



REPORT TO

**CORPORATE SERVICES, STRATEGIC PLANNING AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE**

**PLAYGROUND RESERVE UPDATE (ALL WARDS)**

*“I can do all things through HIM who strengthens me.”  
Philippians 4:13 (NRSVCE)*

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**INFORMATION REPORT**

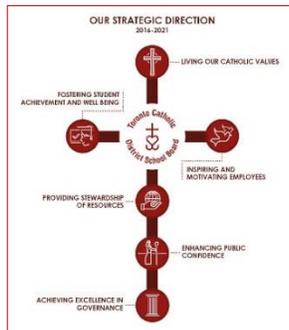
**Vision:**

*At Toronto Catholic we transform the world through witness, faith, innovation and action.*

**Mission:**

*The Toronto Catholic District School Board is an inclusive learning community uniting home, parish and school and rooted in the love of Christ.*

*We educate students to grow in grace and knowledge to lead lives of faith, hope and charity.*



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## **A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report outlines the results of the first year of implementation of the Ward Priorities Playground Reserve as well as providing a general status update on all ongoing projects and feedback received on the criteria and selection process.

In its first year, the Playground Reserve had an overwhelmingly positive response and generated enthusiasm Board-wide in schools, as well as with Catholic School Parent Councils (CSPCs), wider school communities and Board staff. Sixty-seven applications were received totalling \$3.8M. Following intensive evaluation by the Ward-based Selection Committees, a total of \$1.39M was awarded to fifty-nine successful applicants. Unallocated funding of \$98,350 in Ward 1 will be carried over for use in that Ward in the next or future years. Appendix A provides a summary of the allocations and project status.

In June 2020, the Board resolved to double the Playground Reserve from \$1.2M to \$2.4M, however this will not be available in the 2020-2021 fiscal year as the board resolved to direct the in-year surplus to the Operating Contingency Reserve.

Site projects staff have also been engaged in the implementation of significant COVID-19 response initiatives, including bicycle rack installation and sourcing of logs for outdoor seating.

*The cumulative staff time required to prepare this report was 16 hours.*

## **B. PURPOSE**

This report provides the Board with the first annual update on the Playground Reserve project selection process, allocations and project implementation.

## **C. BACKGROUND**

1. *In June 2019, the Board approved the establishment of a strategic Ward Priorities Playground Reserve fund of \$1.2M from in-year surpluses (if available) amounting to \$100,000.00 per Ward.* In November 2019, the Board further approved an allocation of an additional \$300,000.00 to the Playground Reserve from the Equity Reserve to be distributed based on socio-economic rankings of each ward (similar to the distribution of funds to school block budgets).

2. ***In February 2020, the Board approved the Playground Reserve Criteria and Selection Process.*** The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) aligned with the existing Improvements to Outdoor Environments SOP, in support of the Outdoor Play Environment Policy B.G.01.
3. ***The Playground Reserve application process was launched on the Board website in February with an initial application deadline of March 31, 2020.*** The launch was communicated to all Principals by email and *Frequently Asked Questions* with answers were posted on the website. Based on response from principals and parents regarding the work needed to prepare a submission, the deadline was extended to April 15. The Sustainable Outdoor Environment Supervisor (SOES) provided support to applicants, attending both in person and virtual meetings.
4. ***Due to COVID-19 and the closure of schools in March, it was necessary to further extend the Playground Reserve application deadline to May 22, 2020.*** This extension and other impacts of COVID-19 resulted in unanticipated time pressures on the selection process and project implementation. While ideally some projects would have been started in the summer of 2020, this was no longer possible. Recruitment of an additional landscape specialist to assist with in-house design has also been a challenge, however successful completion of that recruitment is expected early in 2021.
5. ***On July 16, 2020, The Board approved an increase in the Ward Priorities Playground Reserve fund to \$2.4M, amounting to \$200,000 per Ward.*** This is a one-time increase pending a report to Governance and Policy Committee to revise the Strategic Reserves Policy to allow for an ongoing increase, and is subject to the availability of a budget surplus at the end of the 2019-2020 fiscal year.
6. ***Following from the Board's approval of the Audit Committee's recommendation to designate most of 2019-2020 in-year surplus Operating Contingency Reserve, no new funds will be available for the Playground Reserve for the 2020-2021 fiscal year.*** The application and selection process for new Playground Reserve projects will therefore not proceed this year, aside from the surplus funding in Ward 1 carried over from 2019/2020. Funding for projects awarded in 2019/2020 has not been impacted by this decisions and current projects are proceeding to completion.

