Board of Education

Special Public Meeting

May 14, 2024

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 57 (PRINCE GEORGE)

School District No. 57 (Prince George)

BOARD OF EDUCATION

CHARTER

Our mission, as a Board of Education, is to create a culture of trust and integrity by adhering to the highest standards of ethical behaviour and fiduciary responsibility.

We, the Board of Education, individually and collectively, in the conduct of our duties, will be:

- Transparent
- Open-minded
- Consultative
- Committed
- Respectful of Diversity

BOARD OF EDUCATION AND SENIOR ADMINISTRATION

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Board of Education and senior administration believe we are accountable to the families and communities we serve. We respect their diversity and support their involvement.

We further believe that all children can learn, achieve and succeed, and that by working together with our employees, students, parents, and our communities, we will enable our students to reach their greatest academic potential.

We believe our students have the right:

- To a safe and respectful learning environment.
- To be valued.
- To have the opportunity to explore and develop their potential.
- To have their intellectual, emotional, physical and social needs met

We also believe that with these rights come responsibilities with respect to their school, classroom and work habits.

We believe our employees have the following rights and responsibilities:

- To be treated fairly and work in a safe environment.
- To be respected, trusted, included and valued.
- To explore, collaborate and develop to their potential.
- To treat others fairly, work cooperatively, and create a safe working and learning environment.

Together, we affirm that these guiding principles provide the foundation for the decisions we make in School District No. 57.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 57 (PRINCE GEORGE)

SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING

4:00 p.m., Tuesday, May 14, 2024

Boardroom – 2100 Ferry Avenue

A G E N D A

The Board of Education is committed to providing a safe and respectful environment. The Board expects all participants to model respectful communication in order to foster positive relationships and build understanding between all school district partners.

Trustees as members of the corporate Board shall act prudently, ethically and legally, in keeping with the requirements of provincial legislation. This includes proper use of authority and appropriate decorum in terms of group and individual behaviour.

Trustees will ensure that their comments are issue based and not personal, demeaning, derogatory or disparaging with regard to Board staff or fellow Trustees, including comments made to media or news outlets.

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

2. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL TERRITORY**

3. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

   That the agenda be approved as presented.

4. **2024/25 DRAFT ANNUAL BUDGET** Page 1

5. **ADJOURNMENT**

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

Advisory Committee – May 21, 2024
Regular Public Board – May 28, 2024

PUBLIC REMARKS:

In accordance with Policy 7 Board Operations:

- *There shall be a public remarks period of up to 30 minutes (Note – maximum of six (6) speakers) following the adjournment of every regularly scheduled public Board meeting, to provide an opportunity for members of the public to make comments to the Board. Public remarks shall be relevant to items on the evening's approved regular public agenda. The Board will listen respectfully to comments, however may not respond to questions during this time.*

- *Members of the public may submit written comments relevant to items on the evening's approved regular public agenda to the Board Chair by email at publicinput@sd57.bc.ca for consideration by the Board. Written submissions must be received by 5 p.m. on the Monday prior to the regular public meeting.*

- *Individuals or groups wishing to make public remarks must identify themselves and the issue(s) to be presented on a speakers' list which will be available following the adjournment of the regular public meeting.*

- *Each speaker from the public will be allowed five minutes to make comments. At the discretion of the Chairperson, additional time may be allotted.*

Additional Notes:

- *The Board of Education has a legal responsibility to create and maintain a respectful workplace*
- *Respectful language and behaviour at all times*
- *Right to disagree but done in a respectful manner*
- *All individuals are entitled to their opinion but not at the expense of others' dignity*
- *Model the behaviour that you would want your children to engage in*
- *No signage is allowed in the meeting room*

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 57 (PRINCE GEORGE)

May 14, 2024

Memorandum

TO: Board of Education

FROM: District Staff

SUBJECT: **DRAFT 2024/25 ANNUAL BUDGET**

Background:

School District No. 57 (Prince George) is required to submit the 2024/25 Annual Budget Bylaw to the Minister of Education and Child Care by June 30, 2024.

The Ministry of Education and Child Care provides 98.4% of the Board's operating revenue. The 2024/25 projected revenue from the Ministry was increased from last year's revenue for salary and benefit increases only. There was no additional funding for inflationary cost pressures. In addition, the 2023/24 budget was balanced with the use of operating surplus dollars in the amount of $1.1 million.

With no additional funding and on-going cost pressures, the draft 2024/25 Annual Budget indicated an initial deficit of approximately $2.2 million. Since the draft budget was first developed, the district has worked to identify cost reductions that could be implemented immediately. As of May 10, 2024, the projected operating deficit is $1.9 million.

District staff have presented recommendations for reductions at Business Committee and Advisory Committee meetings and to members of the public through a recorded presentation available on the website. Since the initial recommendations were provided, additional recommendations have been identified and included for Board discussion.

