



Barbara Poplawski
Trustee Ward 10

Dear Parent/Guardian:

As another school year ends, I thank you for your continued commitment to Catholic education. I also want to take this opportunity to update you on some of the financial issues we face.

You may have heard the Provincial Government speak about changes to the funding of education. They are to be commended for some of the initiatives that have been undertaken in recent years to reduce class sizes, improve student achievement on standardized tests, and reduce the drop-out rate in secondary schools.

For a number of years, the Toronto school boards have faced a number of other financial pressures as well. These include the escalating cost of transportation, the costs associated with leasing many of our school facilities, and a shortfall in the funding of teacher salaries and benefits, which amounts to approximately \$7,000 per teacher. Our Board employs approximately 5,700 teachers.

In its most recent budget announcement, the Ministry of Education has increased the flexibility of the funding model, but has not provided any new money to offset the cost of teacher salaries, which means that money will have to be diverted from other areas to offset the actual cost.

The Ministry of Education suggests that because of declining enrolment (an issue Boards across the Province face) we should be able to balance our budget. If you consider that each class has lost an average of less than two students over the last 10 years, this does not translate into any cost savings. Whether there are 24 students in a classroom or 22, the costs per class remain the same. Our schools operate at over 90% capacity.

In February of 2004 we wrote to the Government alerting them to the issues we now face. Last August we wrote again about the continued financial challenges.

Over the summer, there will be public discussion about school board finances. According to recent projections, we are facing a potential deficit of \$31 million (approximately 4% of our operating budget). We hope to continue to work with the Ministry of Education to address this matter.

In September we will provide you with an update on our discussions. In the event that we are still facing a shortfall, we will seek your direct input prior to taking any decisions with respect to the budget. Information will be published on the board's website at www.tcdsb.org later in the summer. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

I wish you and your family a safe, restful and happy summer. I look forward to seeing you in the fall.

Barbara Poplawski

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