

# A Model of Good Governance for The Toronto District School Board



Submission by the Toronto &  
York Region Labour Council

The Toronto District School Board is the largest school board in Canada. It is a complex organization whose role is to meet the educational needs of a broad and diverse student population. The Toronto District School Board must do this within the context of education in Ontario, serving a broader role as an agency of equality for our society. This means a focus on both the academic success of students and also on the development of students as responsible and engaged citizens. The TDSB serves a population that spans pre-school family centres to adult learners and seniors.

Good Governance depends on mutual respect among parties. The education system in the province's largest city needs to include appropriate resources that support the specific needs of all students. At the root cause of problems with the operation of the TDSB is the lack of adequate funding, along with a failure to have accountability on decision making processes. The problems will not be solved by dividing the TDSB into smaller units.

In considering a Governance Model for the TDSB, it is important to recognize that there are very real differences in people's access to decision-making within an institution - based on income, race and newcomer status. A strong commitment to equity is vital for the TDSB to effectively serve one of the most multicultural cities in the world.

Within this context the Labour Council recommends the following **MODEL OF GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR THE TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD:**

1. Trustees continue to be elected to represent a local community
2. The TDSB Trustee shall be a full-time position, with adequate staff support, in order to provide effective democratic oversight to an organization with over 30,000 employees, 240,000 students and a three billion dollar annual budget.
3. The TDSB Trustee shall advocate for local neighbourhoods and schools while working together for the greater good of all students and school programs in the TDSB.
4. The TDSB Trustees shall have the power of local taxation to a limit based upon a percentage agreed upon between the local Trustees and the Province of Ontario to raise funds for local priorities.
5. The Board of Trustees shall establish an Executive which shall be the Planning and Priorities Committee. Said Executive shall be made up of the Board Chair, Vice Chair and each of the Board's Sub-Committee Chairs, all of whom are elected by the body of which they are Chair.
6. The Executive- Planning and Priorities Committee shall seek input from staff and employee groups as needed.
7. The Role of the Committee shall be to make recommendations to the Board on the TDSB's priorities, governance policy and structure, financial planning and budgeting, fiscal policy including revenue and tax policies the TDSB and its operations, human resources and labour relations
8. The Board of Trustees shall set a mandate of broad social competencies for superintendents and principals that include equity and leadership skills including practices of democratic engagement
9. Human Rights and Equity training shall be part of all professional development within the TDSB

## COMMUNITY ACCESS

1. The Toronto District School Board will establish an Office of the Ombudsperson and the Office of the Integrity Commissioner each of whom will have the resources necessary to fulfill the obligations of their respective offices. whistle-blower protection will be part of the mandate of the ombudsperson
2. The TDSB shall establish the ability for community members to make deputations to the whole board.
3. Only issues pertaining to personnel or legal contract matters shall be dealt with In-Camera
4. Board meetings shall be held at a regular and consistent times that are widely publicized
5. Appropriately resourced public Community Councils will be established at a consistent time/date for each Trustee Ward.
6. The TDSB will publish a regular newsletter for parents and ensure public access to information through establishment of a "311"-like information line. Translations for major mother tongue languages will be available.
7. The TDSB will maintain or create advisory committees, with a clear public selection process, for key constituencies such as Special Education, Model Schools, French Language, Adult Learners, Equity, Parent Engagement and others as required.
8. The TDSB will work with the City of Toronto and other levels of government to maintain schools in every neighbourhood as vital public assets and hubs of community life.