding supports school boards in making land purchases where the sites are not eligible to be purchased with EDC revenues. This funding is allocated on a project basis supported by a business case. Since the inception of the Land Priorities funding program, the ministry has allocated approximately \$235 million to support 84 site purchases for 36 school boards. To date, the ministry has not received any requests for Land Priorities funding from the TDSB. I hope the TDSB will consider making use of this program in the future.

In an effort to provide greater confidence that the Province has the flexibility to support school boards' land funding needs, I am pleased to inform you that the ministry will be providing an increase in funding available through the Land Priorities program from \$60 to \$100 million. This will support land acquisition for all boards, including those dealing with rapid enrolment growth in urban and densely populated areas. Given that land acquisition in the Toronto area can carry increased costs relative to many other areas of the province, our government believes this increase will allow greater flexibility in supporting the TDSB's growth needs.

In addition to Land Priorities funding, the ministry requests that school boards submit annually their proposals for funding consideration through the ministry's Capital Priorities program. This is the primary program for funding capital projects, including those to address pupil accommodation pressures in areas facing growth and intensification. It is up to school boards to determine their most urgent capital needs and submit their business cases to the ministry for funding consideration. The TDSB has achieved great successes using these supports. For instance, our government was proud to support the majority of the TDSB's capital submissions last year.

However, we recognize that more must be done. Dense urban boards often deal with a great diversity in need between neighborhoods. As such, I am pleased to inform you that the ministry is prepared to consider the TDSB as having distinct planning areas, each of which could be eligible to submit Capital Priorities project proposals.

In addition, the Province will also announce that it will undertake an engagement this fall focusing on supports for pupil accommodation in urban areas experiencing rapid growth and intensification. The engagement will include the challenges faced by school boards and municipalities with planning, partnering and building schools in these changing communities and the range of financial tools available to support this work, including Education Development Charges.

The ministry remains committed to working with the TDSB to find solutions that address the concerns you have raised. I appreciate the time you have taken to share your feedback with me. Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Indira Naidoo-Harris". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Indira Naidoo-Harris
Minister of Education
Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care

c: The Honourable Kathleen Wynne
Premier