



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, BUDGET REPORT

Tuesday, June 6, 2023

7:00 pm

Board Room

Administration Building

133 Greenbank Road

Ottawa, Ontario

Trustees Present: Alysha Aziz, Justine Bell (electronic communication), Donna Blackburn, Donna Dickson, Lyra Evans, Jennifer Jennekens, Nili Kaplan-Myrth, Matthew Lee (electronic communication), Suzanne Nash, Amanda Presley (electronic communication), Lynn Scott, Tabarak Al Delaimi (electronic communication), Antong Hou (electronic communication)

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), Prince Duah (Superintendent of Instruction), Mary Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Paula Hall (Superintendent of People, Culture and Leadership), Reg Lavergne (Superintendent of Instruction), Shawn Lehman (Superintendent of Instruction), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Teri Adamthwaite (General Manager, Finance), Stacey Kay (General Manager, Learning Support Services), Roxanne Sun (Team Manager, Financial Planning), Sandy Owens (General Manager, Business & Learning Technologies), Diane Pernari (General Manager, Communications & Information Services), Nicole Guthrie (General Manager, Board Services), Michael Guilbault (Content Creator, Digital Multimedia Technician), Joanie Asch (Interim Board/Committee Coordinator) (electronic communication)

Non-Voting Representatives Present: Natasha Baines (OSSTF-SSP), Tracy Shapiro (OCSSAN), Melodie Gondek OSSTF-ESP), Pat Dixon (OCEOTA), Stephanie Kirkey (OSSTF-TBU), Terry Warner (SEAC)

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

Chair Blackburn called the meeting to order at 7:01 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 Dickson,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Carried

4. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were filed.

5. Briefing From the Director

In response to questions that were raised at 31 May 2023 Committee of the Whole (COW) Budget meeting, Director Giroux noted that the Finance Team had developed a Budget Questions and Answers document. She further noted that a memorandum on the Summer Learning Program had been distributed to Committee members which outlined the procedural issues related to a 2016 motion passed by the Board regarding the ongoing operations of the Summer Learning Program. She added that the motion cannot be rescinded or amended by a Committee vote; only the Board is able to do so; however, when COW Budget makes a decision, it is presented as a recommendation for consideration by the Board.

6. Delegations

There were no delegations.

6.1 Janet Bowen, re Summer Learning Program

Ms. Bowen, who is the co-chair of the Crystal Bay Special Education Centre School Council, expressed concern about the proposal to cut the funding for the Summer Learning Program, which would affect 96 students who have moderate to severe disabilities. She noted that the program is different from a day camp or day care, and supports the continuation of work on educational goals with qualified staff.

6.2 Joanne Greenall, re Summer Learning Program

Ms. Greenall outlined the benefits of the Summer Learning Program for students who are non-verbal, and listed several achievements that students had reached during previous summers. She noted that this is the only summer program under threat of being cut and expressed the view that it was inequitable treatment of students with disabilities. She noted

that there are no other similar programs, as this is educational, not recreational.

6.3 Christine Guptill, re Air Filtration

Ms. Guptill suggested that better quality air can help students who have asthma and other respiratory issues, and requested that ventilation in all school areas be tested and the results be made public. She referenced monitors which had been purchased by the Ottawa Public Library, and recommended following the example of the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB). While there are high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters in classrooms, they are typically not used during large events, such as assemblies.

6.4 Francoise Slaunwhite, re Summer Learning Program

Ms. Slaunwhite is the chair of the Clifford Bowey Public School Council, and referred to the wording in the Board's 2016 motion on the Summer Learning Program. She noted that between 2005 and 2016, the program had been reduced from 21 to 16 days. She asked if staff had noted that this program is not meeting its intended goals. She also suggested that Crystal Bay and Clifford Bowey are the only two schools that do not offer an extended day program and that there are no other similar programs with certified teachers and qualified staff.

6.5 Katie Gibbs, re Air Filtration

Ms. Gibbs underscored the importance of clean air in schools, which supports the health of students and staff and results in fewer days away due to illness. During COVID-19, funds were used to provide HEPA filters. She asked for assurance that air filter units are being maintained and fitted with new filters and suggested new policies on their proper use would be beneficial.

6.6 Margaret Sambol, re Summer Learning Program

Ms. Sambol discussed the learning needs of her three children and that the youngest depends on the Summer Learning Program to continue to learn and work towards his goals. She cautioned that cutting this program would punish the most vulnerable students in the Board and urged the trustees to support learning.

6.7 Wendy Gee, re Summer Learning Program

Ms. Gee noted that her son has been attending Clifford Bowey Public School since he was four years old, and that he is entitled to the same fundamental human rights as other students. She expressed the view that cutting the Summer Learning Program would be discriminatory, interfere with his education, and directly contravenes the Board's own policy.

