



Tuesday, February 11th, 2025

CO-CHAIR'S REPORT

1. Thank you to our web team (Steph, Keith and Harp) for keeping the website updated with information about the trustee candidates as it comes in.
2. Welcome
A warm welcome to all members of the Northern Community who are joining us today both in person and on-line.
3. School Trustee By-Election: As discussed at our January meeting, we circulated 7 questions to all 10 candidates. To date, we have responses from 9 of the 10 candidates. One has not yet responded.
We also invited all 10 candidates to plan a meet and greet with Northern families. Jason Stevens joined Walking Buddies on January 25th, Stacey Cline held an event on January 30th and Adam Golding has planned an event for February 21st. No other candidates have responded regarding that invitation.
Various school councils in the ward have been referring their families to our website. Jessica has spoken with a reporter at the Local who is writing about the Trustee by-election.
4. Capital Funding. Following the January meeting, a submission regarding Capital Priorities funding was drafted to submit as part of the provincial budget consultation process. The majority of council endorsed the letter and it was submitted. A copy of the letter is appended to this report.
Unfortunately, the provincial election call led to the closure of the budget consultation process, so it is not clear that the submission will be reviewed.

Shelley Laskin has also recently addressed the issue of capital funding in her newsletter. Her text is included below:

2024-25 Capital Priorities Program

School boards may apply for funding for construction projects such as school additions, school replacements or deep retrofits from the Ministry of Education through the Capital Priorities program. School boards identify their most urgent capital needs and submit business cases for these priority projects. The projects are meant to be ranked based on a priority. Historically, the TDSB has received approval for a small number of capital projects through the Capital Priorities process. The list of the five TDSB Capital Priority projects ranked to align with the Ministry criteria and submitted for funding consideration in the last application process can be [found here](#).

The news release from the Ministry of Education provided details of \$1.3 billion of capital priorities which included 30 new schools and 15 additions.

<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1005655/ontario-making-historic-13-billion-investment-to-build-and-expand-more-schools>

We were held to submitting business cases for 5 projects, like every other school board, regardless of our size and need. TDSB did not receive any funding for our priority projects even though we have 12% of all the students in the province.

The Ministry provided some feedback to staff - you will remember that Recommendation 15 from the [Auditor General's Report](#) on the TDSB included the ministry providing written feedback to the boards. It also included "develop and implement a formal quantifiable process that is used for scoring criteria used by the Ministry to rank capital project business case submissions." That was not provided. Not surprisingly, most of these projects are either in PC ridings or possible swing ridings. There is no transparency. "In a report released earlier this month, Ontario's auditor general found that TDSB school buildings are in the worst condition of all school buildings in the province and that financial and capital resources are not consistently allocated in the most cost effective or efficient way."

Please also note in the December 17, 2024 [report on school buildings in Ontario](#), including building condition and the state of good repair by the province's Financial Accountability Office, "the FAO estimates that it would cost \$21.7 billion to clear the infrastructure backlog and maintain all school buildings in a state of good repair over the 2024-25 to 2033-34 period. This includes \$16.3 billion for school buildings in the English Public school system."

5. Provincial Election. A provincial election has been called for February 27th. This creates an opportunity for families to advocate for the education issues that they consider to be the most pressing. Capital Priorities and the significant repairs backlog in TDSB schools are examples of the issues affecting education, but there are many more.
 - [Ontario Principals' Council](#) Position Paper on the Ontario Election
 - Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario [Build Better Schools Campaign](#)
 - Ontario Secondary Schools Foundation, Toronto and York Region Labour Council and the Elementary Teachers Foundation have collaborated on a [Fund Our Schools Campaign](#)
 - [The Ontario Public School Boards Association](#) is tracking how party platforms align with education issues in the province.

No matter which issues are most important to you, we encourage you to ask your candidates about them, and most importantly, get out and vote on election day.

6. Northern's back field. We are in the early stages of exploring funding options for repairs to the back field at Northern. Priorities include improved drainage to reduce the amount of time that the field is out of commission, resurfacing and widening the running track, eliminating the height difference between the playing field and the track to prevent injuries, mitigating the wasp situation with better waste disposal options, improved storage facilities for sports equipment, upgraded bleachers and opening washroom facilities for athletes and spectators. It is likely that fundraising will be necessary once partnership and grant opportunities have been established. We welcome members of the community to reach out

regarding opportunities to get involved.

