AGENDA

Special Education Advisory Committee

Tuesday, November 20, 2018
7:00 p.m.

Brampton Room
OPEN SESSION

1. Call to Order
   1.1 Approval of Agenda

2. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

3. Minutes
   3.1 Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting October 16, 2018

4. Chair's Request for Written Questions from Committee Members

5. Notices of Motion and Petitions

6. Delegations

7. Ministry and Board Policy Review

8. Program Review

9. Reports from Officials and Staff/Department Work Plan Review
   9.1 Superintendent's Report – oral
   9.2 Introduction to Cochlear Implants, BAHA and Classroom Management - oral
   9.3 Update on Supports and Resources: FASD

10. Communications - for Action or Receipt
    10.1 New Release From the Ministry of Education About New Legislation Regarding Access to Service Animals
    10.2 Letter From Upper Grand District School Board's SEAC Regarding Amending the Education Act
    10.3 Letter From Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board Regarding Recent Changes to Funding for Special Education

11. Response of Administration to Former Questions

12. Reports from Representatives on Councils/Associations

13. Questions asked of and by Committee Members

14. Public Question Period

15. Adjournment
PEEL DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee of the Peel District School Board, held in the Brampton Room, the H. J. A. Brown Education Centre, 5650 Hurontario Street, Mississauga, Ontario on Tuesday, October 16, 2018 at 19:00 hours.

Members present:

Shelley Foster, VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children, Chair
Sue Lawton, Trustee, Vice-Chair
Barbara Cyr, Association for Bright Children, Peel Chapter
Jennifer Knight, Easter Seals Ontario
Nancy Leaton, Autism Ontario, Peel Chapter
Kathy McDonald, Trustee
Anju Mistry, Down Syndrome Association of Peel
Suzanne Nurse, Trustee
Carol Ogilvie, Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region
Carol Oitment, Tourette Syndrome Association of Ontario
Dorothy Peddie, FASworld Canada, Peel Chapter (19:05)
Ann Smith, Brampton-Caledon Community Living

Members absent: (apologies received)

Nancy Bratkovic, Canadian Mental Health Association, Peel Branch
Barbara Byers, Fragile X Research Foundation of Canada
Wes McDonald, VIEWS for the Visually Impaired

Also present:

Rick Williams, Trustee

Administration:

Shawn Moynihan, Superintendent, Special Education Support Services (Executive Member)
Poleen Grewal, Associate Director, Instructional and Equity Support Services
Joy Uniac, Superintendent, Social/Emotional Learning and Early Years

Nicole Fernandes, Board Reporter

1. Approval of Agenda

Chair Foster welcomed Trustee Rick Williams to the meeting. She noted that he is retiring after 21 years as a trustee, and she thanked him for his service and dedication to the Peel DSB and to students.

SE-78, moved by Nancy Leaton, that the agenda be approved.

............... carried
October 16, 2018
Special Education Advisory Committee:nf

2. **Conflict of Interest**

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

3. **Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, September 17, 2018**

SE-79, moved by Carol Oitment, that the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of September 17, 2018, be approved.

.............. carried

4. **Superintendent’s Report**

Reviewing the report circulated, Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Shawn Moynihan highlighted Teaching Assistant Appreciation Day on October 24, 2018, and he described their roles in supporting student success. He expressed appreciation for their commitment, caring approach, and professionalism, and he stated that their skill, knowledge and leadership have a positive effect on students and families.

Superintendent Moynihan noted that the Grade 4 CCAT 7 Regional Testing period will be December 3-14, 2018, in view of the student census scheduled in November 2018. Referring to EQAO data contained in his report, he indicated that discussion on EQAO results will be scheduled for the November SEAC meeting. Staff are working on presenting EQAO data by exceptionality, and members were invited to submit questions which can be responded to at the November meeting.

SE-80, moved by Sue Lawton, that the Superintendent’s Report, be received.

