



ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

OPSBA Review of 2015-16 Grants for Student Needs (GSNs) and Related Announcements

Education Funding for 2015-16

On March 26, 2015 the Ministry of Education issued Ministry Memorandum 2015:B7. This memorandum provides highlights of the 2015-16 Grants for Student Needs (GSN). The GSN for 2015-16 is estimated at \$22.5 billion which is essentially the same amount as the 2014-15 GSN. Highlights are as follows:

- Continuation of School Board Efficiencies & Modernization (SBEM) Initiative providing incentives and supports for boards to make more efficient use of school space.
- SBEM measures include changes to (1) Top-up funding and benchmarks under the School Facility Operations and Renewal Grant; (2) the School Foundation Grant; (3) the Geographic Circumstances Grant; and (4) the Declining Enrolment Adjustment.
- The Ministry will begin to eliminate (3 year phase-in) Base Top-up Funding through the School Facility Operations and Renewal Grant, while continuing to protect Enhanced Top-up funding support for schools that are isolated from other schools of the same board. Some of the savings will be reinvested in operating and renewal cost benchmarks that support students in all schools.
- The Ministry has developed a new allocation method for the School Foundation Grant (3 year phase-in), which provides funding for principals, vice-principals, office support staff, and administrative supplies. The overall impact of this new method is a net investment in schools. However, this method will shift funding away from very small schools that are not isolated.
- As the Ministry has both made investments and put in place protections for boards and schools in rural and remote communities, a decision has been made to phase out over 3 years the Rural and Small Communities Allocation as part of a balanced overall package of changes. Also, changes will be made to the Supported Schools Allocation.
- Beginning in 2015–16, the Ministry will be reducing the Declining Enrolment Adjustment grant to encourage school boards to adjust more quickly to declining enrolment (full implementation in 2015-16).
- In 2015–16, School Condition Improvement (SCI) funding will increase to \$500 million, or double the amount that was allocated to boards in 2014–15. The Ministry is changing the funding approach for SCI starting in 2015–16. SCI funding will now be allocated in proportion to a board's total assessed renewal needs under the Condition Assessment Program.

- The Ministry is conducting pilot School Consolidation Experience Studies (SCES) as part of an effort to work with administrators, teachers, parents, students, and other members of the school community to better understand stakeholder experiences with pupil accommodation decisions (specifically, school closures and consolidations).
- As the work of the Community Hubs Advisory Group unfolds, and to support Community Hubs, the Ministry is prepared to make funding and other resources available to assist school boards with retrofitting and modifying facilities where a viable community hub partner has been identified.
- Labour Framework – As in 2014–15, GSN funding for compensation and other labour costs in 2015–16 will reflect the current situation under the statutory freeze. These provisions include the delay in salary grid movement (known as the “97th day” provisions).
 - When negotiations result in new collective agreements, the Ministry will seek approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council regarding any necessary amendments to the GSN.
 - Benefits benchmarks continue to be reduced as retirement gratuities are phased-out.
 - Beginning in 2015–16, boards will be provided with the funding necessary to support the labour relations activities of their respective trustees’ associations. The funding will be provided each year through the School Board Administration and Governance Grant.
- In 2015-16 the Ministry will continue the phase-in (2nd year of 4 year phase-in) of the new Special Education High Needs Amount (HNA) funding model. New HNA funding model is financially neutral (no new money) so redistributive impact is being phased-in over 4 years (old claims based allocation process will be eliminated & replaced by evidence/data based process) (reference Memo SB05)
- 2015–16 is the second year of the four-year phase-in of the new School Board Administration and Governance Grant. The new model will be fully implemented in 2017–18.
- Six allocations in the Learning Opportunities Grant that directly support programs to improve student achievement will be enveloped as a group, starting in 2015–16:
 - Literacy and Math Outside the School Day Allocation
 - Student Success, Grades 7 to 12 Allocation
 - Grade 7 and 8 Literacy and Numeracy and Student Success Teachers
 - School Effectiveness Framework Allocation
 - Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership (OFIP) Tutoring Allocation
 - Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) Allocation

Boards will be required to report that they have spent the total funding received from the six allocations on programs and services associated with improving student achievement through these initiatives. The enveloping applies to the sum of the six allocations, not to each allocation separately.

- To ensure that allocations in the Safe and Accepting Schools Supplement continue to be directed to achieving safe, inclusive, and accepting school environments, and to enhance prevention and intervention initiatives, the Ministry will introduce enhanced reporting requirements for the Safe and Accepting Schools Allocation.
- The School Board Administration and Governance Grant enveloping provision incorporated in the GSN requires that board’s net administration and governance expenses in a fiscal year do not exceed the administration and governance limit. The expectation is that school

boards are in compliance with the enveloping provision. The Ministry will be reviewing board compliance with this limit.