7. Ongoing Policy Consultation

Learning Opportunities Index (LOI) Policy. This policy affirms the TDSB's commitment to achieve equitable academic opportunities. This Policy will assist with steering additional resources to schools serving students who face greater challenges and to make sure that all students have access to educational resources. The revised draft Policy also aims to support student learning experiences through equitable allocation of resources to schools and to provide direction to staff regarding the use of the Learning Opportunities Index (LOI). Comments are due before **March 24, 2025**.

Jessica's commentary: I agree absolutely that some student populations face more challenges than others, and that it is appropriate for certain types of supports to be augmented at schools with a lower LOI. Unfortunately, the LOI has been creeping into areas where it may not belong. When determining funding for improvements to facilities, for example, the LOI of the school is not a relevant consideration. Parent councils are not allowed to contribute to the cost of school infrastructure, even if they have the means to do so. As such, LOI should not be a factor in decisions related to facilities repair and maintenance.

This is the text of a strategy adopted at the Planning and Priorities Committee on October 25, 2023:

Capital Revitalization Strategy

Goal

The long-term goal of the Capital Revitalization Strategy is for TDSB to not have any school buildings classified as requiring extensive improvement by 2035. The mid-term goal is to reduce the number of school buildings classified as requiring extensive improvement by 25% by 2028. The goal, specifically the timing, will be reviewed regularly to determine how external factors may be impacting the plan. Guiding Principles Guiding principles are required in order to achieve the multi-year goal and assist staff in determining the timing of projects. TDSB is committed to the creation of learning and working spaces that foster safety and belonging for all students and staff, including those who identify as Indigenous, Black, racialized, having disabilities, members of various faith groups and members of 2SLGBTQ+ communities.

Aligned with the TDSB's Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy (LTPAS) and the Toronto Lands Corporation's Modernization Strategy, the Capital Revitalization Strategy will undertake building upgrades and renewal work based on the following guiding principles:

- *Provide a consistent range and quality of program spaces for all elementary and secondary schools;*
- *Make the buildings and sites barrier-free accessible;*
- *Ensure buildings are safe and healthy;*
- *Refresh interior and exterior finishes to create safe, welcoming environments for students, staff and community-use;*

- Consider modernization of building components and systems to improve energy efficiency, reduce greenhouse gases and make the site climate resilient;
- The following will be considered when determining the timing of the projects:
 - the classification of the building
 - *the Learning Opportunities Index of the school*
 - the LTPAS (for example, schools identified to be investigated in a Pupil Accommodation Review should be considered for improvement after a Board decision has been made on the outcome of the review);
 - the funding sources (for example, those that are time sensitive); and
- Minimize disruption to students, families, and staff.

The draft policy does mention that it should not be used for critical items like heating and lighting, but that does not go far enough. The draft document also does not include the appendices that set out the details, so it is difficult to really analyse the impacts of the policy.

Further, it would be helpful to see a comparison between the draft policy and the existing policy. School councils are made up of volunteers with limited volunteer resources. Let's be clear about what changes are being proposed.

Dealing With Abuse and Neglect of Students Policy

The revised draft *Dealing with Abuse and Neglect of Students Policy* (the "Policy") supports the Toronto District School Board's commitment to educate school communities about their Duty to Report, incidents of suspected, witnessed, and/or disclosed neglect and abuse of children to the Children Aid Societies. The draft Policy also centres around the principles of human rights, in alignment with the Human Rights Policy (P031) and the Human Rights Code, to provide a culturally safe, nurturing, positive, and respectful learning environment focused on preventing abuse and neglect for all students, including Indigenous, Black, and newcomer students.

In addition, the revised draft Policy includes provisions related to:

- Embedding Jordans and Katelynn Principles.
- Committing to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, specifically related to child welfare and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
- Aligning the Policy to governing legislation and directions, such as, the Human Rights Code, the Education Act, the Child, Youth, and Family Services Act, 2017, Policy Program Memorandum (PPM) 9: Duty to Report Children in Need of Protection, and PPM 166: Keeping Students Safe: Policy Framework for School Board Anti-Sex Trafficking Protocols.
- Educating all students about abuse and neglect.

