

Local 784 Brief to the Board 2010

Good evening Trustees, Board Members and Guests.

It has been two years since this Local has given a brief to the Board but we are here tonight to present one for the 2010 budget. The concerns that face this Local have been the same for over the past 25 years that I have been involved with the Board. After giving numerous briefs over the years it has always surprised us that there has never been any follow-up from the Board to go through or even challenge the concerns we have brought forward. Our members are comprised of trades people and maintenance workers that have spent most of their careers looking after the Boards Real Estate and have not had their expertise realized to its full potential. It is with this concern we once again bring forward our concerns with site based budgeting for the maintenance of the buildings the Board has in their inventory. Over the years the Board has tried different ways of allocating funds to ensure the Schools are funded properly so the students will not suffer any lost time due to schools being forced to shut down due to problems arising from critical maintenance not being done on the buildings. We have gone from dollars per square foot to dollars following the students. Buildings that are funded by square foot should be the first choice as you cannot close classrooms or any other part of the Schools without the School suffering damage due to neglect in these areas. Whether the Schools are occupied 10% or 100% they still require the same amount of maintenance to keep them from falling to the point of disrepair. The result is that in time huge amounts of funding will be required to bring them back to the standards once held. In all the Schools today SBB (Site Based Budgets) are enforced which make the Principals responsible for the building in both maintenance and operating expenses. Although the Board has taken on the funding of utilities problems with Schools not maintaining the funding allocation to pay for the utilities led to utilities falling into arrears. Over the years this has always been a concern with Local 784. Principals should not be in charge of the maintenance of

Schools when they have no certification or knowledge of what it takes to be a building manager. It seems in an organization that boasts how great their employees are when it comes to being educated, building managers in Schools fall short.

Today we have come up with ways in which we go after the funding in Schools that will give the maintenance department control of ensuring the Schools will not be closed due to mechanical or structural break downs. At present there have only been School closures when the School administration teams make the call even though the maintenance department has given the green light that the building will be ready for classes come morning. Sometimes trying to explain what has happened and the procedure to rectify the problem are almost impossible to convey to the School administration department. This usually leads to the Schools feeling threatened by the Maintenance Department and as they do not understand what the problem is, inappropriate decisions are made that cost more to correct and take more time to complete the tasks.

This is why once again CUPE Local 784 is asking the Board to look into bringing back 100% of all the money allocated for maintenance for the Schools back to a Central budget that will be administered by the professionals that have not only been trained and educated in these fields but have years of experience to go with the trade ticket they hold.

It has always been a problem with the funding that follows the student and is allocated on the number of students in the Schools. This leads to Schools having funding problems because the square

footage does not match the dollars allocated to maintenance of the Schools; especially to the high standards the Board has set out for their buildings.

The FMA (Facilities Maintenance Agreement) is a program that has been set in motion that allows the Schools a chance to give the responsibility back to the Maintenance Department for them to ensure the Schools suffer no problems arising for the aging structures they are.

The problems we face with the FMA program is that there are three levels the Schools can opt into that are based solely on the Principals decision.

The first level is the Mandatory Level which means only the basic maintenance items are inspected and repaired that pertain to the operation of the School. Most of these items are requested by the Government to ensure the safety of the occupants that are in the building at any given time. This is the least expensive FMA Contract and only requires a fraction of the Maintenance funds allocated to the School. We have 28 or about 12.5 % of Schools on this contract.

The next level of the FMA is Level 1. This includes the basic service as outlined in the Mandatory level but also includes inspection of certain mechanical, electrical and carpentry items. There are areas in the Grounds Department that are covered but do not include large amounts of snow removal. Level 1 does not cover large repairs; only the basic as identified through the inspection process of Mandatory

Level. As School still have large amounts of their maintenance money left they are required to submit work orders to have these repairs completed. We have 73 or about 37.6% of Schools on this contract.

If you look at these amounts there is still a large percentage of funding left in the Schools. The trouble with this type of allocation (SBB) is that the money cannot be transferred to Schools that need the funding to repair buildings that have no dollars left to keep their Schools in the same state as their sister Schools. A central budget would allow the funding to go places we feel are needed to keep all the Schools in a similar condition.

The last Level of the FMA is level 2. This means the School releases their entire Maintenance Budget to the Maintenance Department and in turn their School is in the hands of the Facilities Department for all their needs. Most of the repairs are covered but major work is usually spread out over the life of the contract that lasts about three years.

As you can see this is the only way Facilities can have some sort of control of maintenance in the Boards Real Estate, but still it is up to the Principal as to which Level they opt into. Even though they sign a three year contract there are ways the Schools opt out of their commitments with the Maintenance Department after signing the FMA agreement and fall back to the lowest level which is the Mandatory FMA agreement. This is why some Schools stay on Level 2 until they feel their School has been upgraded to a fair state. At that point because they can, they drop back to the Mandatory FMA Level. They feel their School has been brought up to an acceptable standard so why spend the

funding on the FMA Level 2? This is unfair to the Maintenance Department as it take a full three years to retrieve the funding to break even.