## **D. EVIDENCE/RESEARCH/ANALYSIS**

1. ***In the 2019/2020 year, total number of Playground Reserve applicants was sixty-seven in the elementary and secondary panels combined, with over \$3.8M in improvement requests.*** Staff reviewed and scored applications as outlined and provided preliminary suggestions for funding distribution to selection committees. Selection committee meetings took place virtually in late spring 2020, during which the final funding allocations were determined by consensus. School principals were advised of the results at the end of June and were also advised that some small projects might be implemented in the fall of 2020, while construction of major projects would take place in 2021.
2. ***A total of \$1,392,799.90 was awarded to fifty-nine successful applicants from the 2019/2020 Ward Priorities Playground Reserve Fund.*** See Appendix A for a summary of the allocations. Where applications received were under the \$100,000 ward allocation (one ward), the surplus funding will be carried over to next year for that ward. There is also a carryover of the Equity Reserve allocation for one ward because there were no applicant schools that met the N-tile score criteria to receive the equity portion.
3. ***Coordination of kick-off meetings with school principals and outdoor committees was initiated in September 2020.*** This start-up was slow due to the demands placed on staff, especially principals, of navigating a return to school in the midst of the pandemic. In October, 2020, school principals were advised that, due to Facilities staff resources constraints, work on the Playground Reserve projects was temporarily on hold. Project kick-off meetings resumed in December of 2020 in preparation for construction in the summer of 2021. Appendix A includes a summary of the current status of the 2019-2020 Playground Reserve projects.
4. ***In the summer and fall of 2020 staff were re-deployed to address a number of other projects and initiatives.*** These projects include:
  - a. the tent pilot project;
  - b. logs for outdoor seating;
  - c. bicycle rack installation;
  - d. sourcing and installation of plexiglass;
  - e. improvements to HVAC systems;
  - f. modifications to windows;
  - g. sourcing and installation of portable handwashing stations;
  - h. application for COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure Stream (CVRIS) funding.

5. ***Eligible Playground Reserve Projects were included in the TCDSB submission for federal COVID-19 Resilient Infrastructure Stream (CVRIS) funding.*** If funding for these projects is approved, corresponding funds from the 2019-2020 Playground Reserve will become available for additional future playground improvements. The CVRIS funding announcement is expected at the end of January 2021.
6. ***Following approval of a Board motion on September 19, to provide all schools with bicycle parking, site projects staff have dedicated significant time to implementing this resolution as quickly as possible.*** Assessment of the requirements board-wide and suitable bike rack locations at each school has been completed. Procurement has also been completed for supply and installation. Procurement reports are in the approval process and once approved, installation will begin.
7. ***In response to a Board motion to approach the City of Toronto and other sources for log seating to support outdoor classroom set-ups, staff have secured access to free logs from the City's regular parks maintenance.*** The Board will be responsible for the collection of the logs, cutting to size and installing at school sites. Staff is in the process of obtaining and evaluating quotations for this work from various vendors to determine feasibility within the COVID-19 relief funding allocated.

## **D. METRICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

1. ***Beginning in the first quarter of 2021, playground reserve project status updates will be prepared quarterly for each project.*** These updates will be posted on the school websites and distributed to trustees, area superintendents, facilities management staff and principals (for distribution to parents).
2. ***Feedback has been requested from various stakeholders, including trustees, on the Playground Reserve criteria, selection process and SOP in the first year of implementation.*** A summary of the feedback received, including staff observations, is provided in Appendix B. This feedback will inform any recommended changes to the process prior to a second Playground Reserve implementation.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

This report is for the consideration of the Board.