



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

Ontario Public School Boards' Association

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April 14, 2015

The Honourable Kathleen Wynne
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Assembly of Ontario
111 Wellesley St W
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A2

The Honourable Liz Sandals
Minister of Education
900 Bay Street
Mowat Block
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1N3

Dear Premier Wynne and Minister Sandals,

Re: Members of the Premier's Community Hub Framework Advisory Group

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) has been a longstanding advocate of the concept of community hubs, as we believe that through community partnerships we can work collaboratively to improve the social, emotional, mental and physical well-being of children, youth and the wider community. We sincerely welcome the appointment of Karen Pitre as the Premier's Special Advisor on Community Hubs. Ms. Pitre has long been an advocate of the concept of a cooperative and integrated public service model.

That being said, I am writing to express my profound disappointment in the fact that school boards were not included in the recently announced appointments to the Premier's Community Hub Advisory Group. The government's news release indicated that these nine individuals "have specialized knowledge and expertise in a variety of areas, including education, finance and community building." The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) fails to see where you have included an education expert as there is no representative from the front lines of the education sector - both elected school board trustees and school board staff have been excluded.

OPSBA and its member school boards have been champions for supporting community partnerships in the coordination of public services such as education, health care and social services. Just last May, OPSBA members endorsed their support for the Integrated Service Delivery Symposium held in Toronto. Trustees and OPSBA staff participated in the event that discussed repurposing Ontario's public schools as community 'hubs' that serve children, families and the communities in which they live.

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Minister of Education

Our schools are busier than ever. With the roll-out of full-day kindergarten having been completed this past fall, many schools have children within their buildings from 7:30 a.m. until 6 p.m. at night. These numbers will only increase with the extension of before-and-after programming to children ages six to 12. This is in addition to child care centres already located within public schools. As such, schools are becoming ever more important in each community and the local school is often the key place where parents, grandparents and caregivers interact with each other.

By excluding school boards and the education sector from the Advisory Group, the government has missed a unique opportunity to discuss, analyze and contribute to possible changes in policy that can move the community hub concept forward. I personally have already heard from numerous trustees across the province expressing their concern in the selection of the panel members. Given the density of school sites in the region, GTA representation is important. However, the Advisory Group is very strongly weighted in this respect. How will the unique and diverse experiences of large areas of Ontario be included in this work, e.g., Eastern and Northwestern Ontario? In the coming days, OPSBA will be forwarding a recommendation for school board representation on the Advisory Group.

Having said that, we have and will continue to connect with Ms. Pitre about how school boards and trustees can contribute to this discussion and have an active role in shaping this extremely important policy framework moving forward.

Yours truly,



Michael Barrett,
President

Copy: The Honourable Ted McMeekin, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Howie Bender, Chief of Staff, Ministry of Education Office
Paris Meilleur, Education Policy Advisor to Premier Wynne
Karen Pitre, Special Advisor, Community Hubs
Tatum Wilson, Office of the Premier
OPSBA Member Board Chairs
ACÉPO – Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario
AFOCSC - Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques
OCSTA – Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association