

Remarks to the February 27, 2007 Meeting of the Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board

Mister Chair:

Developing the annual budget and overseeing the Board's ongoing capital and operating affairs are important components in restoring financial stability to the Dufferin-Peel Catholic School Board. But they are not enough. As I have indicated on many occasions the process is more than simply financial. It is also about re-establishing relationships and ensuring that the Board emerges from the co-management process as a healthy organization ready to deal with future challenges. This process requires:

- open and transparent communication regarding the co-management decisions;
- meaningful engagement in the priority-setting process by all parts of the community;
- structures and processes which support sound management and responsible stewardship; and
- trustees' involvement in those affairs of the Board over which they continue to have jurisdiction.

Co-Management and Information Sharing

All matters affecting the financial affairs of the Board are being managed by staff and the Chair of the Co-Management Committee.

Issues affecting the operating and capital budget are being considered through the weekly Executive Committee meetings.

To ensure that trustees, staff and constituents are fully apprised of the decisions taken, a public report on all issues decided through this process will be presented in the *Other Business* section of the monthly Board meeting. This will constitute the formal public report for the process. The full text of the report will also be posted on the Board web site.

In addition, the public delegation portion of the Board agenda will be continued as the means for public input on all non-financial matters.

Engagement in Priority Setting Process

The major vehicle for public involvement in setting financial priorities will be the annual budget process. Staff has been directed to develop a budget development model which:

- begins in January and ends no later than June 30 of each year;
- provides opportunities for parents, staff and community members to offer their views on strategic financial directions; and
- results in staff recommendations for a budget that meets the annual deficit reduction targets.

I am pleased to advise that the staff work on this matter is nearly complete. I hope to present trustees and the broader community with the proposed structure for the annual budget process through the *Other Business* section of the next Administration and Finance Committee Meeting. Details will also be posted on the Board web site and forwarded to all School Councils for information.

Supporting Sound Management and Responsible Stewardship

The processes and procedures which govern the day-to-day operations of the Board are defined in its Policies and by-laws. *Moving Forward Together* detailed 10 revisions to existing by-laws to promote responsible stewardship. These ranged from the tabling of a “money-bill” defining the rules for adopting additional programs and services, to empowering staff to set school hours based on the most effective and efficient use of the transportation fleet.

These by-laws are deemed to be in effect. They will be formally presented to the March meeting of the By-law Committee.

Work is also continuing on the Ministry-sponsored review of the integrated transportation system. Recommendations for improving efficiency and effectiveness are expected in time to begin implementation for the coming school year.

Role of Trustees

It is important that trustees are in a position to resume control and charge of the Board once it returns to a stable and sustainable financial position. To ensure that trustees continue to have a meaningful ongoing role in the life of the Board:

- committees and Board, both regular and special, will continue to meet to consider denominational issues and matters that do not affect operating and capital budgets;
- SEAC and SALEP will function in their normal manner;
- trustees will continue to liaise with parents and constituents, including attendance at school councils;
- trustees will continue to recommend the selection of

architects for approved capital projects; and

- board resources may continue to be used for communications, provided that the communication is of a non-partisan nature and carried out in accordance with policy I have requested staff to develop.

I am prepared to meet informally with trustees to hear their views and advice on issues where they wish to offer it. I would also be pleased to entertain proposals for trustees to resume a more formal role in the financial decision-making process.

Decisions and Directions to Staff

During the past month a number of decisions affecting the financial affairs of the Board have been taken. These include:

1. approval of the audited financial statements for 2005-2006. The report of the Board auditors confirmed that the operating deficit for 2005-2006 stood at \$2.435 million. The report also concluded that financial controls were ‘satisfactory’ for all aspects of the Board’s operations. A copy of the audited financial statements will be posted on the Board web site in the near future.
2. approval for the capital improvements required for the R.F. Hall hospitality program from facilities renewal funding. Staff will be providing the school community with details of the program in the near future.
3. cancellation of the mandatory 2 week summer shut-down at the CEC and the Keaton Centre originally approved by the Board in September 2006. The majority of the savings anticipated from this measure have already been achieved through the vacancy management program. All staff will, however, be encouraged to take a portion of their holidays during the last week of July and the first week of August. A

uniform summer closure policy will be reconsidered once the vacancy management program is no longer in effect.

Staff has also been directed to undertake the following actions:

1. engage the services of a consultant to determine whether a sale and exchange of lands would provide sufficient funding to allow the Loyola project to move forward;
2. provide a report on the impact on the existing capital program of proceeding with the Loyola project;
3. work with the administration and school council to mitigate the effects of cancellation of regular home to school transportation to Holy Name of Mary Catholic Secondary School;
4. co-operate with local members of the provincial parliament in the development of strategies to secure Council approval for public transportation on Mississauga Road;
5. work with the committee established by the St. Sofia School Council to study potential transportation efficiencies for the coming academic year; and
6. develop an overview of the revised literacy support model for presentation during the 2007-08 budget process.

I am committed to continuing to work with trustees, staff and the community to bring financial stability to the Board in a way that balances the interest of all of the parties involved and responsibly addresses their major concerns.

I am also committed to doing so in a manner that is open and transparent.

Thank you Mr. Chair.