

## THE MISSISSAUGA NEWS

### Working for students

Dear Editor:

**The Mississauga News**

Jul 21, 2006

#### Working for students

On behalf of my fellow trustees on the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board (DPCDSB), I must take issue with your recent editorial (Board trustees must be taught, The News, July 5 edition) that identified balancing the budget the core role of the board. Making do with whatever funds the Province chooses to provide is certainly not our vision of our primary role, nor is it the role parents expect us to play.

Our core role is to ensure that students under our stewardship receive the best possible education available anywhere in this province. It's a goal that has become increasingly difficult as successive provincial governments have chosen to redirect funds away from basic needs in order to fund their pet projects.

Our board is not alone. Dozens of other boards across the province are either in deficit or about to be in deficit positions as well.

DPCDSB trustees have led the way to bring underfunding of transportation, salaries, and special education into the provincial spotlight. We have done so without support from our local Liberal MPPs who appear to be more interested in towing the party line than in representing their constituents on this important matter.

As a direct result of our willingness to stand up for quality education, provincial officials have been told by their own independent investigators that they need to increase funding for transportation, salaries, and special education. Education Minister Sandra Pupatello has now publicly acknowledged there is a shortfall. We are hopeful that the province will provide the needed funding and that the cuts described by your editorial as inevitable, can in fact, be avoided.

Your editorial accuses trustees of not wanting to make tough decisions. We demur. The easy road would have been to do the province's bidding. Had we knuckled under and directed staff to recommend cuts, as your editorial suggests, the Province could have continued to ignore this growing funding crisis. You also suggest that staff were deficient in not steering us away from our decided course of action. Let me be clear. At our board, trustees, not staff, are responsible for setting policy.

The harder decision was to speak out. We took that road with the express direction and support of the parents we represent and to whom we are accountable. With their support, we will continue to work with the province to find solutions to our budget issues that do not compromise the quality of education for our 88,000 students.

It's a record we will be proud to stand by in the coming elections.

Peter Ferreira

Chair

Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board