



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, BUDGET REPORT

Tuesday, February 21, 2023

7:00 pm

Board Room

Administration Building

133 Greenbank Road

Ottawa, Ontario

Trustees Present:	Alysha Aziz, Justine Bell (electronic participation), Donna Dickson, Lyra Evans, Jennifer Jennekens, Matthew Lee (electronic participation), Cathryne Milburn, Suzanne Nash, Lynn Scott, Antong Hou (Student Trustee)
Staff Present:	Michele Giroux (Director of Education), Brett Reynolds (Associate Director), Randy Gerrior (Associate Director, Business Operations), Janice McCoy (Executive Officer), James Proulx (Executive Officer, Information Technology and Digital Transformation), Paula Hall (Superintendent of People, Culture and Leadership), Richard Sinclair (General Counsel, Superintendent of Labour Relations, Risk Management and Privacy), Prince Duah (Superintendent of Instruction), Mary Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Amy Hannah (System Principal Learning Support Services), Reg Lavergne (Superintendent of Instruction), Shawn Lehman (Superintendent of Instruction), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Teri Adamthwaite (Team Manager, Financial Planning), Stacey Kay (Manager, Learning Support Services), Pamela LeMaistre (Manager, Human Resources), Sandy Owens (Manager, Business & Learning Technologies), Diane Pernari (Manager, Communications & Information Services), Nicole Guthrie (Manager, Board Services), Michael Guilbault (AV Technician), Marco Paladino (Training and Support Specialist), Darren Gatley (Senior Board Coordinator)
Non-Voting Representatives Present:	Christine Moulaison (OCASC), Stephanie Kirkey (OSSTF D25TBU), Pat Dixon (OCEOTA), Melodie Gondek (OSSTF - ESP), Corinne Lassaline (OSSTF - PECCS), Philip Battison (OSSTF - PSSU), Jennifer Capitani (OCEOC), Susan Gardner (OCETF), Tracy Shapiro (OCSSAN), Terry Warner (SEAC), Bronwyn Funicello (ACE), Nina Stanton (IEC)

1. Call to Order - Chair of Committee of the Whole, Budget

Chair Scott called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

2. Acknowledgement of Territorial Lands

Chair Scott acknowledged that the meeting is taking place on unceded Algonquin Homelands and thanked the Algonquin Nations for hosting the meeting on their land.

3. Approval of Agenda

Moved by Trustee Lyra Evans,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Carried

4. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were filed.

5. Chair's Remarks

There were no remarks from the chair.

6. Delegations

There were no delegations.

7. Discussion Items

7.1 Report 23-006, 2022-2023 Revised Estimates (R. Gerrior)

Your Committee had before it Report 23-006, to explain changes reflected in the District's 2022-2023 Revised Estimates as compared to the District's 2022-2023 Budget.

Director Giroux noted that the District has not received details on special purpose grants or Grants for Student Needs (GSN) and that budget projections could only be conducted at a high level. Director Giroux added that staff are anticipating a budget shortfall between \$9 and \$39 million and that changes in transfer payments, increased compensation, inflationary pressures, and operating costs are also anticipated. She added that staff anticipate receipt of further details on transfer payments which will help to refine projections and produce specific recommendations on the academic staffing plan.

7.2 Report 23-014, 2023-2024 Budget Process (R. Gerrior)

Your Committee had before it Report 23-014, to present information on the 2023-2024 budget cycle timelines and processes as well as the anticipated challenges impacting the development of the budget.

During the discussion and in response to queries, the following points were noted:

- The Ministry has not provided a specific date for the release of the GSNs and the financial team will require approximately two weeks to process the information once the GSN's are received;
- The District is engaged in a broad consultation for the strategic plan which can aid in informing the 2023-2024 budget. It was noted that trustee zone meetings have been utilized in the past for additional public consultation;
- Non-voting representatives from the advisory committees can report to their respective committees about issues and concerns raised at the Committee of the Whole (COW) Budget meeting. Advisory committees may then reach out to their superintendent for additional support;
- Certain budget decisions, such as contractual agreements, are required to be made based on current budget projections;
- Staff noted that past practice has included a live Q&A document that provides an opportunity for budget questions to be submitted for staff to answer. It was noted that some specific questions may not be able to be answered due to a lack of information available to staff at that time;
- Staff acknowledged that the need for mental health supports in the community is high and that there is a growing expectation for the District to address these needs. Staff noted that the community should work together to respond to mental health needs;
- Staff noted that historically, the budget has been approved by 30 June and that staff do not anticipate a need to extend the deadline or change the process to approve the budget; and
- Staff noted that 30 June 2023 is the timeline established by the Ministry and that the Ministry can alter this timeline if needed.

7.3 Report 23-017, 2023-2024 Academic Staffing (P. Hall)

Your Committee had before it Report 23-017, to provide information with respect to the academic staffing process and about how potential changes might be considered when the final academic staffing recommendations are presented on 27 March 2023 at the Committee of the Whole Budget.