6.8 Jordan Leblanc, re Summer Learning Program

Mr. Leblanc advised that the Summer Learning Program is the same as others at Board, but instead of English literature, students learn about safety. He suggested that it is discriminatory and unfair that this funding be cut while able-bodied students are supported. If it is cut, he proposed that all summer programs across the Board be cut.

6.9 Don Andersen, re Summer Learning Program

Mr. Anderson noted that his son has attended Clifford Bowey for 17 years, and noted that cutting the funding has arisen several times over that period. He discussed the importance of these students having a safe environment that provides continuity and stability. When others have suggested that this is not a mandated program, he questioned whether any summer program was mandated. He referenced a staff report (08-038, Summer Learning Program 2008) that supported the Summer Learning Program, and urged trustees to continue to support this program.

7. Action Items

7.1 Report 23-047, 2023-2024 Staff-Recommended Budget (R. Gerrior)

Your committee had before it Report 23-047, seeking to present the staff recommended operating budget for the 2023-2024 school year.

Trustee Alysha Aziz requested that staff review the air quality in schools, and noted the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) initiative. Director Giroux replied that there was previously available information on air quality, which could be consolidated.

Director Giroux expressed appreciation for the parents who attended the meeting about the Summer Learning Program, and noted the difficult budget choices facing trustees. She indicated that staff are not aware of any other program that is not either legislated or operated on a cost recovery basis or is in receipt of special purpose grants. Programs which are legislated are funded; extended day programs operate on a cost recovery basis; and other summer programs are funded through special purpose grants. If the Board cannot offer a summer program, the funding must be returned to the Ministry. She reviewed the options, which were to leave the resources where they are, or to use those funds to increase the number of educational assistants. The Board has a funding shortfall, which can only be addressed through reductions.

Moved by Trustee Scott,

- A. THAT the unconsolidated 2023-2024 operating budget of \$1,100,848,097 as presented in Report 23-047, 2023-2024 Staff-Recommended Budget and detailed in the 2023-2024 Staff-

Recommended Budget Binder be approved; and

- B. THAT the 2023-2024 capital budget of \$140.3 million as presented in the 2023-2024 Staff-Recommended Budget Binder, be approved.

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

- The costs of having an extended day program at Crystal Bay and Clifford Bowey would be significant; however, the City of Ottawa has been approached regarding offering child care programs at those sites;
- The transition program at Crystal Bay and Clifford Bowey has been in place for several years to provide transition activities during the last two weeks of summer;
- Staff were asked if cutting staff or senior administrators, such as superintendents and principals, was feasible. The Ottawa Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) is within or under benchmarks for those costs, and is not over-resourced. Staffing levels for summer school programs are similar to regular school staffing levels;
- The Ministry has indicated that the Board cannot approve a deficit budget;
- Some trustees did not support increasing the rental cost of all facility rates as it would impact community groups supporting marginalized groups. OCDSB's rates are lower than those charged by the Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB) and we have not amended our rates for over 10 years;
- Calculations on the ratio of EAs to students have not occurred;
- Pausing the green bin initiative and using those funds for other programs such as the Summer Learning Program was proposed;
- While a former trustee had proposed lowering thermostats by one degree to achieve savings, unforeseen consequences resulted in a proliferation of space heaters and a net increase in electricity costs;
- The budget is comprised of approximately 85% for salaries and benefits, and approximately \$150 million for other expenses. While other school boards have utilized their accumulated surpluses, that is not an option for the OCDSB;

- In the past, a search for community partners for the Summer Learning Program has taken place, but the challenges with running the program and staffing are significant. In the past, the program came close to being cancelled at the last minute due to resourcing issues and it was noted that no other school district has a similar program;
- Funding for the Outdoor Education Program has been underspent the past few years and the surplus funds go into deferred revenue;
- The proposed 15% increase in the number of secondary technicians will be reviewed;
- Allocation of EAs in schools was discussed, noting that these positions are temporary supports to aid students in becoming more independent;
- No cuts to equity positions have been proposed;
- Academic staffing was approved in March 2023; and
- It would be cost-prohibitive for most parents if a full cost-recovery model for the Summer Learning Program were introduced.

Following a break at 8:55 p.m. the meeting was called to order at 9:19 p.m.

An amendment moved by Trustee Kaplan-Myrth,

THAT the Autism Spectrum Disorder/Developmental Disabilities (ASD/DD) summer learning program option be retained in the 2023-2024 budget.

Trustee Evans indicated that she would move a motion to defer the approval of the budget until the next budget meeting, to allow staff time to develop other options for consideration.

Moved by Trustee Evans,

THAT the motion be deferred until the 12 June 2023 COW Budget meeting.

Carried

Director Giroux confirmed that alternatives will be considered and presented at the next budget meeting. Trustee Lee commented that this may involve making changes to reports that have already been approved, and expressed concern about approving a budget with multiple procedural hurdles.

Moved by Trustee Scott,

**THAT the meeting be adjourned and the discussion continue
at the 12 June 2023 budget meeting.**

Carried

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:02 p.m.

Donna Blackburn, Chair