The following items are attached to the agenda:

1. **Proposed reductions**
   The 2024/25 Annual Budget currently projects a deficit of $1.9 million. The recommendations for reductions total $2.4 million leaving flexibility for the Board in providing direction to staff.

2. **Public response to 2024/25 Annual Budget communications**
   There were 800 responses to the public survey on the district website. The themes from the survey questions are attached to the agenda for information and discussion. In addition, correspondence regarding the 2024/25 budget was received through e-mail. This information has been provided directly to trustees for consideration.

At tonight's meeting, district staff will review the proposed recommendations. The Board will discuss the information and provide direction to staff to support the preparation of a balanced budget for presentation at the May 28, 2024 Regular Board Meeting.

2024/25 Draft Annual Budget

MAY 14, 2024 – SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

2024/25 Draft Annual Budget Deficit and Recommended Reductions

2024-2025 Draft Annual Budget - Operating Deficit	**$**	**(1,933,958)**
Proposed budget reductions	**$**	**2,398,300**

2024-2025 Recommended Budget Reductions

Instruction

All schools	Reduction to school budget allocations by $30 per student - reduction of costs at school level	390,000
Schools	Reduction in school administration positions (Southridge, College Heights Elementary, Van Bien, Morfee, Mackenzie Secondary, McBride Secondary)	500,000
Elementary Schools	Increase in VP teaching time/reduction in teacher allocation 0.2 FTE per school (Quinson, Spruceland, Ron Brent, Harwin, Nusdeh Yoh)	121,000
District Learning Commons	Reduction in staffing, supplies and services	270,000
Indigenous Education	Eliminate Director position (currently vacant)	221,000

2024-2025 Recommended Budget Reductions

Instruction - continued

Schools	Reductions in clerical staffing	127,000
Valemount Schools	Reduce supplemental staffing allocation	125,000
Giscome Elementary	Reduce supplemental small rural school allocation to reflect declining enrollment	30,000
Distance Education Program	Eliminate program	TBD
Cultural Performances Program	Reduction in budget allocation for staff travel & clerical support	10,000
Rural Schools	Reduction in staff travel allocation from $5,000 to $2,500 per school, based on prior year actual costs	15,000

2024-2025 Recommended Budget Reductions

District Administration - Education Administration		
Teacher Pro-D Fund Administration	Eliminate coordinator position (0.5 FTE)	67,000
District Administration - Business Administration		
Central Administration	Reduction in budget for retirement/long-service celebration and gifts	10,000
Governance	Eliminate DPAC budget	9,000
Central Administration Office	Reduction in coffee supplies	7,000

2024-2025 Recommended Budget Reductions

Operations and Maintenance		
Utilities	Staffing reduction	106,000
Purchasing Department	Staffing reduction	100,000
Operations and Maintenance	Staffing reduction related to discontinued and potentially discontinued programs (Distance Education, Provincial Resource Programs, Intersect)	97,000
Custodial services	Staffing reduction/reorganization	67,000
Vehicle Fleet	Reduce fleet by 3 vehicles - operating cost savings (insurance, fuel, maintenance)	12,300
Transportation		
Student Transportation	Implement a registration fee of $50 per student (maximum $75 per family)	100,000
Student Transportation	Staffing reductions	14,000
2024-2025 Total Proposed Budget Reductions		**2,398,300**

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 57 (PRINCE GEORGE)

May 14, 2024

SUBJECT: **2024/25 DRAFT ANNUAL BUDGET**
ON-LINE SURVEY SUMMARY AND THEMES

Q1: HOW ARE YOU CONNECTED TO THE DISTRICT?

Total Responses = 800

- Parent / Guardian / Caregiver (345)
- Student (4)
- Community Member (77)
- Staff (361)
- Other (13 Blanks)

Q2: WHAT ARE THE PRIORITIES YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE REFLECTED IN THE BUDGET?

Common themes for school district budget priorities include:

1. **Staffing and Support:** There is a strong emphasis on teacher recruitment and retention, as well as the need for more support staff such as Education Assistants (EAs), counselors, speech therapists, and other specialists to support student needs.

2. **Student Wellness and Mental Health:** Many responses highlight the importance of funding for mental health supports, counseling services, and overall student well-being. There is a focus on student mental health and wellness programs.

3. **Equity and Inclusivity**: Community members stress the importance of equity and inclusivity in education, particularly in supporting Indigenous education, students with special needs, neurodiversity, and diverse learners.

4. **Student Learning and Classroom Supports**: Prioritizing resources for student learning, maintaining services that directly impact children, including classroom resources, libraries, music, arts, and technology options.

5. **Professional Development:** Concerns about maintaining funding for teacher professional development, district learning commons (DLC), and mentorship programs to support ongoing learning and collaboration among educators.

6. **Rural School Funding:** Calls for increased support for rural schools, preserving programs like CIDES, and ensuring rural students have access to similar opportunities as urban students.

