

Fiona C. Delegation

November 7, 2019

I am the parent of a student in the International Baccalaureate Program at Parkdale Collegiate. I am here today to discuss the proposed fees for the IB Program in the TDSB.

In response to a letter to my school board Trustee Robin Pilkey last May, I was told that the justification for suddenly imposing this fee is to “put the TDSB in line with other boards”. I am not here to talk about other school boards, I am here to talk about the TDSB and its stated goals.

In 2018 the Board approved a multi-year strategic plan (MYSP) that identified five system goals, including to “**Provide equity of access to learning oppourtunities for all students**”. The proposal to charge fees to students in the TDSB to participate in the IB program is in direct contravention of that goal.

Charging a fee to take this program is clearly an equity issue and will result in students not being able to participate in this learning oppourtunity for financial reasons.

As you know, the IB Program is currently offered at five schools in the TDSB, including Parkdale Collegiate Institute (PCI), a small, vibrant school in a largely immigrant, working class neighbourhood.

The 2016 TDSB Student Census found that at PCI:

- almost 60% of our school population has a first language other than English,
- almost 40% of our students were not born in Canada and
- a whopping 72% of students have both parents born outside Canada

Truly an immigrant school. The IB Program came to PCI through a groundswell of interest from families in the community who wanted a challenging, academically well-rounded program. Unlike many arts and other specialized programs and schools, the IB Program has **no barriers to access**. Any student can apply for this program, work hard and succeed. The IB Program teaches students skills and ways of learning that set them up for success in their post-secondary studies and beyond.

When I wrote to my TDSB Trustee she informed me that “Currently 12% of IB students come from families who earn less than \$50k per year”. First of all, a \$51k per year household income in the city of Toronto certainly does not leave money available to pay for public school tuition fees, so I feel quoting this income level to be completely arbitrary. Secondly, this income statistic is simply not accurate for PCI. I understand it is also not accurate for Monarch Park Collegiate Institute, another TDSB IB school and an Urban & Priority School, where over 40% of students come from low income households.

I have been told that the TDSB Equity Fund will be topped up to accommodate students with financial need, yet **zero** details on how this will work have been provided to students and parents. I am here today to refute the concept that this fund will be able to **ensure equity of access** to the IB Program. There will be students who cannot participate in this learning oppourtunity due to financial issues if fees are levied.

As such, the proposed IB fee is clearly contrary to your own board's goal to "**Provide equity of access to learning oppourtunities for all students**". I therefore request that you reverse your plan to impose fees for the IB Program before students miss out on the oppourtunity to participate due to financial issues.