

Ontario school boards receive record funding in light of COVID-19

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Boosting the education system in light of the pandemic had led to record funding for Ontario's school boards.

School boards are funded through two main avenues ??unicipal property taxes and provincial, Ministry of Education funding.

The Ministry of Education had a budget of roughly \$25.5 billion this year. However, due to COVID-19-related expenditures, that has ballooned to over \$27 billion.

The property taxes vary from region to region and are based on the local tax base. For the Ministry, roughly \$8 billion for school funding comes from property taxes.

Based on the per pupil formula, the Peel Board of Education receives \$1.83 billion from the province and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board gets \$924.5 million.

Boards also receive grants for special education services, language programs and more. It's based on the demographics and specific needs by individual boards.

The school boards set their own budgets and are responsible for all staff salaries, the maintenance of board-owned schools and properties. Part of their budget is earmarked for repairs and maintenance and they can't borrow from that fund to pay for other expenses. Boards can sell surplus lands, which become part of their reserve funds.

Queen's Park dedicated a total of \$1.29 billion to the school boards, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some \$315.6 million are in the process of being distributed to boards across the province. Of the remaining \$1 billion in funding, the province projects the follow allocations for area boards:

The Peel board is anticipating some \$64.9 million in total funding for COVID-19.?This includes funding and an unlocked accumulated surplus. Of that, \$5.7 million will go to hire more teachers to keep class sizes small and \$3.8 million will go to hiring custodians.

Some \$2.1 million will be used for enhanced cleaning and safety measures for student transportation. Around \$1.6 million will support students with special education needs and provide student mental health services. Another \$3 million in one-time funding will go to improving ventilation, air quality and HVAC systems.

The board will use \$3.4 million to hire additional principals, vice-principals and administrative staff.

The Dufferin-Peel board will receive a total of \$33 million. This money will flow as follows:

? \$2.8 million to hire more teachers to keep class sizes small.

? \$1.9 million of \$50 million to hire additional dedicated custodians.

? \$900,000 for enhanced cleaning and safety measures for student transportation.

? \$1 million to support students with special education needs and provide mental health supports.

? \$1.7 million in one-time funding for improved ventilation.

? \$1.7 million to hire additional principals, vice-principals and administrative staff.

The province has also allocated funds to all boards for technological devices, health and safety training and cleaning supplies.

For September, the government has delivered over 37 million pieces of PPE to Ontario's 72 school boards and 10 education authorities, including more than 19.5 million masks, 16 million gloves, 317,000 face shields, 320,000 bottles of hand sanitizer, and 218,000 containers of disinfectant, among other critical supplies.