



## **2024-25 Grant for Student Needs Consultation by Ministry of Education**

**To:** Finance, Budget and Enrolment Committee

**Date:** 11 October, 2023

**Report No.:** 10-23-4611

### **Strategic Directions**

- Allocate Human and Financial Resources Strategically to Support Student Needs

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that 2024-25 Grant for Student Needs (GSN) Consultation by the Ministry of Education be received.

### **Context**

On September 27, 2023, the Ministry of Education provided the 2024-25 Education Funding Consultation Guide (Appendix A) to school boards for feedback from the sector. They identified that feedback must be submitted by October 27, 2023 to be considered.

The Ministry consultation document asks for feedback in the following areas through targeted questions in each area as outlined below.

- Special Education – Special Incidence Portion (SIP) and Special Equipment Amount (SEA)
- What reforms can be made to SIP and SEA to:
- Reduce administrative burden and streamline processes?
- Recognize the complexity of student needs across the different Special Education delivery models (example: self-contained classroom setting versus fully integrated setting)?
- Ensure the allocations are meeting their intended purpose?

## Agenda Page 50

- Support flexibility to meet local needs?
- Strengthening accountability, enhancing transparency, and reducing complexity
- What reforms can be made to the GSN funding formula to:
  - Reduce its complexity?
  - Enhance the transparency on how school board funding is used?
- What opportunities are there to strengthen accountability while balancing administrative requirements?
- What opportunities exist to better communicate to taxpayers:
  - How GSN funding is allocated to school boards?
  - How school boards use GSN funding in alignment with government priorities?

While the Ministry has identified these as areas they would like feedback from the sector, they will also welcome any additional feedback in any other areas school boards wish to comment about.

Attached in Appendix B is TDSB's response to last years GSN consultation guide. In the Boards response to the guide TDSB also included the following areas of interest for additional funding support:

- Continuation of Staffing Supports and Support for Students Fund
- Technology and Cyber Security
- Lifting the Moratorium on School Closures
- Addressing Inflation and Cost Increases

Due to the reduced timeline for submission of a response, there will not be time for stakeholder consultation. Staff have identified the following areas to be included in this year's submission and will prepare comments on each:

- Increased staffing to support student achievement, well-being and safety including:
  - Professional and para-professional support to address student well-being and safety, including social workers
  - Additional school staff to provide a caring adult to all students
  - Additional curriculum support
  - Tutoring supports continued
  - Increased support for Safe and Caring schools
  - Literacy and Numeracy increased supports
  - Funding to support the Right to Read recommendations
  - Funding to support professional development of staff
- Funding support for increase inflation costs including:
  - Utilities
  - Materials
  - Repair and Maintenance costs
- Funding to cover the historic and current unfunded increases in statutory benefits
- Lifting the moratorium on school closures

## Agenda Page 51

- Funding for wrap-around services to support violence reduction in schools and school communities including community-based programming
- Mental health supports for students and staff
- Return of the Efficiency and Modernization funding to support structure improvements in boards
- Funding to support the improved accessibility in schools for all students and staff
- Increased funding to support a 1 to 1 device strategy for all students

If there are additional areas the Trustees would like included staff will include them in the submission.

### **Action Plan and Associated Timeline**

Staff will include Trustee feedback received at FBEC into the final response to the Ministry of Education on October 27, 2023 and report back to the Special FBEC meeting on November 29, 2023 with a copy of the submission.

### **Resource Implications**

N/A.

### **Communications Considerations**

All Budget related reports will be posted on the Board's budget website for stakeholders to review.

### **Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)**

List all Board policies and procedures that relate to this matter.

### **Appendices**

- Appendix A: 2024-25 Education Funding Consultation Guide
- Appendix B: Final Response to the 2023-24 Ministry of Education Budget Consultation

### **From**

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# 2024-25 Education Funding Consultation Guide

September 2023

## **INTRODUCTION**

For the 2023-24 school year, the Ministry of Education investments will continue to help ensure every student has the opportunity for success, by ensuring our students have the skills they need. Our actions will continue to be informed by data and evidence, including results from Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) assessments, credit accumulation, and graduation rates.

