



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, BUDGET REPORT

Tuesday, January 28, 2025

8:00 pm

Board Room

Administration Building

133 Greenbank Road

Ottawa, Ontario

- Trustees Present: Donna Blackburn, Donna Dickson, Lyra Evans, Julia Fortey, Jennifer Jennekens, Nili Kaplan-Myrth, Matthew Lee, Cathryne Milburn, Suzanne Nash, Lynn Scott, Lyra Evans (electronic communication)
- Staff Present: Pino Buffone (Director of Education), Brett Reynolds (Associate Director of Education, Academic), Randy Gerrior (Associate Director of Education, Business), James Proulx (Executive Officer of Technological Support Services), Jesse Mark (General Counsel - Legal Services), Teri Adamthwaite (General Manager, Finance), Julie Cyr (General Manager, Early Learning), Sandy Owens (General Manager, Business & Learning Technology), Diane Pernari (General Manager, Communications & Public Relations), Michael Guilbault (Multimedia Coordinator, Communications), Darren Gatley (General Manager, Governance Services), Tamara Persaud (Board/Committee Coordinator)
- Non-Voting Representatives Present: Philip Battison (OSSTF-PSSU), Jason Glover (PIC), Chris Walsh(OSSTF-Support Staff), Corinne Lassaline (OSSTF-PECCS), Stephanie Kirkey (OSSTF-TBU), Stephan Skoutajan (OCEFTO)

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

Chair Jennekens called the public session to order at 7:30 p.m.

2. Acknowledgement of Territorial Lands

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

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were filed.

4. Approval of Agenda

Moved by Trustee Nash,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Carried

5. Delegations

There were no delegations.

6. Discussion Items

6.1 Report 25-006, 2024-2025 Revised Estimates (R. Gerrior)

Your Committee had before it Report 25-006, providing information on the 2024-2025 revised estimates to the District's original 2024-2025 estimates.

Associate Director Gerrior provided an overview of the report including the financial results in relation to the Board's approved estimates and the revised estimates to inform future financial planning and decision making.

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

- The purpose of the report is to inform the Board of areas of concern and provide information on how the District is managing these concerns to ensure the District meets the Ministry of Education requirement of a balanced budget;
- It was noted that salary increases surpassed the funding provided by the Ministry resulting in a projected deficit of \$4.2M for the 2024-2025 school year;
- The majority of the funding provided by the Ministry of Education is based on average daily enrolment (ADE) of the school district;
- When the initial 2024-2025 estimates were approved, Bill 124 funding was not built into the funding formulas. Bill 124 has contributed to the current deficit and many school boards across the province are also experiencing this form of deficits;
- As a result of the reduction in elementary enrollment, 42 full-time equivalent (FTE) teaching positions were eliminated for a savings of d \$4.7 million. As these positions were filled by occasional teachers, there were no layoffs to permanent staff;

- Currently, the OCDSB is under financial supervision of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry is monitoring the Boards' finances on a monthly basis and the Board is required to report to the Ministry and ensure that current expenses do not exceed projections;
- Some expenses are difficult to predict, for example, snow removal, utilities, and replacement costs. Savings have been found in other areas to accommodate the unknown financial variables;
- With respect to concerns raised over potential cuts to programming, Associate Director Gerrior advised that reductions have not been made to any positions created by Board motions or in the areas of equity and special education. It was noted that the goal is to rebuild a surplus and pay back the deficit without impacting classrooms;
- Funding allocated by the Ministry for Facilities has specific uses to maintain schools and ensure safety and hygiene;
- Trustees highlighted the importance of transparency in the budget process and informing the public of any changes being made regarding school operations and potential impacts;
- While the Elementary Program Review (EPR) is working in tandem with budgetary discussions, it is not a budgetary driver. The EPR is an infrastructural reorganization to better serve the needs of students, staff and school communities by coordinating existing resources to optimize services and programs;
- Trustees were encouraged to advocate for education to be a priority for the province as the Ministry continues to make changes to funding allocations; and
- Ministry funding is based on funding formulas and any positions that fall outside of the Ministry funding have to be taken into account when allocating funding throughout the District which may restrict funding in other areas.

6.2 Report 25-007, 2025-2026 Budget Process (R. Gerrior)

Your Committee had before it Report 25-007, providing information on the 2025-2026 budget cycle timelines and process, as well as anticipated changes and challenges that may impact the development of the budget.

Associate Director Gerrior and General Manager Adamthwaite provided an overview of the report and noted that the District is working to remain within the boundaries set in the Ministry Guidelines, while advocating for areas of high need.

During discussion and in response to queries the following information was noted:

- The next Committee of the Whole (Budget) meeting will be held on 18 February 2024 to discuss academic staffing;
- In April of 2025, the District expects to have a better understanding of revenues and expenses to prepare a balanced budget;
- Some dates in the timeline are subject to change, as delays from the Ministry of Education can create shifts in projected dates;
- The Ministry advised that school boards across the province should be conservative in their budgeting. Areas of underfunding remain, including special education, inflation and replacement costs, and funding may be allocated for specific Ministry-mandated priorities ;
- Trustees emphasized the Board's social responsibility to their school communities, and balancing the budget should not be at the expense of necessary services and programming;
- The importance of building funding reserves while simultaneously reducing the deficit was highlighted;
- Staff is making every effort to prioritize recommended budget reductions in non-mandatory and/or enhanced areas of services in order to minimize reductions in the classroom;
- It was noted that the upcoming provincial election may impact the District's ability to receive funding information from the Ministry in a timely manner;
- Enrolment continues to be an area of risk and fluctuations in enrolment are normal as the City of Ottawa changes and develops;
- Trustees expressed the need for this budget to be transparent and allow for feedback from affected communities;
- The staff-recommended budget will include a rationale for any potential recommendations for budget reductions; and
- Due to limitations in the *Education Act*, school council funding cannot be used to supplement classroom needs. School councils may assist with non-school based supports such as field trips and guest speakers.

7. New Business - Information and Inquiries

There was no new business.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:31 p.m.

Jennifer Jennekens, Chair