7. **Budget Allocation and Administration:** Suggestions to cut administrative costs at the board office level, reduce top-level salaries, and focus on allocating resources directly to schools and classrooms rather than administrative positions.

8. **Safety and Facilities:** Concerns about budget cuts affecting student safety, maintenance of district buildings, class sizes, access to technology, and general upkeep of school facilities.

9. **Student Supports and Special Needs:** Emphasis on providing additional assistance for students with special needs, including increased funding for EAs, assessments, speech therapy, learning assistance, and support for students with learning or behavioral challenges.

10. **Program and Service Sustainability:** Recommendations to maintain funding for essential programs like the district learning commons, mental health support, distance education options, and resources that enhance student learning and engagement.

These themes represent the key priorities and areas of focus identified by the community in the survey responses regarding the school district budget.

Q3: WHY ARE THESE BUDGET PRIORITIES IMPORTANT TO YOU?

The feedback from the school district budget survey includes a wide range of concerns related to the allocation of resources within the district. Community members, parents, and staff expressed the importance of prioritizing student needs and supporting teachers to enhance student learning outcomes. There are concerns about the lack of qualified teachers, inadequate support staff, and insufficient resources for students with special needs. Additionally, issues such as classroom sizes, mental health support, and access to professional development were highlighted as crucial for a successful education system. Overall, the feedback emphasizes prioritizing students, teachers, and school resources to ensure a high-quality education for all students.

The major themes of the survey data can be summarized as follows:

1. **Support for Teachers**: Participants expressed concerns about the lack of qualified teachers, support staff, and resources in schools. They emphasized the importance of investing in teacher training, professional development, and classroom supports to ensure quality education and student success.

2. **Student Needs and Well-being**: Concerns were raised about the diverse needs of students, including those with special needs, mental health challenges, and learning disabilities. Participants highlighted the importance of providing adequate support, resources and services to meet the needs of all students to promote academic success and well-being.

3. **Budget Priorities**: Participants emphasized the importance of prioritizing budget allocations to support student learning, teacher development, and school resources. They advocated for directing funds towards student-focused initiatives and school improvements rather than administrative expenses.

4. **Indigenous Education**: Several comments mentioned the significance of Indigenous education and the need to support Indigenous students, families, and communities. Participants highlighted the role of Indigenous education directors in promoting cultural awareness, reconciliation, and support for Indigenous learners.

5. **Professional Development**: The importance of professional development for teachers and staff was highlighted as a key aspect to improve teaching practices, student outcomes and overall school performance. Participants emphasized the need for ongoing training and access to resources for educators.

6. **Student Success and Equity**: Participants stressed the importance of prioritizing student success, equity in education and access to essential resources for all students. They highlighted the need to address gaps in student support, educational resources, and learning opportunities to ensure equal access to quality education.

Overall, the themes of teacher support, student needs, budget priorities, Indigenous education, professional development, student success, and equity emerged as key concerns and priorities in the survey data.

Q4: WHEN CONSIDERING REDUCTIONS, WHAT TYPES OF REDUCTIONS SHOULD THE BOARD CONSIDER FIRST?

Common themes:

1. **Reductions in administrative positions at the board office**: Many comments suggest that there are too many senior administrative positions and redundant roles at the district level. Cutting back on administrative positions that do not directly impact student learning was identified as a priority for respondents.

2. **Review of upper management salaries**: Several comments mention that high salaries for senior administrators could be reduced to help with budget constraints.

3. **Cuts to unnecessary positions**: Positions that are seen as not directly contributing to student learning, such as district positions, could be reviewed for potential reductions.

4. **Evaluation of non-essential expenses**: Suggestions include cutting unnecessary expenses, such as travel costs, outside speakers, or programs that do not directly benefit students' education.

5. **Review of district-level programs and departments**: Examining the effectiveness and necessity of district programs or specialized areas that could lead to potential reductions.

Overall, the feedback indicates the priority should be on reducing non-essential expenses and positions that do not directly impact student learning in the classroom.

Q5: DO YOU HAVE ANY ADDITIONAL INPUT REGARDING THE 2024/25 ANNUAL BUDGET?

Common themes and concerns include:

1. Concerns about budget cuts impacting students, teachers, and essential programs.

2. Calls for transparency and accountability in budget decisions.

3. Requests to prioritize student well-being and education.

4. Frustration with administrative costs and salaries in relation to budget deficits.

5. Emphasis on the importance of professional development for teachers.

6. Support for rural schools and the need for equitable funding.

7. Criticism of budget allocations and decisions affecting specific programs and services.

8. Advocacy for mental health support and resources in schools.

9. Suggestions for cost-cutting measures at the top administrative levels.

10. Calls for better financial management and planning to avoid recurrent deficits.

These themes reflect a range of perspectives and concerns regarding the 2024-2025 Annual Budget and its potential impact on students and education in the district