



## **New School Monies Mostly to Cover Current Cost Pressures**

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Tuesday's budget announces a significant increase in funding for K-12 schools. On the operating side of the ledger, there appears to be in excess of **\$625 million** in additional money, according to the Education Ministry's Service Plan document.

Before the champagne corks start popping, it is worthwhile to keep a few salient (and sobering) thoughts in mind.

- Current year funding for public schools is in the order of \$6,330 million, so the above scale of increase is clearly sizeable and in the vicinity of 10 per cent.
- Our schools are highly labour intensive. In 2022/23, about \$4,528 million was spent on wages and salaries for teachers, support staff, and administrative staff. Benefit costs that vary directly with wage spending are likely to add in another \$830 million in costs, so the cost of maintaining the staff that run our schools comes to about \$5,362 million. These workers are in line to receive a 6.75% increase in April, so that will absorb a full **\$362 million** in new funding.
- School enrolments are slated to rise by 1.4%. If one assumes a direct scaling in system costs to meet the needs of these new students, that will take up another **\$89 million**.
- Expected inflation on non-wage costs in our schools – close to a \$1 billion annually – will absorb another **\$58 million**.
- The newly-enhanced school food program is projected to cost an additional **\$59 million** in 2023/24.

If you tally up the underlined amounts above, you get about **\$568 million already committed**. That leaves just \$60 odd million to deal with costs associated with new initiatives or the Classroom Enhancement Fund to hire new teachers, or the Learning Improvement Funding dedicated to building up Education Assistant time with students with special needs. Not insubstantial of course but a far cry less than what the headlines alone suggest.