.............. carried

5. **Accessibility Plan Update**

Manager of Abilities, Wellness and Attendance, Lyn Wilson, explained that the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) 2005 has reporting requirements and deadlines for all public sector organizations with over 50 employees. She noted that the Board met the deadline of December 31, 2017 to file the accessibility compliance report, and that the next date is December 31, 2019. Lyn Wilson reported that staff are preparing an updated Accessibility Plan Status Report, which will be presented to the Physical Planning and Building Committee in February 2019, and the Special Education Advisory Committee in March 2019. Thereafter, status reports will be presented to the two committees in February of each year.

The administration responded to members’ questions of clarification. Superintendent Moynihan welcomed SEAC input into the annual plan status reports, and he stated that the input will be included in the Board’s annual special education plan. Lyn Wilson clarified that compliance reports follow the multi-year compliance schedule on different aspects of AODA requirements. She noted that the recently filed report provided an outline of the accessibility projects undertaken so far, including physical and online accessibility requirements.
5. **Accessibility Plan Update (Continued)**

Chair Foster confirmed that the Committee would like to receive the recently filed compliance report. Associate Director of Instructional and Equity Support Services, Poleen Grewal, indicated that information will be brought to SEAC on completed projects and a gap analysis of AODA requirements yet to be covered.

SE-81, moved by Carol Oitment, that the update report re Accessibility Plan, be received.

............... carried

6. **SEA – Summer Camp Pilot**

Michelle Anderson, Coordinating Principal, Special Education Amount, along with Casimir McGeown, Special Education Consultant - Assistive Technology, presented information on the summer camp pilot, Camp Goal. The camp was funded by the Ministry of Education Special Equipment funds, with the goal of providing an opportunity for students to increase their knowledge, confidence and independence in using SEA technology. Camp Goal was offered at two schools, Erin Centre Middle School and Centennial Senior Public School, to students from Grades 4-8 who were within the busing area of the school, and who had recently received their SEA equipment. On average, each location had 12 students and two teachers who provided excellent support, similar to one on one training provided during the school year to students with new SEA equipment. Writing teams created curriculum engaging modern learning using assistive technology tools to support their reading, writing and study skills. The equipment available for students' use in Camp Goal was listed. Parents were invited to the last day of Camp Goal to view a carousel of tools and resources used. Students' progress was monitored and they will also receive one on one training during the year.

Comments from members, and responses to their questions of clarification included: Assistive Technology Resource Teachers (ATRTs) support schools with SEA training and offer professional development; review of students' achievement during Camp Goal provided to classroom teachers, and ATRTs follow up with classroom teachers to determine students' progress; students were not allowed to take home equipment at Camp Goal, as these were on loan; extend offering the camp at other sites that provide summer school and busing; SEA funding cannot be used to cover transportation expenses; explore inviting students with higher needs to Camp Goal. A member requested that plans for next year's Camp Goal be shared with SEAC, and she suggested that this information be included in the SEAC newsletter.

SE-82, moved by Jennifer Knight, that the report re SEA – Summer Camp Pilot, be received.

............... carried
October 16, 2018
Special Education Advisory Committee:nf

7. **Review of Secondary Gifted Programming - Update**

Shawn Moynihan noted that the timeline for the review of secondary Gifted programming is outlined in the report, and that this month, a steering committee will be struck comprising representatives from various stakeholder groups. He recommended that SEAC consider being represented on the steering committee by the Chair, Vice-Chair and one other member. Members agreed that Barbara Cyr will also represent SEAC on the steering committee.

**SE-83, moved by Barbara Cyr, that the update report re Review of Secondary Gifted Programming, be received.**

......... carried

8. **Focus on Poverty: Consultation on Next Steps**

Providing background information relating to the Focus on Poverty project, Kim Bennett, Research Officer, noted that the project was framed from an equity perspective, and she highlighted the review of Social Risk Index, and creation of poverty indicators. The Focus on Poverty report also included data on students with identified special education exceptionalities to determine whether poverty impacts these students.