The government has also implemented the first set of regulations following the passage of *The Better Schools and Outcomes Act*. These new measures will focus on getting back to the basics of education: strengthening reading, writing and math, and other STEM disciplines. These reforms include the new authority for our government to set binding priorities on school boards that focus on boosting student achievement focused on reading, writing and math. To improve school board transparency, school board plans will be benchmarked against system-wide performance indicators.

For the 2023-24 school year, total public education funding is projected to be \$27.6 billion. This is the largest investment in Ontario's history. This includes a \$693 million increase in base Grants for Student Needs (GSN) funding compared to the year prior, or a 2.7 per cent increase.

For more information about the current education funding model, please see [Education funding, 2023-24](#) on the Ministry of Education's website.

## **ABOUT THIS CONSULTATION**

As in previous years, the government remains committed to discussing education funding reform in Ontario with education stakeholders through a consultation process that allows stakeholders to provide the benefit of their expertise, experience, and ideas. This year's guide focuses on two areas:

1. Strengthening accountability, enhancing transparency and reducing complexity
2. Modernization of the Special Education Grant

However, you may also submit feedback on education funding topics not outlined in this guide.

To ensure your feedback is considered, please forward your electronic submission by **October 27, 2023** to: [EDULABFINANCE@ontario.ca](mailto:EDULABFINANCE@ontario.ca). If you have questions about this consultation, please send them to the email address noted above.

## **STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY AND ENHANCING TRANSPARENCY**

Ontario is among the top performing education systems nationally and internationally. However, there is variability in how the education system performs across the province, including in student outcomes, governance practices, and approaches to engaging and sharing information with families.

On April 17, 2023, the government introduced *The Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act* which will build on the progress Ontario has made as a world class education jurisdiction and on the continued efforts to modernize our education system by ensuring a renewed focus and commitment to student achievement.

The government is focused on ensuring school boards deliver on provincial priorities on student achievement and increasing accountability and transparency on board performance and funding.

### **Considerations:**

1. What reforms can be made to the GSN funding formula to:
  - i) reduce its complexity?
  - ii) enhance the transparency on how school board funding is used?
2. What opportunities are there to strengthen accountability while balancing administrative requirements?
3. What opportunities exist to better communicate to taxpayers:
  - i) how GSN funding is allocated to school boards?
  - ii) how school boards use GSN funding in alignment with government priorities?

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION – SPECIAL INCIDENCE PORTION (SIP) AND SPECIAL EQUIPMENT AMOUNT (SEA)**

On April 17, 2023, the Ministry of Education announced that a modernization review of key components of the Special Education Grant (SEG) was being undertaken. During the 2023-24 school year the ministry will conduct a review of the Special Incidence Portion (SIP) and Special Equipment Amount (SEA) allocations. This review seeks to improve the SIP and SEA allocations by streamlining processes, reducing administrative burden and continuing to meet student needs.

The review presents an important opportunity to transform the way funding is allocated and used and to ensure that supports on the ground are more closely aligned with student needs and our goals for student achievement through a modern process that is accountable and transparent. In addition, it will provide an opportunity to evaluate the existing allocation models, to assess student needs and outcomes, and to develop solutions that will address issues and inefficiencies that are identified.

For further information on the SIP and SEA allocations, please see the [2022-23 SIP Guidelines](#) and the [2023-24 SEA Guidelines](#).

### **Considerations:**

What reforms can be made to SIP and SEA to:

- i. Reduce administrative burden and streamline processes?
- ii. Recognize the complexity of student needs across the different special education delivery models (example: self-contained classroom setting versus fully integrated setting)?
- iii. Ensure the allocations are meeting their intended purpose?
- iv. Support flexibility to meet local priorities?