- Beginning in 2015–16, the Ministry may take action, including applying GSN cash withholdings, if a board’s FDK or primary class size results are not in compliance with the Class Size regulation for two years in a row beginning with its 2014–15 results.
- The Student Transportation Grant will be increased by 2 percent to help boards manage increased costs. As in previous years, this 2 percent cost update will be netted against a school board’s transportation surplus.
- The Ministry will provide a 2 percent cost benchmark update to the non-staff portion of the School Operations Allocation benchmark to assist boards in managing the increases in commodity prices (natural gas, facility insurance, and other costs). There will also be additional funding to further assist boards with electricity costs.

The full B Memorandum is available on the Ministry of Education website at http://tpfr.edu.gov.on.ca/B_Memos_2015.htm

Release of New Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline and Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline

On March 26, 2015 the Ministry of Education issued Ministry Memorandum 2015:B9. This memorandum provides details of the new Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline (PARG) as well as the revised Facility Partnerships Guideline (now known as the Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline (CPPG)).

The focus of the PARG revisions is to allow school boards to have a more effective tool to address their needs to close and consolidate facilities, while continuing to ensure that communities have the opportunity to provide meaningful input.

Highlights of the new PARG:

- Requirements for School Boards to Consult with Municipal Governments and Other Community Partners on Underutilized Space
- Changes to the Accommodation Review Committee Structure
- Changes to Timelines for the Accommodation Review Process
- Changes to School Board Staff Reporting Requirements
- Introduction of Transition Plan Requirement
- Introduction of Optional Modified Accommodation Review Process
- Introduction of Additional Exemptions
- Refocus of School Information Profile Requirements

The focus of the CPPG changes is to enhance opportunities for school boards to work more closely with local municipal governments and other community partners when planning to address their underutilized school space, and more generally to require greater coordination and sharing of planning related information between school boards and other community partners.

Highlights of the CPPG Revisions:

- At a minimum, all levels of municipal government, District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs), Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs), public health boards, Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs), and children’s mental health centres must be on school boards’ notification list when key information regarding facility partnerships or planning is changed or updated.
- At a minimum, on an annual basis, the sharing of planning information between school boards and other community partners must take place at a public meeting. In addition to this meeting, school boards and other community partners have the option to meet at a staff-level to discuss potential partnership and planning opportunities. The type of information to be shared at this meeting by both school boards and community partners, and the documentation of exchanged information by school boards has been specified.
- In addition to the annual meeting, school boards should continue discussions with affected municipalities and other community organizations as they explore options to address underutilized space issues in schools within specific areas of their school board. As part of these discussions with community organizations, school boards should obtain a clear indication of any community planning and partnership opportunities in areas where a pupil accommodation review may take place. Additionally, school boards are to request technical information from the local municipality or municipalities where a planned pupil accommodation review may occur.

The PARG and CPPG continue to represent a framework of **minimum** standards for school boards to meet in developing their pupil accommodation review and facility partnerships policies. **School boards are expected to amend their existing pupil accommodation review and facility partnerships policies to reflect the changes incorporated into the new PARG and CPPG before announcing any new pupil accommodation reviews. The Ministry of Education expects school boards to consult with local communities prior to adopting or subsequently amending these policies.**

The full B Memorandum is available on the Ministry of Education website at http://tpfr.edu.gov.on.ca/B_Memos_2015.htm

2015-16 School Year Education Programs – Other (EPO) Funding

On March 26, 2015 the Ministry of Education issued Ministry Memorandum 2015:B8. This memorandum provides details of the 2015-16 Education Programs Other (EPO) funding. To facilitate school boards’ budget planning for the 2015-16 school year, the Ministry confirms that \$214.1 million (\$178.9 million in 2014-15) of EPO funding will be allocated to school boards and school authorities to support ministry priorities. Within this amount:

- \$153.4 million is allocated by program, with school board allocation detailed included in this memorandum; and
- \$60.7 million has been allocated by program, with school board allocations to be confirmed later in the year.

As indicated in the previous EPO B memorandums (2014:B5 and 2014:B10), the ministry has initiated the EPO streamlining project to simplify the reporting processes and requirements for EPO transfer payments. The goals of the streamlining project are to reduce administrative burden, improve financial resource management and better support the renewed vision.

The main concept that will be used to achieve the project goals is theme bundling. Selected EPO programs that serve the same strategy/priority will be grouped into a bundle, within which school boards will be allowed to flexibly manage the funding resources, as long as they are able to deliver the same (or better) outcomes that the ministry requires in a cost-efficient way. The first wave (to be launched in 2015-16SY) will see the implementation of the following three pilot bundles:

- 1) Student Success – Building Capacity for Effective and Differentiated Instruction
- 2) Well Being: Safe, Accepting and Healthy Schools and Mental Health
- 3) Ontario Leadership Strategy and Professional Learning Enhancements

The full B Memorandum is available on the Ministry of Education website at http://tpfr.edu.gov.on.ca/B_Memos_2015.htm