- Informing and training employees and volunteers working with students about their legal duty to report abuse and neglect - suspected, witnessed and/or disclosed to Children's Aid Society and/or Native Child Services.
- Identifying, developing and facilitating identity affirming/culturally responsive and relevant healing practices for all groups of students.
- New section on: detecting and reporting abuse and neglect.
- New section on: privacy and confidentiality.
- New section on: training and awareness.
- New section on: Truth and Reconciliation – Calls to Action, UNDRIP, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls –Reclaiming Power and Place.
- New section on: child welfare and their impacts on black students, newcomer students and their parents/guardians/caregivers.
- New section on: institutional accountability.

Comments on this policy are due by **February 24, 2025**

All policies under review can be found on the following website:

<http://www.tdsb.on.ca/About-Us/Policies-Procedures-Forms/Policy-Consultations>

The Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy
Minister of Finance
c/o Budget Secretariat
Frost Building North, 3rd Floor
95 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1Z1

RE: Budget Consultation Submission from Northern Secondary School School Council

Dear Hon. Minister Bethlenfalvy,

We are making this submission as co-chairs of the School Advisory Council at Northern Secondary School, with endorsement from our voting members. With approximately 2,250 students, Northern Secondary is a large high school in a generally well-resourced community within the Toronto District School Board. Though we have high levels of parental involvement and a strong administrative team, our students still come to school with boilers that are unreliable, plumbing that fails, windows that are cracked and indoor temperatures that soar to dangerous levels in the summer. Our school is in dire need of capital improvements to accommodate one of the largest student populations in the entire board, and to do this we need commitment to more funding for capital improvements at the provincial level. We know that there are many schools in dire need of repairs, additions or replacement, we kindly ask you to increase the provincial investment in capital improvement funding for all Ontario boards.

On December 17, 2024, the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario released a report entitled *Ontario School Boards: School Building Condition, Student Capacity and Capital Budgeting*. This report found that while province wide, 62.6% of schools are in a state of good repair, in large urban boards, the percentage of schools that meet this standard is far lower. The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is the largest school board in the province, and only 15.9% of the schools in that Board are in a state of good repair. Put the opposite way, 84.1% of schools in the TDSB fall below the standard of a state of good repair.

These abysmal statistics are in large part due to the fact that capital funding for school repair is administered by the province and treats each of the 72 school boards as though they are the same. What this means is that when the Ministry of Education accepts applications for capital funds, each board is permitted to submit the same number of applications. So, for example, in the 2023-2024 school year, each school board in the province, irrespective of size, was invited to submit five applications for capital funds.

The TDSB has over 580 schools. By comparison, the Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board has only 39 schools. If applications were accepted and approved for 5 schools in each board per year, it would take only 8 years for each school to be approved for a capital project in the smaller board. In the TDSB, by contrast, it would take 116 years. Clearly, a policy that does not take the size of the school board into account will result in schools quickly falling into a state of poor repair in larger urban boards. As bad as this math sounds, it actually understates the scope of the problem, because of the 5 proposals that the TDSB submitted in 2023-2024, only one was approved by the Ministry of Education. That proposal was not the top priority of the board, however, it was the only one in a riding held by the governing party. Projects approved as Capital Priorities in 2024-2025 did not include a single project in the TDSB, even though it is the largest school board in the province.

For the 2025-2026 budget year, we hope that your leadership, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, can bring about a new model for capital funding for large urban school boards. Funding that takes the number of schools and students into account seems like a good place to start. As active voters, we expect to see a reasonably similar percentage of schools in good repair in every school board in the province, and that will only be possible with a new approach to the capital funding model. Keeping 580 schools in a state of good repair requires more funding than doing the same for 39 schools.

Large urban boards need flexibility to close or consolidate underutilized schools in order to deliver quality education in a cost-effective manner. In a rural board, closing a school might mean that children need to travel unreasonable distances to get to school. In large urban boards, this is rarely the case.

All students in the province have an equal right to a quality education in safe, well-maintained learning spaces. The current model provides new, well-maintained schools to students in rural boards, while leaving schools in large urban boards crumbling. Please don't let our kids down!

Sincerely,

Jessica Miklos and Omar Becerril
Co-chairs
On behalf of
Northern Secondary School School Council

cc: Hon. Jill Dunlop, Minister of Education, by e-mail
Neethan Shan, Chair, TDSB, by e-mail
Shelley Laskin, TDSB Trustee, by e-mail