## **CONCLUSION**

As always, we thank you for your continued collaboration and partnership to support Ontario students. We remain committed to working closely with you to facilitate the next school year, with the best interest of Ontario's students in mind.

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide, and we look forward to receiving your submission.





## **Final Response to the 2023-24 Ministry of Education Budget Consultation**

**To:** Finance, Budget and Enrolment Committee

**Date:** 23 November, 2022

**Report No.:** 11-22-4436

### **Strategic Directions**

- Allocate Human and Financial Resources Strategically to Support Student Needs

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the 2023-24 Ministry of Finance Education Funding Guide Response be received.

### **Context**

At the 12 October 2022 Finance, Budget and Enrolment Committee (FBEC) meeting, staff presented the 2023-24 Ministry of Education Budget Consultation Guide and a survey tool to gather feedback. A draft response was also circulated to Trustees on 11 November 2022. Based on the feedback received from internal and external stakeholders, the response was finalized and submitted to the Ministry on 15 November 2022. Attached in Appendix A is a copy of the submission.

The survey tool was communicated to SEAC, PIAC and the Community Advisory Committees. A copy of their feedback received through the survey is attached in Appendix B.

### **Action Plan and Associated Timeline**

Not applicable.

### **Resource Implications**

Not applicable.

## **Communications Considerations**

The final submission has been posted on the 2023-24 budget development page on the TDSB external website.

## **Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)**

Not applicable.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix A: TDSB Budget Consultation Response for Final Submission
- Appendix B: Feedback from Ministry of Education Funding Guide Survey
- Appendix C: 2023-24 Ministry of Education Budget Consultation Guide

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**Appendix A: 2023-24 Education Funding Consultation  
Draft Responses for November 15, 2022 Ministry Submission**

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is Canada's largest and most diverse school board, with approximately 233,000 students at 583 schools. We also serve more than 130,000 life-long learners in our Adult and Continuing Education programs.

As the largest and most diverse school board in the country, we have unique needs when it comes to what is required to best support our students and communities. Our students need safe and modern learning environments, appropriate special education supports, targeted supports for mental health and well-being, and access to reliable and up-to-date technology. It is critical that school boards receive adequate support to help address widening gaps in student achievement, and mental health and well-being needs in the post-pandemic environment.

**TDSB's Response to Education Funding Guide Questions**

**Question 1: EFFICIENCIES AND REDUCING ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN**

**i) What other initiatives could support the reduction of administrative burden or further streamline reporting for the education sector?**

Although the implementation of the Transfer Payment Ontario System (TPON) Online Platform has provided some efficiencies around the reporting process, there are still possible areas of improvement. For example, the TPON functionality should allow for notifications, workflow management and delegation. It would be ideal if the system could allow Multi-Project Transfer Payment Agreements (TPA) to be shared with different program owners for review and acknowledgement prior to final sign off by the Director of Education. Also, the reporting templates should be provided to school boards at the same time as the Transfer Payment Agreements, so that staff know what information is required at the start of the funding period. This will help facilitate information gathering and expense tracking.

The Ministry may also consider aligning ad hoc Priorities and Partnerships Funding (PPF) reporting deadlines to the Board's Ministry financial reporting timeframes to streamline the financial reporting involved.

For funding that is announced mid-year, school boards should be provided with sufficient time to plan and utilize the funds, or flexibility to carryover unspent funds. It has been a challenge to achieve full funding utilization (e.g. the tutoring support funding in 2021-22), especially when the funding is used for staffing or mass procurement of goods (e.g. ventilation units). Time required for recruitment and procurement should be considered when determining the funding timelines.

The Ministry could consider reducing the reporting requirements for PPFs by, for example, requesting only one consolidated year-end report instead of multiple reports with different timelines.

**ii) What are the areas where there is potential or opportunities to find new efficiencies?**

It would be preferred if some of the recurring PPFs that the TDSB receives annually, such as the Focus on Youth funding, be transferred to the Grants for Student Needs (GSN). This will help alleviate budget uncertainties and program planning delays. It will also allow the department to hire appropriate staff to manage the program.

