

Memorandum

To: Board of Trustees

From: Tracy Barill, Director of Education

Date: May 23, 2023

Subject: **2023/2024 Ministry Funding Announcement**

Origin: Marie Hammond, Chief Financial Officer

Purpose

To provide the Board of Trustees an overview of the Ministry of Education's funding announcements for the 2023/2024 school year.

Background

On April 17, 2023, the Ministry of Education released the Grants for Student Needs (GSN), Capital Funding, and the Priorities and Partnerships Funding (PPF) for 2023/2024.

Staff has prepared the following summary to outline the significant funding changes.

Grants for Student Needs (GSN)

COVID-19 Learning Recovery Fund

Introduced in 2022/2023, Covid-19 Learning Recovery Funds provided funding for additional staffing to address continued pandemic related issues. This funding has been eliminated in 2023/2024. This is a reduction in funding for the Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB) in the amount of \$3,330,982. These funds had been used in the following areas:

- Remote learning (teachers, administration, information technology supports);
- Special education supports (educational assistants, professional staff);
- Supply staff; and
- Enhanced cleaning.

Student Transportation Reform

The Ministry is implementing a new Student Transportation Grant funding framework. The new framework is intended to be more transparent, equitable and focused on reliability. There will be enhanced reporting and accountability requirements to allow the ministry to track how certain components within the funding model are being utilized. The new framework reflects the following:

- Number of students deemed eligible based on common home-to-school distance thresholds applied to all school boards;
- Determining the optimal number of school-bus routes needed as well as leveraging use of public transit where services are available; and
- Establishing transparent benchmarks that are intended to represent the cost of services such as
 - Annual cost of purchasing and operating school buses;
 - Continuing to reflect changes in market prices of fuel (fuel escalator/de-escalator);
 - Setting compensation benchmarks for school bus drivers; and
 - Including a provision for spare driver capacity.

Driver retention and recruitment bonuses previously funded directly by the ministry to school bus operators have now been moved to the Student Transportation Grant and the funds will flow through school boards.

The impact of actual costs and routing information on in-year and future grants is not fully discernible at this time.

The estimated grant impact for 2023/2024 is an additional \$1M in revenue. This revenue will be utilized to offset additional costs included in recently negotiated operator contracts and costs downloaded from the ministry.

Remote Learning

Funding will be provided for remote learning administration (i.e., Principals, Vice-Principals, school office, information technology) based on virtual school enrolment. Remote learning enrolment will be excluded from the calculations for in-school administration and school facility-based calculations. DCDSB has a low virtual enrolment resulting in a minimum grant impact.

Safe and Clean Schools Supplement

A new grant within the GSN, the Safe and Clean Schools Supplement is intended to provide funding for staff in the following areas:

- Professional/Paraprofessional staff such as psychologists, social workers, and child/youth workers;
- Educational Assistants; and
- Custodial/Maintenance.

The grant for DCDSB for 2023/2024 will be \$247,601.

Indigenous Education Funding Realignment

The funding for First Nations, Metis and Inuit Studies courses is being revised as part of the realignment within the Indigenous Education Grant. Funding for teachers in these courses will now be pro-rated between the Pupil Foundation Grant and the Indigenous Education grant. Class sizes between 8 and 23 will be funded through both grants proportionately and classes with 23 or more students will be solely funded through the Pupil Foundation Grant. Previously, the Indigenous Education Grant covered the entire cost of teachers for these courses.

School boards are required to deliver courses where a minimum of eight students are enrolled.

One-time transition funding is being provided to boards that will experience a reduction in funding due to the realignment. Funding is intended to support existing programming. The DCDSB has been allotted \$367,679 as a one-time grant.

The funding realignment includes a new supplemental amount under the Board Action Plan (BAP) that is intended to support provincial Indigenous education priorities.

Overall, the funding realignment reduces funding for DCDSB by approximately \$750,000 after the one-time transition funding is discontinued.

Indigenous Education funding continues to be enveloped.

Keeping up with Costs

The Ministry will provide a 2% increase to school operations non-staffing funding benchmarks to assist school boards in managing increases in commodity prices such as electricity, natural gas, and insurance. There is also continued support for the optimization of ventilation in schools.

Secondary E-learning Funding Adjustments

The funding for secondary class size will be reduced to reflect e-learning courses funded at 30 students to 1 teacher vs 23 to 1 for regular classroom teachers. The Ministry assumes 22.5% (2022/2023 – 15%) of secondary students will take one e-learning course during the 2023/2024 school year.

Salary and Benefit Increases

Benchmarks have been updated to reflect the provisions of the recently ratified central agreements for the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

Capital Funding

Capital funding for 2023/2024 remains consistent with previous years and is estimated to be as follows:

School Condition Improvement	\$5,297,165
School Renewal	\$3,219,467
Capital Capacity	\$38,514
Temporary accommodation	\$543,258

The ministry is introducing time limits on school condition improvement funds and school renewal funding allocations. Funds may be carried over but will expire after 2.5 years. Therefore, 2023/2024 allocations will expire if unspent March 31, 2026.

Priorities and Partnerships Funding (PPF)

The Ministry has announced the following PPF funding which focuses on their priorities of learning and well-being to support students for success now and in the future.

Announced and allocated PPF Funding - \$3,206,570

Priorities and Partnership Funding (PPF)	Amount
De-streaming implementation supports	\$44,500
Early Reading Enhancements: Early Reading Screening Tools	\$135,100
Education Staff to Support Reading Interventions	\$727,400
Licenses for Reading Intervention Supports	\$15,670
Experiential Professional Learning in the Skilled Trades for Guidance Teachers	\$29,500
Entrepreneurship Education Pilot Projects	\$20,000
Health resources, training and supports	\$14,900
Math Lead	\$166,600
Math – School Math Facilitators	\$252,000
Math – Digital Math Tools	\$164,500
Professional Assessments	\$145,800
Special Education Additional Qualifications (AQ)	\$12,200
Staff to Support De-streaming and transition to high school (additional teachers for grades 7 – 10)	\$1,069,100
Skilled Trades Bursary Program	\$12,200
Summer Mental Health Supports (cannot increase existing staffing compliment)	\$145,900
Summer Learning Special Education Supports	\$123,400
Human Rights Equity Advisors	\$127,800

Next Steps

DCDSB will experience a significant decrease in funding through the elimination of the Covid-19 Learning Recovery Fund and the Indigenous Education Funding Realignment. In addition, the ministry has not kept up with all inflationary increases, sick leave realities or changes in statutory and other benefit obligations. These gaps in funding have created further budget challenges for the Board.

Senior administration is currently looking at system realignment that maximizes student support while maintaining a balanced budget. Staff will bring updates to the Board of Trustees throughout the budget process.

TB/MH/II