

FUNDRAISING

Ontario schools raise nearly \$600 million per year.¹⁴

Almost every publicly-funded elementary and secondary school council in the province raises funds for various reasons, ranging from school trips, to team uniforms, to library books, computers, and even upgrades to the school building or grounds.

FUNDRAISING POLICIES

In recent years many school boards have changed their policies to allow fundraising for capital projects and to allow for recognition of corporate and private donors—with signage, naming rights, or in one case, paint colours.

In 2005, the Ministry of Education released a plan to create a “fundraising policy [that] will guarantee school councils control over funds raised and limit fundraising by ensuring education essentials are provided by the system.”¹⁵ Thus far, no such policy has been implemented.

THE DRIVE TO FUNDRAISE

School boards must now report to the province on all fund-raised money and other “school-generated” funds, such as vending machines, school fees, charitable donations and donations from businesses.

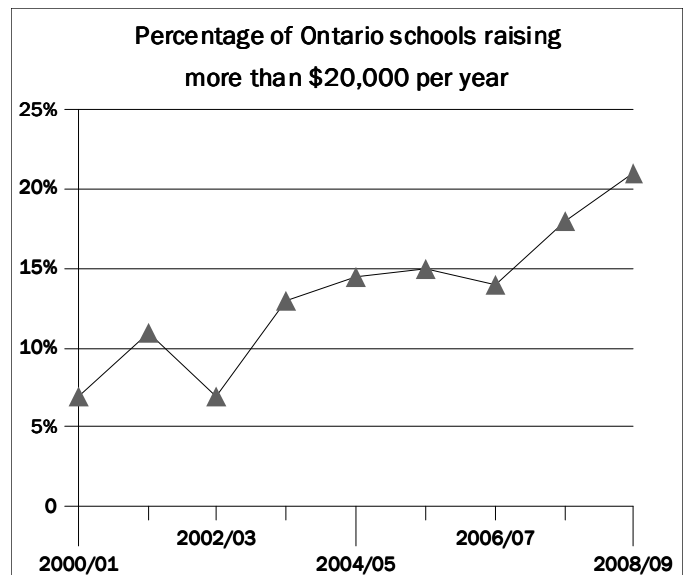
In their 2007/08 audited financial statements, boards reported raising a total of \$595,000,000; virtually the same amount as last year.

Funding that the school itself generates is often used to augment school budgets, to pay for everything from classroom supplies to new science labs.

The amounts parents raise cover an extremely wide range - from \$0 to \$124,000 per school; with the top 10% of fundraising schools raising the same amount as the bottom 72% put together. And the average amount raised per school has increased fairly steadily over the years.

QUICK FACTS

- 87% of Ontario school councils fundraise.
- The percentage of elementary schools raising more than \$20,000 per year has more than doubled since 2000/01.
- 57% of schools raise funds for sports.
- 8% of schools raise funds for renovations or additions to their schools.



Fundraising continues to increase for a number of reasons—some economic, and some attitudinal. In some cases, parents are raising funds for things no longer funded by school boards or the province, such as playground equipment (46% of schools) and musical instruments (35% of schools). In many cases, parents are raising money for arts enrichment (37%) that schools can no longer afford. Boards can no longer respond to parents' expectations by raising taxes to pay for things parents want in their children's schools. This, coupled with a consumerist shift in society, has led parents to assume that if they want it, they have to pay for it themselves.

GROWING INEQUITIES

While fundraising has been common-place in Ontario schools for many decades, the growing amounts raised are cause for concern. Some affluent neighbourhoods have the capacity to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for their public schools; other neighbourhoods, where parents' incomes are lower, raise little if any money.

As a result, some students have access to enriching arts programs, well-stocked libraries and extra classroom supplies, while others—often the students whose families are less likely to be able to afford the extras—go without.

WHAT SCHOOLS TOLD US...

We organize an annual fundraising event where all staff, parents and students participate. This year we raised about \$24,000, but this will not cover all our expenses. So we also are arranging a Bingo in an effort to increase the money we have raised. We are a small school and we want to offer everyone a chance to participate in all the sports teams, committees and activities, but this costs our school a great deal of money. So in addition, we also have an activity fee of \$50 per student which helps to cover the costs of certain activities. *Secondary School, CSCD du Nouvel-Ontario*

It shocked me to realize the materials that school fundraising was purchasing (a/v equipment, gym equipment). In my view this should not be incumbent on the community to provide for, as in essence this leaves economically challenged communities with an inferior school compared to their affluent counterparts. This is wrong and needs to be addressed. *Elementary School, School Council, Dufferin-Peel CDSB*

NEXT STEPS

Fundraising is a reality in schools across the country, and fundraising activities can be an effective method for engaging parents and school communities, but high levels of fundraising lead to inequities among schools.

People for Education recommends:

the Ministry of Education develop provincial fundraising policy that has equity as its foundation, and that includes guidelines for corporate involvement in schools; guarantees for essentials in every school and clarity about private funding for capital projects and naming rights.