

Board re-elects chair

By JOHN STEWART

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There are three sure things this time of year in Mississauga — leaves will fall from the trees, the snow will come and Janet McDougald will be re-elected chair of the Peel District School Board.

McDougald, the longtime trustee for Mississauga Wards 1 and 7, was acclaimed as chair of the Board on Monday for a 16th consecutive year. She served as vice-chair for three



Janet McDougald

years prior to that. “When asked to speak I often start by saying that it is my privilege to serve as chair of the Peel District School Board,” McDougald told her colleagues, who acclaimed Brampton Trustee Suzanne Nurse as vice-chair at the Board’s Mississauga headquarters. “That word—privilege—is purposeful. Because though the role requires a lot of work, it is also an honour to serve—and to be supported by my colleagues.”

While trustees serve a number of roles, a critical one has become advocacy, said the 25-year trustee. She then announced that the Board is launching a social media campaign, using the hash tag #FixTheFormula, to bring attention to the underfunding of special education it receives from the Ontario government.

The High Needs Amount grants provided by the provincial government range from a high of \$1,700 per student at the top to a low of \$339 at the bottom. “The unfortunate news—that very bottom amount is the Peel Board funding,” McDougald said.

By just moving to the “middle of the pack,” McDougald said the Board would gain \$14 to \$16 million in additional funding.

The chair added that, “the HNA grant is a vital source of funding, and we are at the bottom. It is pretty clear that the process to calculate it is flawed. It’s not scientifically based. It’s out-of-date. It’s not equitable or fair. Due to this flawed funding formula, we in the Peel Board face a serious shortfall in special education funding. We need to fix the formula and fund Peel students fairly.”

She concluded by saying, “that is what advocacy is all about—raising our voice to ask for fairness for Peel students.”