



**OCDSB Oral Presentation to the
Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs
Pre-Budget Consultation
23 January 2019**

Good morning. I'm Lynn Scott, Chair of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. With me is Michael Carson, our Chief Financial Officer. We appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today.

Like you, we want to see a provincial budget that meets the needs of communities and families across this province and ensures a prosperous future for Ontarians. We believe that public education is foundational to a provincial economy that encourages businesses to grow, creates jobs, and supports the success and well-being of individuals and families.

In December, your Education Funding Guide spoke of achieving better and more equitable outcomes for students while ensuring accountability, value for money, and efficiency. As a school board providing front-line services directly to students and their families, we are ideally positioned to partner with you and with other front-line service providers in Ottawa to achieve these objectives.

But this costs money, and we live in interesting economic times. It's all the more important, therefore, for school boards to be able to count on reasonable, predictable and sustainable funding that support our multi-year planning to improve student achievement, student well-being, equity of outcomes, and fiscal accountability.

First, let's talk about managing assets—our schools, our infrastructure, and our people. Our facilities are not just education assets but also community assets. They need looking after, based on the Facility Condition Index and other data sources. Our operational funding must be adequate to support ongoing maintenance, generous enough to allow us to make inroads on our maintenance backlog, and flexible enough to give us latitude to use funding efficiently by combining compatible projects and engaging in planned multi-year projects.

Adequate capital funding lets us manage change effectively. There are several parts to this idea. To start, the government has said it wants to reduce the practice of "hallway medicine" but growing enrolments mean we face potential "hallway education" issues in parts of Ottawa. We need capital funding for additions and new schools, and we also need the policy tools that enable good planning for the efficient use of space. We need the revised Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline so that we can adjust our facilities inventory to match current and projected demographics, and we need your impending

changes for Education Development Charges, to complete our new and much-needed EDC by-law by March.

Capital funding is also needed for major renovations. If we want to graduate students well-equipped for success in a future world, we must modernize classrooms and labs to support changing curricular needs for technological education (both hard-tech and hi-tech), STEM subjects and the arts. Your construction cost benchmarks must reflect the reality of the local market for builders and skilled trades.

Neither can we afford to ignore the need to invest in back-office technology and replace outdated legacy systems that impede efficient operations and planning. Also, for better management of our human assets, in the face of rising staff absenteeism rates, we need operational funding to be able to track and backfill when staff are not at work, as well as provincial policy tools to help us manage absences and staff shortages

Second, let's talk partnerships, and how the provincial budget can facilitate partnerships in support of student learning and well-being. As a front-line service provider, the OCDSB is asking you to reduce barriers to integrated service delivery, and to provide funding in ways that support joint delivery of key services in our schools with other community institutions and other service sectors.

Our existing partnership with the Catholic board, the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority, has produced major efficiencies, but we now see continuing cost pressures, issues over driver shortages, and the potential impact of arbitration decisions as contracts with bus operators are renewed. Without improved transportation funding, there may be no choice but to reduce service, with a significant impact on students and families.

Please design funding to support new partnerships, particularly with regard to integrated delivery of mental health services and integrated provision of health and social services to our high-needs special education students. With a full array of interventions to address behavioural issues and the developmental needs of autistic students as early as possible in a student's school career, children can become full participants in their ongoing learning and graduate better prepared for a productive independent life. We need be able to increase our in-school supports and coordinate with services that health care and social services sector professionals can provide within the school setting.

Third, the OCDSB needs the autonomy and flexibility to respond efficiently to local needs. Some of the provincial Grants for Student Needs vary board to board but they're based on out-dated census data. Our local needs are best understood through reviewing a range of other data sources specific to our student population and local conditions, including locally administered early development instruments, the annual demographic data from EQAO testing, and the results of our school climate surveys.

We are currently in the process of implementing the collection of identity-based data that we hope will allow us to differentiate resource allocations and build our capacity to

address achievement gaps across the district for special education students, English Language Learners, Indigenous students, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, racialized minority students and other specific groups in need of targeted supports. These students need equitable access to quality education, and we need your continued support for this work.

Past provincial initiatives, such as the Local Priorities funding, gave us some 87 positions strategically deployed to support our schools and our students. Please maintain and improve this funding stream so that we can do what our data tells us our students need, and what our data validates as effective strategies.

In summary, we're asking for three things: first, support for managing our assets efficiently for the benefit of students, second, reduction of barriers and support for more local partnerships for integrated multi-sectoral service delivery to students, and third, greater autonomy and flexibility for us, as the front-line provider of public education, to address local needs.

As I said before, this costs money, but research shows education funding is one of the best investments our government can make to improve the lives of children and families. Our local data reveals responsibilities that you share with us. With good governance, adequate funding, and wise use of available resources and assets, we believe that our success will be your success.

Thank you. We'd be pleased to respond to questions.