



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, BUDGET REPORT

Tuesday, February 18, 2025

7:00 pm

Board Room

Administration Building

133 Greenbank Road

Ottawa, Ontario

Trustees Present: Justine Bell (electronic communication) , Donna Blackburn (electronic communication) , Donna Dickson (electronic communication) , Lyra Evans (electronic communication) , Julia Fortey, Jennifer Jennekens, Matthew Lee, Cathryne Milburn (electronic communication) , Suzanne Nash, Amanda Presley (electronic communication) , Lynn Scott

Staff Present: Pino Buffone (Director of Education), Brett Reynolds (Associate Director of Education, Academic), Randy Gerrior (Associate Director of Business Operations), Jesse Mark (General Counsel, Governance & Legal Services), James Proulx (Executive Officer, Business & Learning Technologies), Teri Adamthwaite (General Manager, Finance), Sandy Owens (General Manager, Business & Learning Technology), Diane Pernari (General Manager, Communications & Public Relations), Darren Gatley (General Manager, Governance Services), Barry Scott (General Manager, Employee Services), Tamara Persaud (Board/Committee Coordinator)

Non-Voting Representatives Present: Stephanie Kirkey (OSSTF - TBU), Stephen Skoutajan (OCEFTO), Corinne Lassaline (OSSTF - PECCS), Susan Rab (OSSTF - OTs),

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

Chair Jennekens called the public session to order at 7:23 p.m.

2. **Acknowledgement of Territorial Lands**

Chair Jennekens acknowledged that this meeting is taking place on unceded Algonquin Homelands and thanked the Algonquin Nations for their stewardship of these lands since time immemorial.

3. **Approval of Agenda**

Moved by Trustee Fortey,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Carried

4. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were filed.

5. Report from In Camera

Chair Jennekens noted that the Board met in camera to discuss the approach to the budget under Section 207(2) of the *Education Act*. She noted that the budgetary pressures the District is facing will have an impact on the staffing budget.

Chair Jennekens reported the following information:

- The District will consider restructuring Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) departments should reductions need to be made to staff;
- The staffing budget will maintain protected staffing complements under the various collective agreements;
- The three pillars of the strategic plan will be considered through an equity lens in preparing the staffing budget. The budget will aim to balance existing focus on learning, well-being and social responsibility;
- Staff are actively working to ensure the Elementary Program Review (EPR) is not negatively impacted by the staffing budget; and
- Staffing budget decisions will be consistent with Responsive Education Program (REP) funding guidelines.

6. Delegations

There were no delegations.

7. Presentations

7.1 Academic Staffing 2025-2026 (S. Lehman)

General Manager Barry Scott, on behalf of Superintendent Lehman, provided an overview of the academic staffing process for the 2025-2026 school year.

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

- The academic staffing process is aligned with the strategic priorities to improve student learning and well-being. It is also based on the legislative, regulatory, and collective agreement obligations,

maintenance of existing core services, and support provided by educators. Prioritization of services and supports for students who may be at risk, are underserved, or students with the highest needs remains high;

- The number of required teacher positions is generated by formula and is tied directly to Ministry of Education guidelines on enrolment, class size and collective agreement requirements. This ensures that all schools have a core staffing allocation to meet student needs. The discretionary staffing positions are not directly funded by the Ministry and support our current program offerings such as special education and English as a Second Language (ESL). Over 80% of the staffing allocation is mandated by the Ministry;
- Academic staffing timelines are set out in the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (EFTO) and Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) collective agreements. Teacher allocations must be provided to schools by 2 April 2025 for elementary schools and 9 April 2025 for secondary schools. This requires staffing levels to be approved by the end of March 2025. The staffing process began in December 2024 with enrolment projections created by the Planning Department and continues through June into the Fall of 2025;
- O. Reg. 132/12: Class Size sets out class size requirements for elementary and secondary classrooms. Class sizes for specialized program classes are subject to distinct regulatory caps that are differentiated by exceptionality that is set out in O. Reg. 298 (Operations of Schools, General). The requirements to meet the regulated class size does not apply throughout the school year but rather is tied to a specific date at the beginning of the school year;
- There are several different staffing allocation envelopes that are provided under collective agreements, including the Supports for Students Fund (SSF) and Early Reader Screeners (ERS). The SSF are positions that are required to be staffed by the collective agreement, with funding for both elementary and secondary panels along with administrative and support positions. For elementary schools, the funding has typically been used to staff English as a Second Language (ESL), Learning Resource Teachers (LRT), Learning Support Teacher (LST), and English Language Learning (ELL) positions. For secondary, the positions have been distributed throughout the system to ensure schools are running programs to provide accessibility for underserved students;
- The Ministry of Education introduced a new investment in the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years to hire teachers to provide

additional supports in reading for students in Kindergarten to Grade three;

