**SEAC Meeting November 2, 2015**

# Topic: Budget Consultation

**Background**

Under Education Act Regulation 464/97 Special Education Advisory Committees:

12. (2) The board shall ensure that its special education advisory committee is provided with the opportunity to participate in the board’s annual budget process under section 231 of the Act, as that process relates to special education

12. (3) The board shall ensure that its special education Advisory committee is provided with the opportunity to review the financial statements of the board, prepared under section 252 of the Act, as those statements relate to special education

A request had been made by SEAC at its October meeting that the budget presentation information for the November meeting be emailed to all SEAC members well in advance of the meeting, so they would have sufficient time to digest the information and formulate questions and recommendations at the November meeting. It was also requested that the information be provided in a format accessible by those who are blind or with low vision. These requests were not honoured, and at the meeting, apologies were extended by the staff responsible.

**\*\*\*Motion** On motion of David Lepofsky and seconded by Jordan Glass:

**Whereas Regulation 464/97 entitles the Special Education Advisory Committee to take part in the TDSB budget process; and**

**Whereas SEAC presented questions to TDSB on important budget issues in early May 2015; and**

**Whereas TDSB staff was scheduled to respond to these issues in September 2015, at the regular SEAC meeting; and**

**Whereas neither the expected staff nor a replacement was available to present at that meeting, to provide answers to the questions on budget that SEAC had submitted, and that had not previously been answered; and**

**Whereas SEAC scheduled a staff representative to appear at its regular meeting on November 2, 2015;and**

**Whereas senior TDSB officials were alerted at the regular SEAC meeting in October 2015 that it was important that TDSB provide budget information well in advance of the November SEAC meeting, in an accessible format; and**

**Whereas it is known by staff that one member of SEAC is totally blind, and does not read printed material on paper or on a PowerPoint screen; and**

**Whereas TDSB staff did not provide any financial or budgetary information to SEAC up to three hours before the November 2, 2015 SEAC meeting; and**

**Whereas around 4:30 pm on November 2, 2015, SEAC members were sent a detailed 26 page budget document purporting to respond to SEAC’s inquiries, which was not in an accessible format for a blind person to read; and**

**Whereas it is unreasonable to expect SEAC members, especially community members who are volunteers, to digest 26 pages of financial information and prepare for an important opportunity to ask questions about it, when they must also in the 3 and a half hours available get home, eat dinner, and then get to the 7 pm SEAC meeting;**

**SEAC therefore recommends that:**

1. **The Toronto District School Board direct senior TDSB officials to provide a detailed written explanation to SEAC, the TDSB and the public, for their failure to provide SEAC with proper budget information on a timely basis and in an accessible format;**

1. **TDSB’s chair and executive committee hold a public meeting with a delegation from SEAC, and with senior TDSB officials including the TDSB Comptroller, to discuss steps that TDSB officials will take to ensure the provision of full, timely and accessible information on special education budget to SEAC.**

The vote on the motion carried with 14 in favour, 3 opposed and 2 abstentions.