



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, BUDGET REPORT

Monday, March 27, 2023
7:30 pm
Board Room
Administration Building
133 Greenbank Road
Ottawa, Ontario

- Trustees Present:** Donna Blackburn, Alysha Aziz, Justine Bell, Donna Dickson, Lyra Evans, Jennifer Jennekens, Matthew Lee, Cathryne Milburn, Suzanne Nash, Amanda Presley, Lynn Scott, Antong Hou (Student Trustee)
- Staff Present:** Michele Giroux (Director of Education), Brett Reynolds (Associate Director of Education), Randy Gerrior (Associate Director, Business Operations), James Proulx (Executive Officer, Information Technology and Digital Transformation), Prince Duah (Superintendent of Instruction), Mary Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Paula Hall (Superintendent of People, Culture and Leadership), Amy Hannah (Superintendent of Instruction), Reg Lavergne (Superintendent of Instruction), Shawn Lehman (Superintendent of Instruction), Brent Smith (Superintendent of Program & Learning), Shannon Smith (Superintendent of Instruction), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Carolyn Tanner (Human Rights and Equity Advisor), Teri Adamthwaite (Manager, Finance), Karyn Carty Ostafichuk (Manager, 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 (Multimedia Coordinator), Marco Paladino (Training & Support Specialist), James Baker (Board/Committee Coordinator)
- Non-Voting Representatives Present:** Stephanie Kirkey (OSSTF - D25), Corine Lasaline (OSSTF/PECCS), Melodie Gondek (OSSTF - D25), Phil Bastion (OSSTF/PECCS), Rebecca Zuckerbrodt (OCETFO), Terry Warner (SEAC), Tracy Shapiro (OCSSAN), Jennifer Capitani (OCEOC), Christine Moulaison (OCASC), Pat Dixon (OCEOTA), Bronwyn Funiciello (ACE), Natasha Baines (OSSTF - D25)

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

Chair Blackburn called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

2. Acknowledgement of Territorial Lands

Chair Blackburn 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 Jennekens,
THAT the agenda be approved.**

Carried

4. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were filed.

5. Delegations

5.1 Cathy Varrette, re Specialized Program Class Funding

Ms. Varrette identified as a parent of a young student who is non-verbal, level 3 autistic with a developmental delay. Ms. Varrette shared that her son is required to utilize self regulation techniques as a means to ensure safety in the classroom. Ms. Varrette noted that her son has thrived in the autism stream as he is in a learning environment he is comfortable with. Ms. Varrette asked staff to discuss plans for class closures, whether waitlisted classes would be closed, and whether students would be moved into mainstream classes.

5.2 Kate Logue, re Special Education Funding Concerns

Ms. Logue identified as a parent of two young children with autism. Ms. Logue expressed her disappointment with the reductions in funding from the Provincial budget. Ms. Logue highlighted that there are 50,000 students who are waitlisted, throughout the province, for special education programs. She added that more investment is needed to support students who have faced challenges in finding therapy to assist with adapting to social environments.

In response to a query, Ms. Logue noted that cutting special education deprives other students of resources and that there is a need for systems classes and support for educational assistants.

5.3 Nicole Robert, re Student Accommodation

Ms. Robert identified as a parent of a student with level 3 autism who is in a Primary Special Needs (PSN) class. Ms. Robert shared the nature of the sensory disorder that her son is required to manage and the impact that it has had on him. She noted an incident in which he was overstimulated and caused a classmate to fall unconscious. She added that having her son in a PSN class has provided him with the necessary support to allow him to feel safe and to accommodate his needs. Ms. Robert noted that her son has since learned to read. She asked staff if a plan was in place to continue with accommodations.

6. Action Items

6.1 Report 23-026, Academic Staffing Plan for 2023-2024 (P. Hall)

Your Committee had before it, Report 23-026, seeking approval of the Academic Staffing Plan for 2023-2024.

During a discussion and in response to queries, the following information was provided:

- The 2022-2023 plan utilized \$9M in reserve funds as support coming out of the pandemic;
- A broad look at operations was conducted to determine if any savings could be achieved in the current year;
- Target points of \$9 million, \$15 million and \$20+ million were identified and if \$20 million was exceeded, a cap of approximately \$2 million on staff would be implemented;
- Opportunities were explored to reallocate resources, and to find savings in the operating budget;
- The Academic Staffing Plan needs to be guided by the priorities of the Strategic Plan;
- Staff focused on ensuring that reductions would have the least negative impact possible;
- Academic staffing will cost \$528 million to support 4,984.67 FTE teaching positions;
- Student enrollment is expected to increase at the elementary level and remain constant at the secondary level;
- To meet the \$2 million cap, a reduction of 21.23 academic positions is recommended, 13.57 elementary and 7.16 secondary, which will provide a savings of \$2.3 million. It was noted that these are staff teaching positions which does not include the 0.5 FTE reduction in central staff;

- The deadline to approve the plan is 30 March 2023 to prevent disruption with the collective bargaining process; and
- Concerns were expressed with regard to the reduction of Learning Support Teachers (LST) based on support requirements.

