

Public school trustees approve budget for 2007-08

Halton District School Board trustees recently unanimously approved a balanced budget for 2007-08, one that breaks the \$400-million mark.

The budget consists of three parts—a \$387 million operating budget, a \$24.4 million capital budget (building and renovation) and a legal fees budget of \$250,000, for a total expected expenditure of \$411.5 million, up 7.5 per cent over the 2006-07 overall budget of \$380.8 million.

The latest budget is up \$101 million since 2003-04.

The board's top administrator likes the look of the budget.

"The budget document represents the priorities and objectives of trustees and administrative staff, and is responsive to the diverse requirements of the students we serve. This budget has been developed with a focus and emphasis on the board's Strategic Plan, which clearly states the board's commitment to students..." Education Director Wayne Joudrie said.

Board chair and Halton Hills

Trustee Gillian Tuck Kutarna is also happy with the budget.

"As a result of the additional time spent providing trustees with a comprehensive overview and responding to our comments and questions, we were able to approve the 2007-08 budget with confidence," said Kutarna.

As is the case with the other school boards around Ontario, salaries and benefits for teachers and non-classroom personnel comprises the bulk of expenditures. At the Halton public board 58 per cent has been allotted for teachers, 15 per cent for other school staff.

Rounding out the expenditure categories for 2007-08 is 10 per cent for facilities maintenance, supplies and utilities, five per cent each for individual school budgets and capital expenses, three per cent apiece for central administration and school bus transportation and one per cent for system learning, such as professional development support for school-based staff.

The 2007-08 budget will cover the

hiring of 37 elementary and 28 high school teachers to match the anticipated 2.7 per cent increase in student enrolment (1,260 more students) and the opening of new schools.

Another 42 primary teachers (JK-Grade 3) are being hired through government funding to address the capping of class sizes in those grades.

The board okayed use of the entire \$1.2 million in the special education reserve fund in order to fund \$2.8 million in increased costs to programming for special education students for 2007-08.

Included in the new budget is \$1.2 million in first-year money for several new student programs, staff and system initiatives such as: ensuring 80 per cent of Grades 3 and 6 students reach the Ontario standard in province-wide testing by 2008; enhanced support for students to improve Grade 9 math and Grade 10 literacy testing and making new and existing schools more environmentally friendly and cost-efficient to operate.

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