

# Board Report Number: 24055

April 3, 2024  
For Information

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**To:** The Chair and Members of the Halton District School Board  
**From:** R. Negoi, Superintendent of Business Services and Treasurer  
C. Ennis, Director of Education  
**Re:** **2024/2025 Budget Consultation - Survey Results**

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## Background

Annually, school boards are required to develop a budget that allocates available funding to addressing the diverse needs of the system. The key objective of the Budget Development Process is to align the allocation of resources with the annual Operational Plan of the Board, the Multi-Year Plan, the Special Education Plan and the School Renewal/Capital Plans; identify school-based staffing requirements; identify budget challenges and opportunities; and gather input from the various stakeholder groups. New regulation requires that the Halton District School Board (HDSB) balance its budget in 2024/2025, eliminating the current year projected deficit of \$7.7M. Any use of board reserves requires approval of the Ministry of Education.

In preparation for the 2024/2025 Budget, the HDSB invited parent(s)/guardian(s), students, staff and community members to provide input into the budget development process. The focus was on gathering an understanding of how to minimize impact of potential reductions across the board, and identifying areas of highest priority.

## Rationale

In past years, school boards were allowed to file a compliant budget, using board reserves of up to 1% of their provincial (funding) allocation. This allowed HDSB and the Board of Trustees to enhance the funding to the system, above what was received from the province, by making use of available reserve funds. For the upcoming year however, new regulation requires school boards that ran a deficit in the prior two years, to balance their budget. This means that HDSB cannot access its reserves without formal approval by the Ministry of Education.

For 2023/2024, the HDSB is projecting a deficit of \$7.7M. The 2024/2025 budget planning focuses on eliminating this deficit, while balancing the projected decline in enrolment, expected decrease to interest rates and other competing priorities that may require additional investment. As a result, based on current information available, and in the absence of funding release, the HDSB is estimating the need to identify \$10.3M in savings and efficiencies, while making \$2.8M in investments, for a net reduction of \$7.5M.

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An online survey was made available to the public from February 2 to February 26, 2024. The survey was promoted via the HDSB website, social media and through a media release. An email was also sent to all HDSB parents/guardians and staff to notify them of the opportunity to provide feedback. Student Trustees shared the survey invitation with the Student Senate, who communicated it to their peers. The budget survey link was also shared with the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) members.

The survey asked respondents to share feedback on the following two topics: (1) As we continue to review our programs and resource allocation, please share any feedback that you would like HDSB to consider in the decision-making and review process; (2) Even when budgetary measures are needed to reduce deficits and balance the budget, there are areas which will require continued support and investment. From the list below choose the top three areas that are most important to you and that you feel the HDSB needs to maintain or direct more investments.

The survey received a total of 3,414 responses. Majority of the responses were received from parents/guardians (62%), students and staff members provided 12.5% and 12% of responses, respectively, while community members and organizations contributed approximately 1% of responses each. Approximately 12% of responses were received by respondents who endorsed multiple roles (e.g., parent and staff).

The survey findings are provided in [Appendix A](#) attached to this report. The overall tone of responses is that of a concern around the impact to the availability and quality of student programs and experience overall. In terms of the top areas of priority, respondents identified student learning and achievement, safe schools, special education and school repair and maintenance.

Further to the information shared at the time of the budget survey release, an initial list of proposed savings and efficiencies, additions and approach to balancing the budget has been presented at the March 20th, 2024 Committee of the Whole meeting (and posted on the [website](#)). In response to the feedback we received through survey responses, and at the request of the Board of Trustees, information outlining the mitigating factors to support the system and minimize the impact to student learning and well being, as a result of proposed reductions has been compiled and posted [here](#).

## Multi-Year Plan Alignment

The budget survey covered all strategic priorities within the current Multi-Year Plan, recognizing that the strategic plan is currently under review and thus the budget planning remains flexible to be able to support the 2024-2028 strategic priorities, once approved.

## Financial Impact

Feedback received from this consultation is reviewed by senior leadership and will inform the recommendations and final decisions around reductions and investments to be included in a draft budget to the Board of Trustees. Without the release of the Grants for Students needs, there remain many uncertainties with regards to funding continuation, particularly for timed investments. A draft budget presentation will be scheduled for the Committee of the Whole later in May, 2024 (depending on the release of education funding), with a draft budget report to be presented to the Board of Trustees at the June 5, 2024 meeting.

### **Respectfully submitted,**

Roxana Negoï  
*Superintendent of Business Services and Treasurer*

Curtis Ennis  
*Director of Education*