

# Memorandum to Council

Office of the Chief Administrative Officer



---

**To:** Mayor and Members of Council

**CC:** Roger Saunders, Commissioner, Planning & Development; Fuwing Wong, Commissioner, Financial Services & Treasurer

**From:** Sarah Klein, Deputy CAO

**Date:** May 26, 2025

**File #:** Correspondence 2025-235

**Subject:** Response to Durham District School Board Request – Education Development Charge Cap and Site Plan Approval Exemption

**Acknowledged by M. Gaskell,  
Chief Administrative Officer**

---

Council recently received correspondence from the Durham District School Board (DDSB) requesting support on two matters: the removal of the provincially imposed cap on Education Development Charges (EDCs) and the exemption of school boards from the municipal Site Plan Approval (SPA) process. Staff have reviewed these requests and are providing the following response for Council's consideration.

Staff support the DDSB's request for the removal of the EDC cap. The cap, introduced by the Province in 2018, significantly restricts the ability of school boards to recover the true cost of acquiring land for new schools. According to the DDSB memo, the true EDC rate required to fund their growth-related capital infrastructure program is over three (3) times the current capped rate. This creates unsustainable financial pressures and limits the boards' ability to build schools to keep pace with rapid population growth. The principle of "growth pays for growth" applies equally to school infrastructure as it does to municipal infrastructure. While removing the cap would increase the total amount of development charges paid by developers, and ultimately by new homeowners, it is a necessary step to ensure that new development contributes its fair share toward the infrastructure required to support it. Staff note that while there may be concerns from the development industry about overall housing affordability and added costs, these must be balanced against the critical need for new schools to serve growing communities. Importantly, this change would not directly impact the education levy collected on the property tax bill, nor would it affect the Town's revenues. The Town's role is limited to collecting and remitting EDCs on behalf of the school boards.

---

In contrast, staff do not support the removal of school boards from the Site Plan Approval process. While the DDSB has suggested that this exemption would expedite school construction timelines, staff believe it would compromise the Town's ability to ensure schools are appropriately integrated into the surrounding neighbourhoods. Unlike colleges and universities, which typically operate on large, standalone campuses, elementary and secondary schools are embedded within residential areas and have a much greater impact on local transportation networks, municipal servicing, and community character. The Site Plan process allows the Town to ensure proper site design, including safe access and circulation, stormwater management, and compatibility with adjacent uses. Removing schools from this process would limit the Town's oversight to general zoning provisions and the Ontario Building Code, which is not sufficient to address the planning complexities involved. Staff also note that, in practice, the Town has consistently worked successfully with local school boards to resolve site planning issues without undue delay. With delegated approval authority now resting within the administrative structure, site plans for schools are processed independently of Council meeting schedules, further reducing timelines.

In conclusion, staff recommend that Council support the DDSB's request to remove the cap on Education Development Charges but not support the exemption of school boards from the Site Plan Approval process.