During the discussion and in response to queries, the following points were noted:

- Staffing needs must be fully understood before recruiting can be addressed;
- Staff are working to create connections within the community in an effort to attract staff that represent the student body. The People, Culture and Leadership team use a variety of methods, including participation at career fairs, in order to attract candidates;
- Staff noted that the Board created policy P.146 HR - Equitable Recruitment, Hiring, and Promotion to foster the conditions for marginalized staff to advance into higher or leadership positions. Staff added that other avenues such as the Indigenous and Racialized Leaders Program, provide opportunities and mentorship for educators to understand the steps to advance to these positions;
- The District has increased recruiting efforts to ensure diversity is reflected within District staff;
- Staff noted that a status quo approach to the academic staffing is recommended until the District has more information to determine any changes to staffing models in special education;
- Staff have begun to examine areas within the staffing allocations where efficiencies can be made, especially within discretionary staffing. Large program changes could be contemplated but possible restrictions would also need to be considered;
- Members expressed concern about finding efficiencies in the classrooms as educators are experiencing difficulty in managing unregulated student behaviour with the current staff complement;
- Staff shared concerns that students and educators need to be properly supported and noted that advocacy is a key part of the budget strategy. Staff noted that in working with the Chair of the Board, advocacy work will continue with the Ministry utilizing many relationships, and communication channels;
- Trustees Scott and Jennekens have also engaged in advocacy with Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) on these issues;
- Staff are in the final stages of acquiring a tool for scenario planning that can be implemented going forward. The tool could provide options for the Board to review a “blank cheque” budget scenario to assist with trustee advocacy to the Ministry;
- It was noted that sustainability in the delivery of services is important when considering the budget and that preserving the

current funding levels provides a status quo approach. Advocacy could help ensure that delivery of services is maintained;

- After the academic staffing plan is approved, positions can be added but not removed. If there are policy changes that require additional positions they could be added, although some positions may require Board approval;
- Virtual school staffing were included within the academic staffing report;
- E- learning classes are separate from Ottawa-Carleton Virtual (OCV) classes;
- Regulations for e-learning classes are different from regular in-person classes and e-learning classes can have a capacity of up to 35 students;
- The District will continue with virtual learning for the 2023-2024 school year and will need to confirm if this will be provided in future years in discussions with the Ministry;
- Many of the central positions identified in the report are part of the teaching complement;
- Designated Occasional Teacher (DOT) positions are not permanent teaching positions and are not part of the Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions within the academic staffing report;
- When hiring educational assistants (EAs), staff recognize that there are qualification barriers in accepting some applicants, and although staff are flexible where possible, the District must adhere to legislative and collective agreement requirements;
- Staff noted that under certain circumstances, a temporary letter of approval will be accepted to fill vacant roles for hard-to-fill positions such as French language teachers. The District also works with the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) to hire teachers outside of Ontario;
- Staff expressed concern about the difficulty of replacing retiring educators that have specialized training in special educational needs as-well-as other special education educator positions. Staff noted that the District has partnerships within the special education community but it continues to be a challenge in filling these roles;
- The special education Professional Development (PD) model is shifting from teaching educators in a group to a coaching model that works directly with educators in the classroom;

- Members expressed concern that public education continues to be underfunded. It was noted that the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario projects a shortfall in funding to the Ontario education sector in the coming years;
- Parent and school councils could advocate with the province and their local Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) to address funding concerns from the Ministry. The school council newsletter and Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils (OCASC) communications could include available language from established communications, such as the OPSBA education funding documents, to ensure consistent messaging;
- Staff noted that there are a variety of supports to address some students' dysregulated behaviours in the classroom. Educators work to understand the function of this behavior, work with behaviour consultants in classrooms, have support outside the academic staffing such as Itinerant Educational Assistant (IEAs), and the support of multidisciplinary teams to provide a continuum of care when providing support to students. School staff can assist families to inform them of community resources in addition to school based mental health team support available;
- The two Indigenous equity coach positions remain active and these positions are tied to special purpose grant funding;
- Staff noted that the number of academic positions is driven by enrolment and that \$9 million in efficiencies would not be fully recovered from discretionary staffing alone;
- Staff recommendations for the academic staffing plan will discuss prioritizing areas and commitments;
- To assist with dysregulated behaviour in the classroom, there are three Social/Emotional Learning Teachers (SELTs) in Learning Support Services (LSS) and one SELT through Safe Schools which are covered by Student Success Funding, although it is unclear whether this funding will continue. Each school has access to a multi-disciplinary team but there can be delays in receiving these services. When educators are supporting students and their self regulation issues, educators consider what the student behaviours are telling them and discussions occur as to which supports are required to help these students. It was noted that this work is challenging and takes time and that there were significant disruptions to this work through the COVID-19 pandemic. Educators focus on reinforcing relationships and utilizing a caring adult approach at the school level; and

- Staff noted that safe classrooms are critical in supporting students and that the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC) and the Violence Prevention Sub-Committee will review the issue of dysregulated behaviour in the classroom.

8. New Business - Information and Inquiries

In response to a query from Chair Scott, staff noted that budget questions can be emailed to Teri Adamthwaite, Manager of Financial Services.

9. Upcoming Meetings

The upcoming meeting dates were provided for information.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:24 p.m.

Lynn Scott, Acting Chair