Kim Bennett stated that an action report is being developed to address issues arising from the Focus on Poverty report, which will help to focus and plan on activities. As the Board decides on the action items, staff will collaborate and consult with stakeholders and experts, including SEAC. She asked members to view the report, reflect on the intersection of students in poverty and those with exceptionalities, and consider the specific actions needed for students who are receiving special education support and also living in poverty. Kim Bennett requested members to also consider the success criteria, in terms of actions that have made a difference with special education students. In small groups, members discussed the action items and success criteria. Feedback from the group discussion was provided to Kim Bennett, and briefly outlined at the meeting. This included: fundraising; equitable access to technology, nutrition and resources; identifying issues early; measuring achievement of special education students receiving support; assisting parents with internal resources such as translation, and providing information on external resources such as government funding. Members were encouraged to submit further input by November 1, 2018.

**SE-84, moved by Jennifer Knight, that the report re Focus on Poverty: Consultation on Next Steps, be received.**

......... carried

9. **Updated Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Member List**

Superintendent Moynihan reported that he had reviewed SEAC member lists of some other boards, and that the list brought forward today will provide contact information of members as required by the Ministry of Education. The Special Education Plan, SEAC brochure, and contact information on the Board’s website, will be amended accordingly.
9. **Updated Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Member List (Continued)**

   SE-85, moved by Barbara Cyr, that the updated Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Member List, be received.

   .................. carried

10. **Ontario Council for Exceptional Children Annual Conference**

    SE-86, moved by Carol Ogilvie, that the report re Ontario Council for Exceptional Children Annual Conference, be received.

    .................. carried

11. **Association for Bright Children of Ontario Toronto Mini Conference**

    SE-87, moved by Barbara Cyr, that the report re Association for Bright Children of Ontario Toronto Mini Conference, be received.

    .................. carried

12. **Response to Question re Ministry of Education Consultations on Education**

    Superintendent Moynihan referred to the email from the Ministry of Education included in the report regarding the process to consult with stakeholders. He suggested that SEAC consider submitting a joint response. He indicated that he will update members regarding the practice being followed by other boards.

    SE-88, moved by Suzanne Nurse, that the report re Response to Question re Ministry of Education Consultations on Education, be received.

    .................. carried

13. **Response to Question re Process for Associations to Provide Letters of Recommendation**

    Ontario Regulation 464/97 provides the criteria for a person to be nominated as a representative on SEAC. The above-noted report includes information provided to SEAC members outlining the requirements for criteria, process and timelines for nomination. Deadline for submission of nomination letters is November 13, 2018.

    SE-89, moved by Ann Smith, that the report re Response to Question re Process for Associations to Provide Letters of Recommendation, be received.

    .................. carried
14. Question Period

Dorothy Peddie referred to discussions at the previous SEAC meeting regarding camera ready communication, and she asked about the process to provide documents to Board staff for inclusion in the newsletter. Chair Foster reported that a sub-committee was struck to develop the documents, which will be reviewed by SEAC and sent to the Board for publication. Thomas Corbett, Shelley Foster, Jennifer Knight, and Dorothy Peddie are members of the sub-committee. Jennifer Knight recalled that SEAC had discussed allotting some time during meetings for members to provide input. Chair Foster suggested this be done after the formal SEAC meeting is adjourned, and it was agreed that, to start the process, an email will be sent to members for their input on the list of documents.

Barbara Cyr requested members to provide her with brochures or items related to their associations for display at the Parent Literacy Conference. She asked for volunteers to staff the display table.

Barbara Cyr indicated that Great Start, a school council event, is being held on November 14, 2018, and a table has been set aside for SEAC. She asked members for brochures to display and for volunteers to staff the table.

Dorothy Peddie requested a status update report on student transportation. Vice-Chair Lawton reported that Board staff continue to work on resolving the issues which, in general, are fewer, and response times have improved. She noted, however, that there are still problems on some school routes with buses being considerably delayed, and she highlighted the nature of the intermittent driver shortage problem. Trustee Lawton indicated that senior staff have been discussing the issue with Student Transportation of Peel Region, with the hope of resolving the issues. Trustee Nurse stated that some other school boards are also facing a similar situation with school busing. Anju Mistry asked about issues with busing for secondary French Immersion students. Trustee Nurse advised that secondary FI students are not eligible for busing.