Moved by Trustee Scott,

THAT the Academic Staffing Plan for 2023-2024, as set out in the Addendum and Appendices A, B and C to Report 23-026, be approved, subject to adjustments related to fluctuations in projected and actual enrolment.

- Roles may need to evolve within Program and Learning to harmonize job descriptions and to build capacity with coaches;
- Despite reductions with Primary Special Needs (PSN) classes, there is no waitlist and current students will not lose placements as there are vacancies in these classes;
- The reduction of three PSN classes allowed for the reallocation of budget funds to support Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) students. It was noted that 12 sections have been added at the secondary level and additional classes have been added at the elementary level over the past several years;
- Staff noted that concerns regarding Educational Assistants (EA) being replaced by lunch monitor staff would be investigated;
- Several advocacy approaches are ongoing with respect to (Support for Student Funding (SSF), including obtaining feedback from the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE), direct contact with the Deputy Minister of Education, and Grants for Student Needs (GSN);

Following a break at 8:58 p.m. the meeting was called to order at 9:10 p.m.

- Concerns were expressed regarding the impact of savings related to the Winning Attitudes program and staff advised that paid co-op placements will continue and will allow students to remain at their home schools with the support from coaches;
- Concerns were expressed about whether the proposed \$2.3M in reductions to academic staffing were sufficient as this could require as much as \$18M in savings to be found in the balance of the operating budget. Staff advised they are reviewing a number of savings and cost reduction strategies including a pause on hiring of non-school based staff , optimizing non-GSN revenues, one-time

pauses in spending, pause on carry-forwards and while not a fulsome solution, these actions would help to reduce further staffing reductions;

- In response to questions about the estimated amount of non staffing reductions that could be found in the balance of the operating budget, staff advised that it would be premature to provide a number based on the information available at this time;
- In response to questions about finding an additional \$1-\$2.5M in reductions prior to the Board meeting, staff advised the areas that could be considered discretionary included LST and Learning Resource Teachers (LRT), and Vice-Principal allocations; however, these are not recommended at this time.
- Staff and trustees acknowledged the challenge to address additional reductions at this stage; however, it was noted that when while the deficit projection was originally as large as \$39M, staff were now estimating a range of \$15 - \$20M and if the actual number was \$20M or higher, consideration had been given to reaching out to the Ministry regarding a two year plan.
- While considering areas where additional reductions could be made, staff indicated that coaches, the equity team, special education - particularly LST, LRT and English as a Second Language (ESL) positions, vice-principal allocations and other one-off positions could be considered. Staff noted that the impact on savings would be minimal;
- With respect to comparisons of OCDSB special education spending relative to other districts, staff advised that each district is responsible for designing their own special education programs and there is considerable diversity of programs throughout the province;
- In response to a question about a motion to protect equity positions and EAs, staff indicated that those were not the first area where reductions would be sought, and advised against setting additional parameters on the budget in its current form as it would make the process more complex.
- Concerns were expressed about trustees' focus on staff reductions as a means to protect initiatives in which they would have a personal interest;
- Staff advised that no reductions would be made with respect to LST positions within the secondary alternate program and that LST positions in community secondary schools are being reviewed; and

- In response to questions about reductions to the number of system principals, staff noted that these positions were often subject matter experts in particular portfolio areas who oversee a team of staff and who support the work of school principals and superintendents and that further reductions in this area were not recommended at this time.

Moved by Trustee Scott,

THAT the Academic Staffing Plan for 2023-2024, as set out in the Addendum and Appendices A, B and C to Report 23-026, be approved, subject to adjustments related to fluctuations in projected and actual enrolment. (Attached as Appendix A, B, C, and D)

Carried

Moved by Trustee Lyra Evans,

THAT the staff provide the Board with an update and positions outlining additional reductions to the academic staffing adjustments of both \$1.0 million and \$2.5 million.

- Concerns were expressed that the motion would interfere with staff's ability to meet their obligations with respect to collective agreements on or before 30 March 2023;
- Staff advised that due to time constraints and the process to review allocations for 146 schools, trustees would need to approve the recommendation in order to prevent undue delays or disruptions; and
- Staff advised that a range of options will be available to review at the next stage of the budget process.

Moved by Trustee Lyra Evans,

THAT the staff provide the Board with an update and positions outlining additional reductions to the academic staffing adjustments of both \$1.0 million and \$2.5 million.

Defeated

Trustee Lee requested that a roll-call vote be held. A recorded vote was held and the motion was defeated on the following division:

For: Trustees Aziz, Bell, Lyra Evans, Milburn

Against: Trustees Blackburn, Dickson, Jennekens, Lee, Nash, Scott

Abstain: Trustee Presley

Absent: Trustee Kaplan-Myrth

7. New Business - Information and Inquiries

There was no new business.

8. Upcoming Meetings

Upcoming meeting dates were provided for information.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:28 p.m.

Donna Blackburn, Chair