- Principals and vice-principals are included in academic staffing as many vice-principals continue to have teaching responsibilities. Vice-principal allocations should occur at the same time as other staffing in order to facilitate the development of teaching assignments and timetables;
- The District allocates ESL teaching positions as there are contractual or regulatory requirements dictating the number of ESL teaching positions. Positions assigned to support the District ESL program is based on current and projected numbers of ELL students and their relative needs;
- Funding for instructional coaches, and other special education educators comes from various sources including, Core Funding and Responsive Education Programs (REPs) and are staffed at the discretion of the District; and
- A report with the information presented at this meeting will be provided to Board members for their review.

7.2 Budget Process (R. Gerrior)

Associate Director Gerrior provided an overview of the budget process and timeline. During discussion and in response to queries, the following information was noted:

- OCDSB staff began the budget process by reviewing the requirements and general enrolment forecast for the upcoming school year to develop an academic and non-academic staffing report that is presented to the Board for approval. This is undertaken in advance of receiving technical papers from the Ministry in April to maintain the staffing timeline. Upon receiving the technical papers, the staff recommended budget will be developed and presented to the Board for approval;
- The annual budget process timeline for the 2025-2026 school year begins on 18 March 2025 with the release of the academic staffing report and ends in June 2025 with the approval of the staff-recommended budget;
- Key considerations when developing the annual budget include: the strategic plan, education funding issues, the OCDSB's financial position, enrolment, cost pressures and revenue generating and self-funded programs. It was noted that OCDSB staff are also tasked with finding \$20 million in reduced expenses across all programs and services;

- Concern was expressed regarding potential cuts to programs and services in order to remedy the \$20 million deficit. Staff advised that efforts are being made to minimize reduction impacts on all areas of the District. The process of identifying the areas for reduction is ongoing and staff will present these to the Board prior to the approval of the budget;
- Support for underserved students, and equity and inclusion remain top priorities for the Board. Trustees requested that discretionary funds allocated for equity and inclusion initiatives remain in place despite potential changes in funding to other areas for the District. Initiatives that support students in low-income communities and those affected by poverty were also requested to remain a high priority;
- While the Elementary Program Review (EPR) runs parallel to the budgetary process, the EPR is not a money saving measure but rather an evaluation of programs and services offered by the OCDSB to optimize organization and delivery of these offerings. Staff clarified that the budget being discussed is for the 2025-2026 school year, while implementation of the EPR will not commence until the 2026-2027 school year;
- The Ministry of Education provides various envelopes of funding that are intended for specific uses and cannot be transferred;
- Many school boards in the Province are experiencing budget deficit and are working to re-establish their accumulated surpluses as many school boards utilized reserves during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Revenue generating and self-funded programming such as the international education program, generate additional revenue for the OCDSB that can be leveraged to offset financial pressures;
- Members expressed the need to protect school front line workers such as teachers, educational assistants, custodians and office administration as they play a vital role in upholding the OCDSB pillars of learning;
- Ahead of the 25 March 2025 approval of academic staffing, staff will be bringing as much context to the Board of Trustees as possible to make an informed decision. It was noted that based on dates in collective agreements, some approval dates fall ahead of others. All academic staffing will be brought forward to the Board Public Meeting on 25 March 2025. After the approval of academic staffing there is flexibility to add additional staff after the technical

papers have been received as there is a more fulsome understanding of the funding granted by the Ministry;

- Committee Members raised concern that decision making will be difficult as the technical papers from the Ministry of Education which informs the OCDSB budget, have not been received. Staff noted the estimates presented are determined based on the current financial standing of the District and are unlikely to significantly change;
- A frequently asked questions sheet will be provided to address staffing changes;
- Committee Members highlighted that all OCDSB staff play a valuable role and the decision to reduce staff will not be taken lightly;
- Gratitude was extended to all staff working diligently to determine the best course of action despite the challenges of the deficit; and
- It was clarified that termination of a position does not necessarily mean the end of employment at the OCDSB. There are many central positions that are academic in nature and an individual could return in some other capacity should their position be terminated.

8. New Business - Information and Inquiries

There was no new business.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:39 p.m.

Jennifer Jennekens, Chair