Jennifer Knight asked for an update report on the Ministry's Special Needs Strategy. Superintendent Moynihan stated that no information has been forthcoming from the Ministry although staff have been regularly checking for updates. Associate Director Grewal advised that the Strategy is funded not through the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) but by the Education Programs - Other (EPO) grants, which are in-year funding amounts that had been regularly provided by the previous government. She reported that no funding has been received as yet, although there are unconfirmed reports that an announcement may be made at the end of October 2018. Adding that the in year funding for the student census has also not been received, she stated there is a backlog of EPO funding for initiatives on mental health, equity, student success, mathematics, literacy, and special education. Vice-Chair Lawton indicated that the Parents Reaching Out grants have not been released, as well. Superintendent Moynihan confirmed that the change in the calculation of special education component in the GSNs had resulted in a shortfall of approximately $850,000 in the budget.
15. Public Question Period

There were no public questions.

16. Adjournment

SE-90, moved by Dorothy Peddie, that the meeting adjourn (20:40 hours).

.................. carried
Update on Supports and Resources: FASD

Recommendation:

It is recommended that this oral report be received.

Background:

FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) is an umbrella diagnostic term describing the range of effects that can occur in an individual who was prenatally exposed to alcohol. These effects may include physical, cognitive, memory, behaviourial and learning difficulties with lifelong implications.

FASD is a brain-based and therefore, invisible injury. While individuals may share common features, every individual is unique with their own strengths and challenges.

This report is the first in series, describing the supports and resources developed in PDSB to support students with FASD.

Prepared by:

*Archie Kwan, Senior Psychologist*

Submitted by:

*Shawn Moynihan, Superintendent of Special Education Support Services*
FASD Fact Sheet

The first published literature that linked prenatal alcohol use with birth defects was in France, in 1968, by Dr. Paul Lemoine. In 1973, researchers at the University of Washington published their findings regarding a group of children who shared uncommon physical features and developmental delay. These children all had mothers who had consumed alcohol in pregnancy. The term “Fetal Alcohol Syndrome” (FAS) was created to describe the patterns observed in these children.

Today, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a diagnostic term that describes the range of effects that can occur in an individual who was prenatally exposed to alcohol. These effects can include lifelong physical, mental, and behavioural difficulties, as well as learning disabilities. Depending on the amount and the timing of alcohol exposure, a minority of infants exposed will also develop a characteristic pattern of facial features, and some will have a growth deficiency. However, those effects are relatively rare and have little impact on day-to-day function.

Decades ago, the facial features of FASD received a lot of attention in the press. The presence or absence of facial features depends on whether alcohol was consumed in a very narrow window of time during pregnancy. It does NOT reflect the degree of brain disorder. The vast majority of people with FASD are not visibly different; you cannot see FASD. Although in a very small percentage of people the face may look different, the important fact is that in all individuals with FASD, the function of the brain is permanently affected.

Alcohol exposure during pregnancy results in changes to the developing brain at neurochemical and structural levels. Often, these changes are not detected until a child reaches early or middle school-age when difficulties at school and at home become increasingly problematic. These challenges can include problems in social communication and attention, motor and sensory problems, memory, and difficulty learning from consequences. As an individual grows, they are also at increased risk for depression, anxiety, and other mental health conditions.

Scientific evidence has conclusively shown that alcohol consumption during pregnancy can cause fetal harm. There is insufficient scientific evidence to define any threshold for safe low-level drinking during pregnancy or when planning to become pregnant. The life-long damage to the brain is the most common and serious result from prenatal exposure to alcohol and can occur at any time during a pregnancy. The safest choice for a woman who is pregnant or planning to become pregnant is not to drink alcohol.

A common misconception is that FASD is associated with social, ethnic, or cultural background. However, the majority of Canadian women drink alcohol. In a 2004 Canadian Addictions survey, 76.8% of women over 15 years of age reported drinking alcohol within the previous 12-month period. Approximately one
half of all pregnancies are unintended, and women often continue their usual pattern of alcohol consumption into the early weeks of an unplanned pregnancy. The highest rates of unintended pregnancy occur in women aged 15 – 19 years of age, which is also a population at increased risk for binge drinking.

