



## STEO Driver Coverage Impacts and Mitigation Strategies

STEO GM/CAO Janet Murray joined the CDSBEO October 18<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting along with STEO Operations Manager Marc Gosset, to provide an overview of the current climate around school bus driver shortages across Eastern Ontario, and the province. The school bus driver shortages are creating service impacts, including increased delays and cancellations. STEO has implemented some mitigation strategies to help avoid cancellations which were presented to Trustees. Murray noted that STEO has requested that bus operators reach out to families directly if a route is cancelled for that day.

Currently, STEO has 27 routes which do not have a permanent driver, with 29 drivers in training. STEO has lost 22 drivers this year and is currently working with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Transportation to discuss the driver supply issue, as well as the existing constraints on the hiring and licensing process, which can be somewhat costly for new bus drivers.

Gosset noted that route modification is one of the mitigation strategies currently being implemented to remedy vacancies. This may include splitting or doubling routes and can result in delayed service in some cases.

In September, parents were sent a letter requesting eligible riders who were not using the school bus to opt out of transportation services to free up more spaces to optimize routes as an additional mitigation strategy. Students are able to opt back in at any time.

"Our ability to make use of all of the available seats on a school vehicle allows us to ensure that all eligible students who want to ride the bus have the opportunity," explained Murray.

STEO has also begun a recruitment campaign to help inform the community of the driver shortage and encourage applicants.

Trustee Eamer, who is also a member of the STEO Committee, noted the number of inquiries and requests that STEO processes, and the complexity of the current situation with driver shortages.

"STEO has responded to a significant number of inquiries from schools, parents and contractors. We should complement them on a regular basis for the amazing work that they do. There's a multitude of reasons that have impeded bus routes and driver retention - reasons we wouldn't even consider. I would like to thank you for all of the great work that you do."



## Learning and Innovation Fund for Teachers (LIFT)

The Ministry of Education released \$3.5M to provincial school boards for the Learning and Lift Innovation Fund for Teachers (LIFT) for the 2021-2022 school year. LIFT supports professional learning communities and funding enables boards to support teacher collaboration, responsive learning, and the sharing of effective instruction practices within schools. Boards were given flexibility to allocate this funding according to local needs and in alignment with provincial priorities such as STEM, equity, numeracy, early reading, student mental health and Indigenous education.

Principal of Curriculum Brenda Reil provided an update to Trustees on the initiative and its impact within CDSBEO classrooms.

CDSBEO had five different schools implement projects that connected with Ministry priorities which were led by teachers and supported by consultants. Teachers throughout the Board were invited to submit proposals, which could be done on an individual basis or within a school team. Teachers submitted proposals in October, and a selection team met to review the proposals and decide which projects would best support learning priorities, with special consideration given to projects that could benefit teaching and learning system wide.

"School teams began their project implementation in November, documenting their process using qualitative and quantitative data along the way," explained Principal Reil.

School teams then met in June to discuss their project successes and share data informed outcomes.

"We are very excited to see the learning continue in our schools, as these projects will certainly grow as students and educators continue to co-learn and embark on new adventures in their classrooms."

This year, the Ministry initiative has been renamed the Teaching Learning and Innovation Allocation (TLIA). A call for proposals will be sent out to schools in the coming weeks, which will facilitate more teacher collaboration and sharing of effective practices.

"Thank you for your presentation this evening," concluded Chair Lalonde. "It is enlightening to see the very engaging learning opportunities for our students as a result of this initiative."

## Plant and Maintenance Capital, School Renewal and School Condition Improvement Projects

For the last several years, the Ministry of Education has provided significant investment in school renewal and school condition improvement funds allocated to school boards to respond to the results of the province-wide school condition assessment program. The funds



are to be used to cover the repair and replacement of existing building systems (e.g., HVAC and plumbing), major building components (e.g., foundations, roofs, windows), and building interiors and surrounding site components (e.g., utilities, parking, and pavement). In addition, the Ministry of Education has provided funds to improve ventilation/air quality in schools.

Royal Metcalfe, Manager of Plant Operations and Maintenance, presented details of the work that was completed within CDSBEO facilities during the 2021-2022 school year. The Plant and Maintenance Department, with input from senior administration and school principals, develops a prioritized list of projects to be completed across the jurisdiction. The 2021-2022 year presented several challenges related to supply chain issues and labour shortages, however, despite this, the Board completed over \$12.2M in capital projects, with HVAC and air ventilation as a significant priority.

The largest project for the year was phase three of the rebuilding of St. Luke Catholic High School, at a total cost of \$5.8M.

"This was a challenging portfolio which included many unforeseen factors that were presented to the team. Great efforts were taken to ensure that the school was operational for the first day of classes," noted Royal Metcalfe.

This project was funded mainly through insurance proceeds due to the fire in 2020. The Board also made significant School Renewal and School Condition investments to complete upgrades while the opportunity was available. This included the addition of new rooftop units for improved ventilation and occupant comfort.

Mother Teresa Catholic School also received capital funding to construct a new childcare facility at a cost of \$505k. Construction for this project began in October 2021 and was completed in July 2022. The newly renovated space includes a kitchen, office space and washrooms to serve the preschool and before and after school program.

As part of the 2021-2022 school year budget, the Board created a new Indoor Environmental Air Quality Specialist position to monitor, assess, and report on ambient air quality within CDSBEO facilities.

"As part of our efforts, we conducted assessments of our mechanical ventilation systems at each of our facilities to assist in planning our steps forward. Our goal is to continually improve our ventilation systems and to ensure they remain in optimal working condition."

Bishop Macdonell Catholic School received \$1.127M in capital upgrades over the last two renewal sessions, and in 2021-2022 the Board completed the second and final phase of mechanical ventilation and air conditioning upgrades at the school.

Additionally, St. Matthew CHS received just under \$1M in funding to update ventilation systems, which included the addition of seven new rooftop units. St. Edward Catholic School received \$293k to replace aging unit ventilators and to complete necessary repairs to the



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foundation and an existing sidewalk. Other notable projects include building automation upgrades and AODA renovations at St. Finnan's Catholic School, and a roof replacement and portable addition at Our Lady of Good Counsel.

"I would like to thank the Plant and Maintenance staff for working tirelessly through challenging times. Through their dedication we were able to recognize our collective goal to provide exceptional and innovative learning environments for our communities," concluded Metcalfe.