



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

Ontario Public School Boards' Association
439 University Avenue, 18th Floor
Toronto, ON M5G 1Y8
Tel: (416) 340-2540
Fax: (416) 340-7571
webmaster@opsba.org
www.opsba.org

Cathy Abraham
President

W.R. (Rusty) Hick
Executive Director

To: The Honourable Steve Clark, Minister of Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
The Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education

Re: OPSBA Letter re: Bill 204, Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act, 2020

Dear Ministers Clark and Lecce,

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) would like to take this opportunity to comment on the recent passage of Bill 204, Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act, 2020 and in particular, the changes that were proposed in Schedule 1 – the Assessment Act, Schedule 3 – the Election Act, and Schedule 4 – the Municipal Elections Act, 1996.

For quite some time, and as part of regular post municipal election reviews, OPSBA has expressed the need for a concerted effort to update and maintain the Voter List to ensure accuracy and school support identification. Many voters complain about the continued confusion that remains at polling stations even on Voting Day. In 2016, when commenting on Bill 181, *Municipal Elections Modernization Act*, we stated, "*OPSBA believes that maintaining an accurate public record for voter registration is a matter of good public policy. For school boards, improving the quality of the data in the municipal voters list would result in more reliable school support data for public policy planning purposes.*"

More recently, OPSBA has been engaged in conversations with Greg Essensa, the Chief Electoral Officer, and expressed our support for an amendment that moves the responsibility for preparing the preliminary voters' list in municipal elections from the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation to the Chief Electoral Officer. We agree that the creation of a single registry for Ontario voters for both municipal and provincial elections is a smart move and it makes sense to have an organization that specifically deals with elections and has the experience, to take on this role.

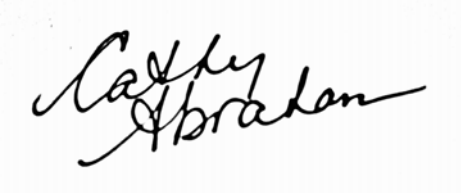
Questions and concerns our members have expressed include:

- The assurance of proactive communications to the electorate about these changes and a provision for accessible user-friendly methods to ensure school board support can be easily declared;
- That school boards receive timely electorate information from Elections Ontario. This includes the information that allows school boards to determine and distribute their trustees;
- Why is this change to be in effect beginning in 2024 when the next Municipal and School Board Elections are to be held on Monday, October 23, 2022?
- In past election years, the issues based on incorrect numbers have impacted some boards and the number of their trustees. How will this delay impact potential adjustments needed to be corrected in advance of the 2022 elections?

- The creation of an ongoing partnership between the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Ministry of Education, and stakeholders in both sectors, to discuss any challenges and opportunities for a successful transition and implementation;
- Why is this change in effect for municipal by-elections initiated after January 1, 2024? Why the difference in dates?

Thank you for considering our feedback. We will follow up with staff in both ministries about the comments and questions stated above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cathy Abraham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cathy Abraham
President
Ontario Public School Boards' Association

cc. Nancy Naylor, Deputy Minister

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association represents English public district school boards and public school authorities across Ontario, which together serve more than 1.3 million public elementary and secondary students. The Association advocates on behalf of the best interests and needs of the public school system in Ontario. OPSBA is seen as the credible voice of public education in Ontario and is routinely called on by the provincial government for input and advice on legislation and the impact of government policy directions.