**Question 2: CAPITAL: REDUCING TIME TO COMPLETION FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS**

**i) What are relevant considerations and opportunities to shorten each phase of planning and construction (planning, design, municipal approvals, approval to proceed (ministry approval), procurement, construction, opening?)**

Discussions should occur between provincial ministries to identify ways to expedite the municipal approval of school projects. For example, legislation could be amended to exempt school projects from the Site Plan Approval (SPA) process, or school projects that meet certain conditions could be exempt, such as replacement buildings. Another approach could be requiring municipalities to fast track school projects through the SPA process to significantly reduce overall timelines. In Toronto, school projects should automatically be put into the “Quick” or “Routine” accelerated process by the City and receive a decision within three or four months from submission of a complete application.

The Ministry approval process is longer now due to the fact that a majority of projects are over the construction benchmark, even though buildings are typically designed to be approximately 10% below the Facility Space benchmark. Regular adjustments to the Ministry's construction funding and the “Benchmark” cost per square foot must be updated to reflect current market conditions and 2022 construction costs. In addition, the Ministry must acknowledge and fund the higher construction costs in Toronto, including the impact of building on smaller, more restrictive sites with older infrastructure and often heritage designations; the requirements of the City of Toronto's SPA and Toronto Green Standards (TGS); and, generally higher construction labour costs.

The Ministry should consider completing their review and approval of Facility Space Templates (FST) in a much shorter time frame. Approvals should not take as much time as the FST is based on programming only, prior to the start of design. By reducing the approval time to ideally one week, school boards will be able to engage architects quickly. As an example, the Sugar Wharf FST was submitted to the Ministry on June 7, 2022 and approval has not yet been received.

The length of time for Ministry approval to award a construction contract has necessitated a longer irrevocable bid period (90 to 120 days), which has in turn contributed to contractors and subcontractors submitting higher prices in order to offset the current market uncertainty. A faster contract award approval timeline would allow school boards to shorten the bid period and in turn, minimize contractors' sense of risk and create a competitive irrevocable bid period.

Given the uncertainties in the current market, with supply chain issues, increased manufacturing, transportation and labour costs, many school boards are using a construction management approach, rather than the more traditional stipulated sum approach. Both methods are well-established in the construction industry and are supported with Canadian Construction Documents Committee (CCDC) contracts.

The construction management method provides transparency with construction costs, as many sub-trades are unwilling or unable to lock in a price for work that will not be executed until 6 to 9 months after the contract has been awarded. Construction management can also result in a more compact design development/tender/construction process as packages of work are designed and issued for tender while the rest of the building continues to be designed. However, to take full advantage of this compacted process, the Ministry's Approval to Proceed (ATP) process would need to change as there would not be the time to reach 80% design development and provide a Class B estimate. For example, the Ministry needs to develop a more flexible approval review process based on both Class C and Class B estimates that would be achievable within the sequential tendering approach.

### **Question 3: CAPITAL: JOINT USE OF SCHOOLS**

#### **i) What impediments do school boards face when considering opportunities for Joint-Use schools with their co-terminus school boards?**

Due to the unique circumstances of joint-use facilities in an urban environment, there are several issues related to the capital needs of boards and the cost of transportation that need to be considered. The best example of joint-use is a truly integrated model where the needs of both boards are met. The challenge is that both school boards must be experiencing accommodation pressures in the same part of the city to facilitate building a joint facility. In Toronto, that only occurs in areas of the city where intensive urban development is being built, such as the Canoe Landing and Downsview areas in Toronto.

Establishing a joint-use facility in a school that has capacity faces the challenge that likely the co-terminus board is not seeing growth in the immediate area either.

While there may be opportunities in some cases for a joint-use facility, there are many considerations that need to be determined, such as: size of site, retrofitting of school so that both schools have unique spaces and facilities, sufficient space to accommodate drop-off/pick-up, staff parking, and school ground use for a large number of students and possible child care.

