



The Ministry of Finance Consultation 2025 Ontario Budget

Background

On January 24, 2025 the Toronto District School Board was invited by the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Finance, Zee Hamid, to participate in a community budget consultation.

As Ontario's government prepares the 2025 Ontario Budget, participants were asked to share their ideas on the key issues that need to be addressed in the next budget, from keeping taxes and fees low, getting roads and highways built to providing better services. Below are the remarks shared by Neethan Shan, Chair of the Toronto District School Board.

The Chair's Remarks

- Thank you, MPP Zee Hamid, we appreciate the opportunity to join you all today.
- As Canada's largest school board, we have 579 schools, 239,000 students and over 41,000 staff who are dedicated to delivering the best education possible for our students to succeed now and into the future.
- At the TDSB, we have a large, diverse student body. It is critical that the funding we receive accounts for the substantial needs of our urban school board. Unfortunately, despite increased funding over recent years, our current funding formula is not working.
- As a result, we've experienced an ongoing pressure to spend more than has been allocated by the Ministry to support our students, staff and communities.
- Currently, we are sitting at a:
 - **\$4.45 billion** shortfall to maintain existing and older school buildings, with rising construction costs (as of January, 2025)
 - **\$38.5 million** shortfall to support special education
 - **\$10.9 million** shortfall to support student and staff mental health, safety and well-being
 - **\$14.3 million** was the amount of funding we received to support student and staff mental health, safety & wellbeing, but we spent **\$25.2 million** to meet these needs.
 - **\$43.7 million** is the cumulative unfunded portion of statutory benefits (e.g. for CPP & EI)



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- The effects of inflation are certainly being felt here and across the province and as we all know when we visit the grocery store, our dollars are not going as far as they once did.
- Right now, we have budgeted for a **\$28.0 million deficit** for the current year and are required by the Ministry of Education to eliminate this by the 2026-27 period.
- A reduction of this scale will involve cuts across the entire system which will affect current programs offered by the Board.
- Broadly, we recognize that to meet the full needs of students and teachers, the budget needs to account for:
 - The long-lasting impact of the pandemic on our students and the very significant mental health and socialization needs we're experiencing today.
 - In a digital world, we need more resources to strengthen cybersecurity and protect school operations from digital threats.
 - The unfunded increases in statutory benefits and rising absenteeism costs strain school board budgets and additional funding for sick leave and employee wellness programs is vital to manage these growing pressures.
 - We have school buildings of all ages and consistent, multi-year funding is needed to upgrade and maintain ventilation systems and remain accessible to all students, staff and community members.
- Finally, the moratorium on school closures restricts our ability to optimize resources and review schools with low enrolment. We are spending desperately needed dollars to maintain older schools that should have been consolidated years ago – not to mention, by keeping these under-enrolled schools open – we are limiting the breadth of programming that an adequately enrolled school can provide to students.
- To meet these demands, we'll need to see a significant increase in investment in our schools and in our students and staff to deliver the best education possible for the future of Ontario.