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Durham District School Board

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April 2025

To: Durham Region MPPs and Mayors/Council members from Oshawa, Whitby, Pickering, Ajax, Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge

From: Durham District School Board

Briefing Note: Durham District School Board Enrollment Pressures and Funding Challenges

Purpose: To provide Durham Region MPPs and Mayors/Council members with information on DDSB enrollment pressures and funding challenges.

Executive Summary:

The Durham District School Board (DDSB) continues to face rapid enrollment growth, which is expected to continue in the coming years. To manage this growth sustainably, we urgently need the Provincial Government to remove the Educational Development Charge (EDC) cap, and to remove school boards from the Site Plan Approval Process, similar to colleges and universities. These adjustments will allow DDSB to fund new schools without incurring unsustainable debt and will expedite new school construction.

Recommendations:

Provincial

We request your support in asking that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing remove school boards from the site plan approval process, similar to colleges and universities, to significantly expedite the timeline for new school construction, in order to best meet the demands of the growing Durham Region.

We also request your support in asking the province to remove the EDC cap. The difference between the capped rate and the actual rate required to purchase land for new schools is so significant, that without action, the debt being incurred to purchase land will soon become unserviceable. Additionally, the opportunity will be missed for the growth that is currently occurring to pay for the development of new schools.

Background – Education Development Charges:

[Education Development Charges](#) are a levy imposed on new residential development that is intended to cover the cost of purchasing land to build new schools on, with the theory that growth should pay for growth in needed infrastructure, like schools.

“Temporary” restrictions on EDC rate increases were put in place in October 2018. Having now been in place for more than six years, the magnitude of the growing debt and the impact on school boards has become untenable. By August 31, 2028, the combined EDC deficit across the province is projected to be more than \$1.2 billion. DDSB’s share of that deficit is projected to exceed \$325 million.



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DDSB Enrollment Pressures:

DDSB serves the rural townships of Uxbridge, Brock, and Scugog, as well as the cities and towns of Ajax, Whitby, Pickering, and Oshawa. With over 12,000 staff members across 136 schools and learning centers, DDSB supports more than 80,000 school students and numerous continuing and adult education students.

Over the past five years enrollment has risen dramatically, from 70,000 students in 2019 to more than 80,000 in 2024, driven by new residential development and urban renewal projects. Durham Region's population is projected to see continued growth in the coming decades, increasing from 723,000 in 2024 to 1.3 million by 2051 ([Envision Durham Municipal Comprehensive Review](#)), which means DDSB's enrollment growth will continue to outpace current school capacity.

DDSB is legally obligated to accommodate every eligible student in its jurisdiction. When building new schools, the Board relies on EDCs to fund land acquisition, as no other revenue source is available. The EDC cap has restricted collections to \$3,749 per unit —far below the \$12,540 per unit required. This shortfall will result in an EDC deficit of about \$200 million as of year-end (August 31, 2025), expected to rise to over \$600 million in the next 15 years if the cap remains. **This situation is financially untenable**, threatening our ability to meet growth demands.

In addition to funding constraints, DDSB also faces challenges in navigating Site Plan Approval Process. The best solution to expedite new school construction would be to remove school boards from the site plan approval process, similar to the treatment of colleges and universities.

Conclusion – The Need for EDC Cap Removal and Removal from Municipal Site Plan Approval Process:

DDSB's capacity to provide adequate student accommodation is severely compromised by the EDC cap, forcing DDSB to incur unserviceable levels of debt. The cap must be removed to enable DDSB to collect adequate funds to meet the region's educational needs sustainably. **School accommodation is a community priority** and a shared responsibility; we urge you to advocate for this critical change to uphold the principle of "growth paying for growth." The EDC cap represented significant change to the EDC framework that was in place for many years. Importantly, this change was made by Regulation and was never brought to the Legislature. The removal of the cap can, therefore, be done by amending the Regulation back to its pre-2018 terms without the need for any amendments to the legislation.

Additionally, removal from the municipal site plan approval process would allow schools to be built in as timely a fashion as possible.

Your local DDSB Trustees will reach out shortly to discuss further and develop an action plan to support our community's needs in Durham Region.

Thank you,

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