We would recommend that the Ministry establish a working group to further explore and recommend standards and practices that would assist school boards when evaluating this type of project. The working group would also look at capital submission criteria that would be used when school boards submit a business case to the Ministry for capital funding, including accommodation funding to relocate current students during construction.

**ii. There are a number of successful joint-use arrangements in place. What are the elements of success (governance, administrative practices, conflict resolution, etc.) that can be replicated and scaled up across current and potential joint use arrangements?**

**TDSB Response:**

Designing of innovative joint facilities with schools and community partners will allow for efficiencies through the sharing of elements such as below grade parking, service entries, physical plant, and even spaces like gymnasiums.

Canoe Landing is a good example of four programs co-existing in a joint facility. This facility involves a TDSB school, TCDSB school, childcare center and community center. The programs share the site spatially, including playgrounds and gymnasiums. The plant facility is centralized making for a more efficient building.

Projects of this type require project management leadership that can engage the highest levels of authority. Without high-level support, the project would not be able to move forward.

Agreements need to be established for all aspects of designing, constructing and operating a joint facility. This includes development, construction, operating, shared space, maintenance, and governance agreements, as well as agreement on the accommodation of shifts in enrolment experienced by the schools in the joint facility. A third-party facility service firm should be engaged to help set up the agreements.

It is important to have consistent involvement of academic representatives (Superintendents and Principals) in the design process and the establishment of the agreements. A Principal should be assigned well in advance of the school opening to support these processes. Additional funds should be provided to school boards to support dedicating principals to these projects.

The successful operation of a joint facility requires the principals of the schools in the building to be experienced collaborators: able to work in partnership with the co-located principal; able to develop solutions to issues that benefit both schools in the building; able to communicate with multiple stakeholders; and, able to be flexible.

With the provincial focus on housing, there is an opportunity to redevelop school sites into mixed-use developments, integrating schools and residential units. This needs to be supported by infrastructure funding for schools.

**OTHER PRIORITY AREAS**

In addition to answering the Ministry's questions above, we would also like to further highlight the following priority areas for the TDSB:

1. Continuation of Staffing Support and Supports for Students Fund
2. Technology and Cyber Security
3. Lifting the Moratorium on School Closures
4. Addressing Inflation and Cost Increases

Please note, these priority areas are not listed in order of importance. While there are many areas of priority for the TDSB, these four items have been selected because the Ministry's immediate attention is required.

### **Continuation of Staffing Support and Supports for Student Fund**

The expiration of Investment in System Priorities funding and Education Workers Protection Fund on August 31, 2022 has resulted in significant staff allocation reductions, particularly school-based support staff in 2022-23. Fortunately, the extension of the 2022-23 Supports for Student Fund and COVID-19 Learning Recovery Fund for additional staffing support has helped offset some of these negative impacts.

Student mental health and well-being, Special Education support, student re-engagement and ESL support for newcomers continue to be key priorities in 2023-24. The TDSB requires sufficient professional support staff to assess the needs of students, and to collaborate with school communities to strengthen school engagement. As the number of students requiring Special Education support increases each year, there is more financial pressure on school boards. The TDSB continues to face a funding shortfall in Special Education each year.

Addressing student re-engagement and mental health needs from the long-term impacts of the pandemic will take time. To ensure students receive the support they need, we urge the Ministry to continue providing the staffing support and Supports for Student Funding in 2023-24. We also ask that the Recent Immigrant Supplement continue until the enrollment levels return to pre-pandemic levels. In addition, TDSB also requests flexibility in the use of these funding as needs of our students continue to evolve.

### **Technology and Cybersecurity**

To support programming for students and 21st century learning, ongoing investments in IT hardware devices and digital resources are required.

In September 2021, the TDSB launched the 1:1 Student Device Program for students in Grades 5 and 9. The program offers students a district-owned and managed Chromebook for educational use. This device is assigned directly to the student and will stay with them over a four-year period, 24/7. Students are able to take them home each night, on weekends and over holidays, and are required to bring them to school each day to support their in-class learning.