As you can see this is a match of wits with the Schools on how to recover the allocated funding in order for Facilities to ensure the Students do not miss time due to a sick building. Do we spend too much funding trying to convince the Schools we know what is best for the District? It seems to be heading in that direction.

How can the District even think that this type of funding really works when it is based on the number of Students that are enrolled in the School? If you look at the square footage used in the Schools it makes no different as the operating cost to cover the whole building whether it is occupied 30% or 110%. This is usually why the older Schools that suffer lower enrolments fall short in trying to keep their Schools in good shape as the funding is tied to the student enrolment. Then along with the lower enrolment and the shape of the building, that school falls on the chopping block when it comes to closures.

Once again we have to ask ourselves, “does Sight Based Budgeting work for Schools to maintain a acceptable state of repairs and simple upgrades to keep the School ready to meet the changing and challenging times or is it just a dream of past administration that has failed but will not die. “

We have, over the years, seen countless examples of Schools wasting or redirecting maintenance dollars only for these Schools to come back and hold their hands out for more funding due to mismanagement of the dollars they received at the start of the School year. This has been CUPE Local 784's concern for years. It is not the Principals fault that the budgets run out. It is simply the lack of understanding the intricacies in planning a maintenance schedule to keep these Schools performing to their maximum.

It is time for you as Trustees to do the right thing and bring this Maintenance budget out of the past and put it in the future as a Central Budget that is controlled by the Departments whose training and expertise has proven itself over the years which has made this School Division the envy of all other Boards. It has not been the Principals that made these Schools shine rather the hard work of Facilities and CUPE Local 784 Members that complete this task. Still the Board gives too much credit to Principals and rewards them by continuing Sight Based budgeting as the choice for maintaining the Schools. It is time to let the Facilities Department control their own budget and let the Principal get back to what they have been trained for - looking after the educating of our Students.

The FMA program is working in our Schools but we need all Sites on the FMA Level 2 in order to ensure we will have them around in the future. In order to do this we must have control of our budget as a Central Budget and not have it based on the funding following the Students as allocating the Maintenance Budget based on the number of Students in a School. If this is allowed to continue, the smaller enrolments in at lot of our smaller Schools will suffer to a point of facing closures due to lack of proper Maintenance Funding.

In closing there are a lot of things that can be said about the way EPSB funds the Maintenance Department but they are in a field of their own when it comes to SBB and that may say a lot to whether it really is the way to continue the Maintenance of its billions of dollars worth of Real Estate . All the Schools were in excellent shape inside and out including the grounds surrounding the Schools and all this added up to make our Schools a show case that led to our great halls of learning. We had a maintenance plan to keep all essentials serviced, upgrades on the fore front and a multiyear plan to keep up with the changing and challenging times. So why did SBB get implemented into the District even though the Maintenance Department voiced their displeasure about losing total control of their budget they controlled for years? The only answer we can think of was that SBB was a total package for the Schools. They had no choice over the Maintenance Budget and were told it was part of the package. This lead to Principals overnight becoming Building Managers which most of them failed at and to our understanding to date we feel they are still struggling with trying to become proficient Building Managers as measured by the standards of the Building Trades not EPSB criteria.

Having other than the Maintenance Department in charge of the Boards billions of dollars worth of Real Estate is a formula for disaster. If the Board has relinquished the Maintenance Budget to the P3's Schools then they must give us the same consideration and return our Maintenance Budget back to Facilities. Then let us compare which School will be in better shape over the life of the P3's Schools. I am sure that the inhouse Maintenance Department will shine over the P3's in giving the School a Maintenance Department that has only the best in service and caring to keep these Schools open.

I once wrote a brief to the Board and in it I compared the Maintenance of the Schools that were being controlled by SBB to that of a Cruise Ship. It seemed that all the funding went to things that were only appealing to the eye and keeping the Ship looking great with the freshly painted walls upgrades to the Administration offices and ensuring only the best in food and drink filled the storerooms of the kitchens. Things were all fine and the Ship sailed along, docking at ports of call where everyone that saw her expressed how luxurious she looked and they could not wait to cruise the open seas with her. It was a shock to hear that this great ship that looked so good foundered at sea and upon investigation it was discovered that lack of understanding of the workings of a ship were to blame. It seemed too much funding was applied to cosmetic items and the hull of the ship along with all the mechanical, electrical, power plants and training of crew had been put on the back burner. But they became so inefficient that the ship finally failed and was overcome by the rough seas and then could not sail any more. Now this may seem like a fairy tale and out of the teaching of a elementary classroom but in thinking about this scenario would you like to be on that Cruise Ship or even better teaching in that classroom of the same state. I hope the Board one day will take heed and do the right thing by putting the experts in charge of the EPSB Schools and Buildings. Only the best should be put into our Schools to ensure our Students have a safe and bright building they are proud of so they can be the best they can be and be ready to face the many challenges they have ahead of them.

Thank you and good night.