

## **Remarks to the August 28, 2007 Meeting of the Board**

Mr. Chairman and Trustees of the Board

A new school year will soon be upon us. While it has been a hectic and busy summer preparing for the new challenges, I trust that all of you have had an opportunity for some down time as well.

For those of us whose lives are regulated by the school year calendar, this time of year is an exciting one. We look forward with anticipation, hope and optimism for what the new year will bring.

This year we have much to be optimistic about. Support from our community remains strong. New schools are being built and opened. Our professional and support staff is ready for the challenges of the coming year. Collective agreements with the majority of our staff are in place. The Board has achieved the financial stability it requires to move forward. And you have chosen a new leader to help guide you into the future.

A significant contribution to that sense of optimism is the new investment that the government has made in the education sector. As you have already heard from your staff, earlier this month the government announced an additional investment of \$182 M for boards across the province. This investment, intended to assist school boards with financial pressures identified through submissions to and discussion with the Ministry, brings total education spending in the province to \$18.45 B. This is \$963M or 6.2% per pupil more than 2006-2007 and \$3.7B (i.e. 29%) above 2002-2003 funding levels.

A significant portion of the funding is dedicated to increasing the benchmarks for various categories of expenditure ranging from

staff salaries and benefits and transportation to school operations and school leadership. This increase in benchmarks will greatly assist boards like ours whose expenditure in these categories exceeds current benchmarks. Other monies are directed to specific area of concerns such as the Primary Class Size Initiative and Special Education. In addition the Ministry has committed to a further review of the effectiveness of education funding by 2010.

For Dufferin-Peel, these summer enhancements will mean new funding of approximately \$7M.

On June 12, 2007, I approved a 2007-08 operating budget that moves the board close to a balanced budget. As a result of these new enhancements, I have requested staff to develop revisions to this budget using the following principles:

1. to fully eliminate the remaining operating deficit which is currently estimated at \$1.7M.
2. to apply the increased benchmark funding to those areas where board expenditures exceed current funding levels so that financial stability for future years is assured, and
3. to identify priorities for the investment of the remaining funding available from the new enhancement.

Staff will be presenting a report that reflects these principles to the September meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee.

I am also pleased to advise that recommendations to the Co-chair made at the July meeting of the Board as well, as the contract with CUPE 2026, are approved.

As always, Mr. Chair I am prepared to answer any questions that trustees may have.