This board-wide initiative supports learning through technology, digital citizenship and our commitment to equity of access to technology. This investment is critical to student learning and requires a significant investment of resources to maintain on an annual basis.

In addition, it is important that investments into cyber security protection are also made in conjunction with this increase in student technology. With the rapid increase in the use of technology and online tools, additional resources are required to promote cyber resilience, so that students and educators can operate in a safe digital learning environment. A robust Broadband and Cyber Protection Program will also help mitigate against risk of loss resulting from cyber threats and incidents.

These technology investments need to be supported with additional Ministry funding so school boards can provide a safe and effective learning environment for our students.

### **Lifting the Moratorium on School Closures**

Since 2017, there has been a moratorium on school closures imposed by the Ministry of Education. The TDSB requests that the school closure moratorium be lifted so that boards can review schools with low student enrolment. These schools face programming challenges that limit our students' choices as well as a financial burden to the Board. The lifting of the moratorium would also help facilitate long-term planning and prudent utilization of resources. In addition, the TDSB recommends revisions to the Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines (PARG). The recommended revisions include providing the opportunity for student voice and input when a school closure is considered, and standardized tools for assessing information received during a Pupil Accommodation Review (PAR) process.

### **Addressing Inflation and Cost Increases**

Since the start of the pandemic, school boards have experienced significant supply chain and inflation pressures. The soaring inflationary costs have been seen across various areas, including school and technology supplies, food, transportation, natural gas and utilities costs, maintenance and construction materials, cost of external skilled trades, etc.

Also, in 2022, the CPP maximum pensionable earnings and employer rate increased by 0.25% and there will be another 0.25% increase in 2023. This increase is anticipated to result in an additional \$2.5M negative budget impact in 2022-23, this pressure has been growing since 21-22 with no funding increase. In prior years, the TDSB was able to absorb the increase to CPP and EI costs through operational savings, but given TDSB's deficit position, additional funding is needed to cover these cost increases. The Ministry has not provided funding to cover CPP cost adjustments, hence this will continue to be a cost pressure for school boards in years with a high increase in rates.

In addition, currently the employer contributions for OMERS pension are not funded by the Ministry. Starting in January 2023, non-full-time employees will be eligible to enroll in the plan and it is anticipated that this plan change will increase the TDSB's contribution costs by approximately \$0.4M per year.

We ask that the Ministry provide additional funding to support these incremental costs (e.g. employer portion of CPP, EI, OMERS) which the Board has no control over and review the salary and benefit benchmarks.



The sick leave entitlement changes in 2012, which provided employees with additional sick days per year, has also resulted in a gradual increase in employee absenteeism. This includes short term sick leave, work related injuries and long-term disability and illness (LTDI). This has resulted in cost pressures for the TDSB as supply costs, premiums and LTDI claims continue to increase. To address increasing costs in these areas, school boards require resources to manage absenteeism, and to ensure staff have the support and accommodations they need to return to work.

**APPENDIX B: 2023-24 EDUCATION FUNDING GUIDE SURVEY RESPONSES**

A survey tool was posted on the TDSB website from October 12 to November 9, 2022, to gather feedback from the community. Below are the consultation guide questions and survey responses received from members of the public, presented as received. There were no responses submitted on behalf of the TDSB Community advisory committees.

**Survey Questions:**

**Q1:** What other initiatives could support the reduction of administrative burden or further streamline reporting for the education sector? What are the areas where there is potential or opportunities to find new efficiencies?

**Q2:** What are the relevant considerations and opportunities to shorten each phase of planning and construction (planning, design, municipal and Ministry approvals, procurement, construction and opening)?

**Q3:** What impediments do school boards face when considering opportunities for joint-use schools with their co-terminus school boards? There are many successful joint-use arrangement in place. What are the elements of success (governance, admin practices, conflict resolution, etc.) that can be replicated or scaled up across current and potential joint-use arrangements?

