

**Report Title:** 2025-2026 Budget Consultation - Feedback Results  
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## 1. Analysis

This report provides the Board of Trustees with the results of the budget consultation process. Under the Education Act, school boards are allowed to file a compliant (deficit) budget, using board reserves of up to 1% of their provincial (funding) allocation. A new regulation requires school boards to eliminate the deficit within two years, or request approval from the Minister of Education. The Halton District School Board has filed a compliant (deficit) budget for 3 years in a row, and in the current year received Ministry approval to run a deficit of \$1.8M.

For 2025-2026, the HDSB is required once again to eliminate the deficit and submit a balanced budget. In order to do so, while also facing enrolment decline, the HDSB is focusing on containing costs, reallocating existing resources to system priorities and identifying efficiencies and potential reductions. The budget feedback process was launched earlier this year, to facilitate a meaningful consultation and allow for decisions to be made in a timely fashion.

The budget consultation process started in December 2024, with the launch of the [Budget Input](#) page, where information on the current year budget was provided, questions were answered and a Public Information Engagement Session was held on January 20, 2025 in advance of the survey launch. The survey received a total of 2,076 responses. Majority of the responses were received from parents/guardians (63%), staff and students members provided 18% and 4% of responses, respectively, while community members and organizations contributed 2.5% of responses. Approximately 12.5% of responses were received by respondents who endorsed multiple roles (e.g., parent and staff).

The detailed summary of survey findings are attached to this report. Overall respondents identify as areas of priority to include: school level staff and resources that directly impact student learning, and facilitate equitable access to education for all students. A focus on lower class size, enhanced programming, equitable allocation of staffing and resources for schools of all sizes, safe and clean schools, and special education support were amongst the top themes mentioned. By contrast, respondents identified as areas to identify efficiencies or reallocate funding from, to include: administrative overhead, non-classroom staffing, reducing the use of technology in schools, reducing the use of portables, review of student

transportation eligibility and optional programming; review of equity and inclusion initiatives, reducing professional development, bundling of orders to save cost and pursuing other revenues (such as recruiting more international students, pursuing other grants and funders, program sponsors and increased fundraising).

Also during January, budget discussions took place with elementary and secondary system administrators, managers and supervisors. Priorities identified by these groups include special education support, focus on program offerings, facility modernization, properly trained staff and budget to provide appropriate professional development opportunities. Challenges identified included coverage for shortage of staff, limited departmental, school and facility operating budgets that have not kept up with inflation, smaller schools budget and staffing allocations, and support for special education and student mental health and well-being.

As mentioned in previous reports and presentations, the HDSB spends approximately 98% of the budget to support students directly in the classroom and indirectly by means of facilitating student transportation, repair and maintenance of school facilities and grounds, and providing central support to school level staff and students. The feedback received from the consultation process will inform our review of existing budget allocations to ensure we maximize the support for students, while continuing to be fiscally responsible and operate within limited funding parameters. Some respondents expressed an interest in more transparency into expense categories. School boards report expenses according to Ministry categories. A detailed breakdown of our budget can be found in the [2024-2025 Budget Book](#) posted on the Budget and Financial Information website, and in the [2024-2025 Revised Budget Estimates](#) board report, available on the Board of Trustees website.

## **1.1. Governance Alignment**

Under the Education Act, section 232 (3) and (4) the Board of Trustees are required to approve a balanced budget, with some exceptions for a compliant budget, which would allow for an in-year deficit which could be the lesser of 1% of the provincial allocation calculation or the balance of the accumulated surplus available for compliance. This report is part of the budget development process.

## 2. 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 Multi-Year Strategic 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.

In preparation for the 2025-2026 Budget, HDSB invited input from parents, guardians, students, staff, and community members. A virtual [Public Information Session](#) was held on January 20, 2025, to educate the community about how the board is funded, and how resources are allocated. Feedback was gathered through an online survey which was available from January 21 to February 9, 2025. The survey asked respondents to share feedback on the following three areas:

- (1) What are your areas of priority for the upcoming school year (2025-2026)?
- (2) What areas, within our budget, could we consider for further efficiencies or reallocation?
- (3) As we continue to review our programs and resource allocation, please share any feedback on how HDSB can support you in minimizing the impact of budgetary reallocations.

In addition to the online survey, separate budget discussions were held with the system administrators and managers, as well as with the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC). Budget discussions will continue with the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and with trustees at future Committee of the Whole (COTW) meetings.

## 3. 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 Core Education Funding, 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 on May 20, 2025, with a draft budget report to be presented to the Board of Trustees at the June 3, 2025 meeting.

## 4. Multi-Year Strategic Plan Alignment

### Priority Alignment:

Environmental and Global Citizenship ▾ ; Human Rights, Equity and Inclusion ▾ ;  
Indigenous Rights and Education ▾ ; Kindness, Connection and Community ▾ ;  
Learning, Engagement and Achievement ▾ ; Mental Health and Well-Being ▾

The Board of Trustees have governance over the financial resources allocated to the Halton District School Board, and the strategic allocation to support the Multi-Year Strategic Plan in a manner that is fiscally responsible and compliant with appropriate statutes and regulations. The budget development indirectly supports all of HDSB commitments under the Multi-Year Strategic Plan, by facilitating the allocation of resources for a successful school and fiscal year for students and staff. Budget consultation and feedback is an important part of the budget development process, providing input into the decision making process.

## 5. Attachment(s):

- 5.1. [2025-2026 Annual Budget Consultation - Detailed Summary of Survey Findings](#)

### Respectfully submitted,

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