**Event 1:** We have arranged for an all-candidates debate on June 9th from 7 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.  so that Willowdale constituents will have a chance to hear from the provincial MPP candidates on their education platforms.  We are finalizing location and moderator and will have more information to you shortly.

There are lots of issues that could be quite dramatically impacted by the various parties' intentions should they form the next government.  Here are some of the issues before us:

a) Currently, the TDSB is not eligible, under provincial rules, to access funding for new school construction.  Yet, many Willowdale schools are completely full and we must bus many students to find a place for them to go to school.  For over 15 years, the TDSB has been told to sell off schools and their greenspace in areas where they are presently under-utilized in order to finance building where it is needed in the city.  The TDSB has been doing this, but must also consider the future possible school needs across our city.  The issues here are how to fund new school space and how to protect greenspace in Toronto.

b) Currently, the TDSB, under provincial rules, is not eligible to levy a development charge and, thus, has missed out completely on hundreds of millions of dollars of funding that might have been available towards financing new school land purchases and supporting new school construction.  In the last decade, the Catholic board is estimated to have made some $300 million from charges to developers.  The issue here is should the TDSB be eligible for education development charges.

c) The TDSB has a backlog of some 3 billion dollars' worth of maintenance and repairs that have not been undertaken over the last 15 years.  Roofs, windows, boilers, painting and pavement repairs, electrical work and more have not been updated or fixed.   The funding formula, as it currently exists, does not allow for anywhere near the kind of funding that would address this backlog.  The issue here is whether the province is willing to begin to correct this.

d) The provincial funding for special education in school boards has not met the needs of the TDSB, which has higher numbers of students in our city needing support than is provided for in the provincial formula.  At least one party is proposing changes to the formula that would reduce the funding further.  The issue is what kind of support is each party willing to give to our special needs students.

e) Currently, the number of teachers in each school board is based strictly on the funding formula.  We get a certain number of teachers for having a certain number of students, with other teachers added for special and specified purposes and all of them distributed to meet the class size and initiative objectives of the province.  The number of teachers right now is so closely determined that, each fall, the school board must go through the exercise of moving teachers around as classes in various schools end up having more or fewer students than was projected in the spring so that we can be sure to have distributed the teachers as best as possible.  At least one party has indicated that they may reduce the number of education workers.  The issue is what this will mean for class sizes and teacher distribution.

**Request 1:** So, what I would like to ask all of you is to let me know if you'd like to ask the candidates questions about any of these issues or about other issues that your school and council may have identified.  I'm hoping to hear back from all of you and then we will take the most frequently identified questions and use them at our meeting.  More details on format and place to follow.

**Event 2:**  The other event I wanted to alert you to was for those of you whose schools are in Councillor John Filion's ward.  He has sent a letter to each school council inviting them to send representatives to a meeting on Thursday, May 29th at 7 p.m. in the cafeteria at Willowdale Middle School in order to discuss the installation location of approximately 10 "watch your speed" signs that measure and show motorists their driving speed.  If possible, please do attend to consider where it would be best to put these signs.  You can RSVP to Callum MacDonald at cmacdon7@toronto.ca or at 416-395-6411.

**Thanks very much and we'll be in touch soon!**

**Mari**

Mari Rutka
Toronto District School Board

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