FASD is often an invisible disability and prevalence research faces considerable limitations, yet, prenatal alcohol exposure is considered the most common known cause of developmental disability in the western world. Previous estimates claimed that one in every one-hundred Canadians live with this disability. Current studies suggest that closer to four per cent of individuals in Canada have FASD, around 1.4 million people. Despite 40 years of public health campaigns warning against the risks associated with alcohol use in pregnancy, prevalence does not appear to be decreasing. The indirect and direct costs for supportive needs in health, mental health, social services, and education, as well as the negative costs through criminality and criminal justice system involvement, are estimated to be $4B/year.

Unlike most other birth defects, the diagnosis of FASD is not straightforward. Medical signs are difficult to recognize in newborns, infants, and young children. Diagnosis can be delayed or missed entirely, as most of the damage caused by alcohol use during pregnancy cannot be easily quantified until problems arise. Problems caused by prenatal alcohol exposure may not be noticed until children are in school or until the teenage years because this is when those impacted by FASD often have significant difficulty meeting societal expectations. FASD is challenging to detect and the diagnostic process relies on an interdisciplinary team approach. Diagnostic services are not widely available across Canada, especially in rural and remote areas. Many families are reluctant to seek a differential diagnosis because of the stigma associated with addiction and substance use.

No two people with FASD will have the same challenges due to the wide variation of alcohol effects on brain development. Individuals with FASD are at increased risk for mental health issues, school difficulty, addictions, and difficulties maintaining employment. Some of the more commonly seen challenges include:

- Executive functioning – difficulty with judging, planning, delaying gratification, consequences, organization, impulsivity, memory
- Communication – can be highly verbal, but lack comprehension skills both written and verbal
- Neuromotor Defects – Impaired balance and coordination

If the above are not appropriately understood and addressed, individuals with FASD are at increased risk for early school failure, involvement with the law, family disruption, and homelessness.

Our understanding of FASD is in a period of rapid expansion and change. We are beginning to understand the extent of the global impact of this lifelong disability. Research, and the answers it may provide, is critical for moving this field forward, changing the way we view this brain based disability and lessening its impact on individuals, families, and society.

For additional information please go to the CanFASD website at www.canfasd.ca.
References


FASD COLLABORATION

FASD Central Team:

**Dr. Bob Cambria**
Coordinator - Integrated Services

**Meghan Echlin**
Coordinating Principal - Special Programs

**Dr. Archie Kwan, C.Psych.**
Senior Psychologist
FASD Collaboration
Contributing Factors

Parent/Guardian
- IPRC
- Case conferences

School
- Presentations to T3RC
- Principal Superintendent requests for support

Community
- Via Integrated Services Coordinator
- FASD Clinical Team - Peel
Core Goals

- Develop a FASD IPRC process
- Identification of resources and supports within PDSB
- Develop a system of FASD support & implementation plan
- Build collaborative relationships with community partners
- Develop a framework & resources to conceptualize student profiles
New Release From the Ministry of Education About New Legislation Regarding Access to Service Animals

Recommendation:

It is recommended that this update be received.

Background:

Ontario’s Minister of Education has announced that it plans to introduce legislation regarding student access to service animals. Peel DSB has an existing Operating Procedure (SESS 19) that addresses the use of service animals by students who have disabilities.

News Release
Ontario Supporting Students with Special Needs
October 30, 2018

Proposed Legislation Would Provide Consistent, Fair and Transparent Access to Service Animals in Schools

Ontario’s Government for the People has proposed a legislative amendment which, if passed, would support students and their families when making requests to bring their service animals into schools and classrooms across the province. Today only 39 of 72 school boards across Ontario have policies in place to address the need for service animals in schools, leaving students vulnerable and parents facing challenges to support their child’s special needs.

The proposed amendment would provide guidance on service animals to school boards when developing their own policies to ensure families of students with special needs experience a fair and transparent process when requesting that their children be able to bring a service animal to school.