**Q4:** Please provide any other initiatives not outlined in the Education funding guide, or other comments for consideration in the Board’s 2023-24 budget consultation submission to the Ministry.

**Survey Responses (as submitted):**

	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>
<b>1</b>	Hiring individuals to take on certain administrative duties that are not outlined for teachers.	In-class support, strong administrative systems with accountability and support for teachers, education consultants for PLL	Management of space, coordination of personnel involved in joint-use, equitable allocation of usage and space. Administrative practices, conflict resolution	

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2	Less Superintendents	Rent out schools for other purposes. Don't single source purchasing. Use size to get better pricing on purchases. Developments that impact school populations should pay for added capacity	Safety and security of materials in schools. Understaffed caretaking. Facilities in schools are in poor condition and underfunded already - puts additional stress on already underfunded resources. Needs to make sense - not just money making or savings. Should be about building strong communities - not an excuse to underfund education	Fund education properly like other provinces
3	Technology update and technology education. If done correctly it can reduce the time spent on these tasks.	Recording of absences. This task is done via phone or email at our school. So someone needs to process and record the absences. How about if there was a way parents could enter it themselves via an online form as well. This will reduce the burden on administrative staff.		
4	Defund catholic schools.	Reduce Ministry of Education staff. End principals' retreats. Cluster extracurricular activities like sports team or lunchtime/etc., arts programs with nearby schools. Larger list of approved vendors of record so there are more options.	Political cowardice on the subject of defunding religious (catholic) schools	

	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>
<b>5</b>	I feel the TDSB is already down to bare bones			Bring back elementary guidance to help with crushing mental health needs at schools
<b>6</b>	More education workers. Bring back spec Ed.	More education workers. Less superintendents.	Treat your employees like people. Be educators NOT business.	Stop trying to be 'efficient'. It makes the tdsb horrible at education. Be better!

# 2023-24 Education Funding Consultation Guide

## **INTRODUCTION**

After two years of pandemic disruptions, the government is looking ahead and remains focused on ensuring students receive the best stable learning experience possible. Ontario has launched its [Plan to Catch Up](#), focused on getting students back on track and strengthening the skills they need for the jobs of tomorrow. For the 2022-23 school year, the province will continue to support the learning recovery journey of all students, including those disproportionately affected by learning disruptions.

Ontario is also investing record funding for the 2022-23 school year of over \$26.6 billion – the highest investment in public education in Ontario’s history. This includes a \$683.9 million increase in Grants for Student Needs (GSN) funding, with projected total funding of \$26.1 billion. In addition, over \$500 million is being provided in Priorities and Partnership Funding (PPF).

Finally, as you are aware, the ministry is currently engaging with its education labour partners in the bargaining process for new collective agreements with teachers and education workers in Ontario’s publicly funded education system. The government is committed to a fair and fiscally responsible approach for new collective agreements, while ensuring stability for students and families. Once new collective agreements have been reached and ratified, the GSN will be updated accordingly.

For more information about the current education funding model, please see [Education funding, 2022-23](#) on the Ministry of Education’s website.

## **ABOUT THIS CONSULTATION**

As in previous years, the government remains committed to discussing education funding reform in Ontario with education stakeholders through a consultation process that allows stakeholders to provide the benefit of their expertise, experience, and ideas. This year’s guide focuses on three key priorities:

- Efficiencies and reducing administrative burden
- Capital: Reducing time to completion for capital projects
- Capital: Joint use of schools

You may also submit feedback on education funding topics not outlined in this guide.

To ensure your feedback is considered, please forward your electronic submission by **November 15, 2022** to: [EDULABFINANCE@ontario.ca](mailto:EDULABFINANCE@ontario.ca). If your organization would benefit from a virtual meeting to provide feedback on this year’s consultation, please submit a request to the ministry at this same email address, and the ministry would be pleased to

arrange one. If you have questions about this consultation, please send them to the email address noted above.

