

Ministry of Education Survey re: In-Person Requirements for Board and Committee Meetings

This survey is about in-person attendance requirements for school board and committee meetings (Ontario Regulation 463/97).

Closing date: May 19, 2023

The survey should take approximately 15-30 minutes to complete.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Emily.lemarchand@ontario.ca. She will respond to you as soon as possible.

Context

The Ministry of Education is examining the impact of physical (in-person) attendance requirements for school board and board committee meetings, particularly on geographically large, northern and rural boards. Currently, all school boards must adopt an attendance policy that includes the physical attendance requirements set out in *Ontario Regulation 463/97 – Electronic Meetings and Meeting Attendance* (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/970463>). There are different requirements for board and committee meetings, and rules differ depending on your role in the board or committee meeting.

The regulation allows boards to provide flexibility in their policy for electronic participation by the Chair of the board and committee chairs in certain circumstances. You may wish to refer to your board's policy on electronic meetings and meeting attendance while completing this survey.

The feedback collected from this survey will help inform potential amendments to O. Reg 463/97 to ensure fairness in the rules as they apply to all boards while respecting the open and democratic nature of elected school boards where communities can engage in-person with their representatives.

About You

1. Please select your school board.

2. What is your role(s) (select all that apply):

- Trustee
- First Nation Trustee
- Chair of the Board
- Vice-chair of the Board
- Student Trustee
- Audit Committee chair
- Audit Committee member
- Parent Involvement Committee chair
- Parent Involvement Committee member
- Supervised Alternative Learning Committee chair
- Supervised Alternative Learning Committee member
- Special Education Advisory Committee chair

- Special Education Advisory Committee member
- Chair of the Equity and Inclusivity Committee (or equivalent committee)
- Member of the Equity and Inclusivity Committee (or equivalent committee)
- Chair of the Indigenous Education Council (or equivalent committee)
- Member of the Indigenous Education Council (or equivalent committee)
- Director of Education
- Supervisory officer

Requirements for meetings of the board, and meetings of the committee of the whole

Under the current rules, the following persons must be physically present at every meeting of the board or of a committee of the whole board:

- The Chair of the Board or their designate (boards may opt to provide flexibility in certain circumstances – the rules and questions respecting board chairs are addressed in the next section)
- At least one additional member of the board
- The Director of Education or their designate

In addition, every trustee must be physically present for at least three regular meetings of the board during each 12-month period beginning November 15, 2022.

The following questions relate to regular board meetings.

3.To what extent is the requirement for a trustee to be physically present for at least three regular board meetings each year, perceived by community members as a disincentive to run for trustee?

- Not at all / very little
- To some extent
- To a large extent
- To a very large extent
- Unsure

4.Considering the geographic size of your board, is there a distance threshold that makes trustee travel to board meetings for at least three meetings per year unfeasible?

- > 50 km
- > 100 km
- > 150 km
- > 200 km
- Unsure
- No
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5. Please describe why travelling this distance is unfeasible.

Optional rules for the Chair of the board

Under the current rules, a board's attendance policy may allow the Chair of the board or their designate to participate electronically in a meeting of the board if:

- the distance from the chair's or designate's current residence to the meeting location is **200 kilometers** or more;
- weather conditions do not allow the chair or designate to travel to the meeting location safely; or
- the chair or designate cannot be physically present at a meeting due to health-related issues.

If your board policy allows this flexibility, it must require that the Chair of the board or their designate be physically present for at **least half of the meetings of the board in every 12-month period beginning November 15** and may require the Chair or designate to be physically present for a greater proportion of meetings.

The following questions relate to meetings of the board and board chairs.

6. Should the distance threshold of 200 km be modified?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

7. Considering the geographic size of your board, what is a reasonable distance for chairs to travel to attend board meetings?

- Up to 100 km
- Up to 150 km
- Up to 200 km
- Unsure
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8. Should the requirement for the board Chair or designate to be physically present for at least half of the meetings of the board in every 12-month period be modified?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

9. Does your board's policy provide flexibility for the Chair of the board to participate electronically in the circumstances described above?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

10. To what extent do you perceive the requirements in your board's policy to be a disincentive in serving as board Chair?

- Not at all / very little
- To some extent
- To a large extent
- To a very large extent
- Not relevant to me
- Unsure

Requirements for committee meetings

At every meeting of a committee of the board, except a committee of the whole board, the following persons must be physically present:

- The chair or their designate (subject to board policy)->If the chair or their designate participates in a meeting electronically, at least one additional member of the committee must attend in-person.
- The Director of Education or their designate

A board's attendance policy may allow the chair or their designate to participate electronically if:

- the distance from the chair's or designate's current residence to the meeting location is **200 kilometers** or more;
- weather conditions do not allow the chair or designate to travel to the meeting location safely; or
- the chair or designate cannot be physically present at a meeting due to health-related issues.

The following questions relate to committee meetings and committee chairs.

11. Should the distance threshold of 200 km be modified?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

12. Does your board's policy provide flexibility for the chairs of committees of the board to participate electronically in the circumstances described above?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

13. To what extent do you perceive the attendance requirements in your board's policy to be a disincentive in serving as chair of a committee of the board?

- Not at all / very little
- To some extent
- To a large extent

- To a very large extent
- Not relevant to me
- Unsure

14. To what extent are the attendance requirements in your board's policy, perceived by community members as a disincentive to serve as committee chair?

- Not at all / very little
- To some extent
- To a large extent
- To a very large extent
- Unsure

15. Should a board's physical attendance requirements for committee chairs apply to all committees of the boards (i.e., statutory committees and all other types of committees)?

- Yes
- No

16. If not, which committees should the physical attendance requirements for committee chairs apply? Select all that apply.

- Audit Committee
- Special Education Advisory Committee
- Parent Involvement Committee
- Supervised Alternative Learning Committee
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Electronic meeting practices

17. Has your Board's or committee's capacity for conducting virtual meetings improved since the pandemic?

- Yes
- No

18. Are there any best practices with respect to virtual meetings that you can share?

19. Please add any further comments.