"Families of students with special needs deserve a clear and transparent process for requesting that service animals be able to accompany their children, no matter where they live," said Lisa Thompson, Minister of Education. "Every family in this province should feel supported when it comes to ensuring their child has access to a meaningful education."
If this legislation is approved, all members of the public - including families, education partners, advocacy groups and community agencies - will have the opportunity to provide input on the policy directive that would be issued to boards.

CONTACTS
Heather Irwin
Communications Branch
416-325-2454
Heather.Irwin@Ontario.ca

Kayla Lafelice
Minister's Office
Kayla.lafelice@ontario.ca
Public Inquiries
1-800-387-5514

Submitted by:

Shawn Moynihan, Superintendent of Special Education Support Services
Letter From Upper Grand District School Board’s SEAC Regarding Amending the Education Act

Recommendation:

It is recommended that this letter be received.

Submitted by:

Shawn Moynihan, Superintendent of Special Education Support Services
October 10, 2018

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson
Minister of Education
22nd floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1L2

Dear Hon. Lisa M. Thompson,

The Special Education Advisory Committee to the Upper Grand District School Board supports Grand Erie District School Board’s Special Education Advisory Committees’ request for support of Bill 44. We request that the Ministry of Education amend the Education Act so that every board shall promote awareness and understanding of permanent brain injury resulting for prenatal alcohol exposure, including best practices to support pupils who may have FASD. Furthermore, we would like this lifelong brain injury recognized as a neurodevelopmental disorder, diagnosed under Fetal Alcohol Disorder (FASD).

Thank you, we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Carrie Proudfoot
Chairperson
UGDSB Special Education Advisory Committee

Cc: Chairs of Ontario Special Advisory Committees
Letter From Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board Regarding Recent Changes to Funding for Special Education

Recommendation:

It is recommended that this letter be received.

Submitted by:

Shawn Moynihan, Superintendent of Special Education Support Services
October 4, 2018

Honorable Lisa Thompson
Minister of Education
22nd Floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, On M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Thompson:

The Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) is writing in support of the findings contained in the Auditor General of Ontario’s Annual Report, 2017. Specifically, we would like to address the information contained in Chapter 3 - Reports on Value-for-Money Audits, Section 3.08, entitled Ministry of Education: Ministry Funding and Oversight of School Boards. Further, we would like to address the impact of the recent changes in the Special Education funding model on our school district, which were made by the Conservative government, as outlined in the August 24th, 2018 memo received from Bruce Rodrigues, Deputy Minister of Education.

The Auditor General found that benchmarks in the funding formula and the dollar amount assigned to that factor are out-of-date. In 2002, an independent task force reviewed the formula used by the Ministry to determine funding to school boards, and recommended that the Ministry annually review and update the benchmarks, as well as conduct a more comprehensive review of the formula every 5 years. While the Ministry updates the labour costs annually, the other benchmarks have not been updated, and still reflect census data which is more than 10 years old. (p.429). When demographics such as income levels and immigration patterns are not reflected in the benchmarks, this creates a funding inequity between the various regions of the province.

The Auditor General’s recommendation to remedy this inequity is as follows:

“To ensure that funds are allocated in a manner that supports school boards in providing a high standard of education to all students, we recommend the Ministry of Education:

- conduct a comprehensive external review of the funding formula, including all grant components and benchmarks, as recommended by the Education Equity Funding Task Force in 2002;
- regularly review the formula and update all benchmarks to reflect the province’s changing demographics and socio-economic conditions; and
- use the more current census data available when determining allocations for grants.” (p.441)

The Auditor General also found that the Ministry of Education does not allocate funding based on actual needs. The Special Education Grant is intended for students who need special education programs and services. However, half of the special-education funding is allocated based on a school board’s average daily enrolment of all its students, instead of the number of students who are receiving special-education programs and services.
services. But the portion of special-education students in each board is not the same, ranging from 8% - 28% depending on the Board. (p.429)

At the October 31st, 2017 Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board (PVNC CDSB) enrolment report to the Ministry, the data indicates that our school board supports 15.7% of our elementary students, and 28.9% of our secondary students, with special education services, for a combined percentage of 19.8%.