## **EFFICIENCIES AND REDUCING ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN**

The ministry continues to look for ways of reducing administrative burden and aligning program implementation with ministry priorities, while ensuring strong accountability and value for money.

To further support the ministry's efforts to streamline reporting while also reducing administrative burden for transfer payment recipients, for 2022-23 the ministry has transferred five Priorities and Partnerships Funding (PPF) and Other Languages in Education (OLE) allocations into the GSN.

For the upcoming school year, the ministry will continue to provide school boards with Integrated (multi-project) Transfer Payment Agreements (TPAs) through Transfer Payment Ontario (TPON), the centralized digital system for government transfer payments.

The ministry is continuing to implement a phased approach in the adoption of TPON, to enable further efficiencies in the administration and management of TPAs. Reporting will be the next phase added to TPON focusing on the reduction and/or streamlining of reporting requirements. School boards will be able to access, complete, and submit PPF reporting requirements through TPON, with further details to be provided in the Fall.

### **Considerations:**

- 1. What other initiatives could support the reduction of administrative burden or further streamline reporting for the education sector?**
- 2. What are the areas where there is potential or opportunities to find new efficiencies?**

## **CAPITAL: REDUCING TIME TO COMPLETION FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS**

Schools and child care centers are crucial in supporting the well-being and positive development of students and children. The Ontario government's education infrastructure plan includes providing \$14 billion over 10 years to support school construction, repair, and renewal. There are over 400 major capital projects at various stages of development worth \$4B.

The time to completion for capital projects, from original funding approval by the Ministry to completion of the project/opening of a school/child care, varies considerably across the province. Some school boards have completed their major capital construction projects in as little as two years while other school boards have taken more than ten years to complete projects.

To ensure needs of communities are met in a timely manner and to deliver good value for Ontario taxpayers, the ministry will be working with school boards to reduce the time to completion for approved projects.

### **Considerations:**

- 1. What are the relevant considerations and opportunities to shorten each phase of planning and construction (planning, design, municipal approvals, approval to proceed (Ministry Approval), procurement, construction, opening)?**

## **CAPITAL: JOINT USE OF SCHOOLS**

The ministry continues to look for ways of optimizing the use of existing educational infrastructure. Overall, school utilization across Ontario is about 90%. On the whole, there is significant surplus school capacity throughout the province.

With student migration and changing demographics, it is an ongoing exercise to try to ensure that school capacity meets the needs of all four school systems at a local level. Where a school board may experience an enrolment decline, there may be a coterminous school board experiencing growth. While new developments often require the construction of new local schools by multiple school boards, there are also areas, both rural and urban areas, with declining enrolments and increasing surplus school capacity. In both circumstances, joint use schools may provide increased program opportunities for students and capital and operating efficiencies through better utilization of school facilities, as currently demonstrated on various arrangements throughout the province. In developing accommodation plans, school boards are encouraged to consider collaborative capital project arrangements between school boards to maximize the opportunities for co-



location. This may include two or more school boards working together to improve the utilization of existing school facilities and reduce surplus space by co-locating into an existing facility, or by exchanging schools to better utilize existing capacity.

**Considerations:**

- 1. What impediments do school boards face when considering opportunities for Joint-Use schools with their co-terminus school boards?**
- 2. There are a number of successful joint-use arrangements in place. What are the elements of success (governance, administrative practices, conflict resolution, etc.) that be replicated and scaled up across current and potential joint use arrangements?**

**CONCLUSION**

Each year, the ministry holds discussions with education partners, outside of the annual funding engagements, to discuss both policy and funding mechanisms. As student mental health and well-being will continue to play a critical role in students catching-up, beginning this Fall, the government looks forward to hearing from consultations with parents, students, and experts like children's hospitals, on how to best strengthen learning to support student mental health and well-being.

As always, we thank you for your continued collaboration and partnership to support Ontario students. We remain committed to working closely with you to facilitate the next school year, with the best interest of Ontario's students in mind.

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide, and we look forward to receiving your submission.

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