



# Memorandum

**Date:** April 27, 2026  
**To:** Members of the Board  
**From:** Ken Ranta, Chief Executive Officer  
**Subject:** **Public Virtual Access to Board Meetings**

At the December 11, 2025 meeting of the Board, a discussion ensued about access to Board meetings via video and/or livestream.

TBDSSAB is an independent organization, unlike a municipality with mandatory open meetings. Unlike a Municipality, a DSSAB does not have constituents. Public access to Board meetings is neither a right nor a requirement.

That said, TBDSSAB's Board meetings are open to the public, and any member of the community may attend and hear the discussion of matters before the Board in open session. Further, agenda packages and all related Board reports and presentations are posted on the website for public access. The public availability of Board materials is a level of transparency that Administration upholds voluntarily and is beyond the requirements of a DSSAB.

While TBDSSAB is dedicated to being transparent and will continue to exceed compliance requirements in that respect, offering virtual public access to Board Meetings is something TBDSSAB has explored previously with suboptimal results.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Board meetings were held virtually with no opportunity for public participation. As meetings progressed to a hybrid format, recordings of Board meetings were either livestreamed, or recordings made available online for five business days following each meeting (livestreaming stopped in December 2020 after an update to Facebook's livestream options). This practice was in place from August 2020 through March 2022, at which point pandemic precautions changed to allow meetings to resume with in-person public participation.

The process of making the recordings publicly accessible took between five and ten hours from start to finish. This included time for the video to be processed and downloadable via Teams, to edit the recording to include only open-session discussion, to generate caption for



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accessibility, and video rendering / upload times. These videos had an average of just two viewers, which typically included staff. Due to the staff resources required combined with low public interest, Administration did not continue offering recordings after in-person participation resumed.

The low viewership on the recordings is consistent with historically low rates of public participation in TBDSSAB Board meetings. Since in-person public participation resumed in 2022, only two meetings have been attended by members of the public. Further, no request for delegation by a community member has been received in many years.

In TBDSSAB's Governance & Procedural By-law (03-2021), Section 3, paragraph 12(ii) states the following:

“Open meetings shall be recorded for the purpose of ensuring accurate intent of any direction of the Board, but closed meetings shall not be recorded. Once the recording has been transcribed and the minutes of that meeting are confirmed by the Board, the recording shall be destroyed.”

Having recordings of meetings available outside of TBDSSAB control may pose a concern related to the by-law, and as such the by-law may require amendment should the Board wish to pursue virtual access options.

Administration understands the appeal of virtual participation options, especially given the span of the District. While open to suggestions to encourage participation and inclusion of members of the public, Administration recommends against pursuing video or livestream meeting options for the following reasons:

- Uploading recordings has proven to be an ineffective use of staff resources.
- Limited audience/viewership (high effort, low reward).
- TBDSSAB's current setup is not conducive to ensuring only pertinent agenda-related discussions – and not personal discussions – are picked up by meeting microphones.
- Loss of control of the narrative once a recording is out in the public domain. Comments made during Board meetings may last forever in the public sphere. As a result, recording may cause a shift in focus from collaborative discussion to saying the right thing.
- Possible contravention of the existing Governance & Procedural By-law.
- Media have been the most consistent members of the public to attend Board meetings, and their attendance has been unaffected by the in-person requirement.
- Organizations with similar legislated mandates, including the Thunder Bay District Health Unit, also do not offer public virtual access to Board meetings.



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Based on the above, Administration recommends maintaining Board meeting access in person and not pursuing a video and/or livestream option at this time.

Sincerely,

Ken Ranta  
Chief Executive Officer

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