The Auditor General's recommendations to remedy this inequity are as follows: "In order to provide funding in a more equitable manner and ensure the funding meets the actual needs it is intended to address, we recommend the Ministry of Education assess whether the funding of grants intended to serve the needs of a specific group of students or for a specific purpose is achieving that purpose." (p.444)

Further, "in order for the Ministry of Education to provide funding in proportion to a school board's need, we recommend it:

- determine to what extent school boards are spending funds for specific education priorities (such as supports for ESL students and Indigenous students) on those specific purposes, and where it finds significant discrepancies, follow up with school boards to understand the reason for the discrepancies and better align funding with actual needs; and
- design and conduct validation procedures to verify the use of restricted funds." (p.448)

We are aware that our Board staff spend considerable time to complete and submit Special Incident Portion (SIP) claims annually in order to supplement the Special Education Grant to the Board. Without these SIP claims, we would be unable to address the significant student needs throughout our jurisdiction, and we would be spending significantly beyond the Special Education Grant envelope. We are advocating that either these grants continue indefinitely at appropriate levels, or the Special Education Grant itself reflects the actual student needs in the system.

The recent funding changes announced by the government do not reflect the findings or the recommendations which the Auditor General made in 2017. Increasing the Special Education per Pupil Amount (SEPPA) to school districts, which uses outdated benchmarks, as described above, and which does not reflect the actual needs because it is based on average daily enrolment, creates an inequity between those boards with larger enrolments and those with smaller enrolments. Further, by decreasing the maximum amount for Special Incident Portion (SIP) by $11,000 per claim, the government has put those districts, such as ours, which rely on SIP claims to support our highest needs students, in an untenable position. This decision was made without full consultation as to the impact this would have on equity and inclusion of our students with special needs, and it does not support school districts in implementing the Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities (2018).

Because of our relatively small enrolment of approximately 15,000 students, an increase in the SEPPA does not have the same impact as the SIP claim amounts for which we can apply, so we are actually now facing a reduction in Special Education Support Staff already hired for the 2018-2019 school year to balance the budget. We had already budgeted in the spring with the knowledge that we could expect $38,000 per pupil rather than $27,000 (see chart, below). If this was a decision which the government felt...
necessary to make, then this should have occurred next spring, when school districts had time to budget appropriately for the following school year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry estimates 2018-2019</th>
<th>Potential reduction in SIP revenue</th>
<th>PVNC SEPPA increase</th>
<th>Potential lost revenue</th>
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<tr>
<td>Equiv. of 55 full SIP claims*</td>
<td>(661,419.00)</td>
<td>211,453.00</td>
<td>(449,966.00)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PVNC estimates 2018-2019</td>
<td>Equiv. of 128 full SIP claims</td>
<td>211,453.00</td>
<td>(1,082,217.00)</td>
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*This number could be based on the Ministry’s estimate that we would submit a minimum of 55 SIP claims for the full amount, but we are unsure as to how the number was derived.

In this era of a renewed focus on workplace violence, specifically student to staff violence, funding is required to ensure that there is sufficient, trained staff in the schools to address the student needs which can manifest in unsafe behaviour. Staff stress levels are at an all-time high, which directly impacts the sick leave costs to all boards. Training for all school staff is an essential step, and this needs funding to occur.

As a SEAC, we support the Auditor General’s recommendations, as outlined above. We look forward to a response which will help us to understand the Ministry of Education’s rationale for the changes to funding. We also look forward to learning of Ministry follow-up action ensure an ongoing, equitable distribution of funds across boards to serve and support the students who need it the most.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Kelly Shiglielski, Chair
Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board
Special Education Advisory Committee

Cc. M. Nasello - Director of Education PVNC CDSB
     D. Smith - MPP, Peterborough
     L. Park - MPP, Durham
     D. Piccini - MPP, Northumberland-Quinte West
     L. Scott - MPP, Haliburton -Kawartha Lakes-Brock
     M. Griebsma - Chair, PVNC CDSB
                - PVNC CDSB Trustees
                - PVNC CDSB SEAC Members
                - Provincial DSB SEAC Chairs