



**ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION**

Leading Education's Advocates

Ontario Public School Boards' Association

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Michael Barrett
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October 15, 2014

The Honourable Liz Sandals
Minister of Education
Mowat Block
22nd Flr
900 Bay St
Toronto ON M7A1L2

Dear Minister Sandals,

With the 2014 municipal and school board election fast approaching, we continue to profile and promote the importance of school boards and the role of publicly elected school board trustees. We have seen the incredible success of our Ministry-sponsored candidates' website and have received overwhelming support for our Public Service Announcements and several other promotional materials that have been distributed widely in communities across the province this year.

Trustees perform a crucial role in ensuring that provincial education policy and education funding are made to work at the local level in ways that address the expectations of parents and communities. Trustees invest a great deal of time and energy supporting their roles by preparing themselves thoroughly for the decisions that are made at board meetings ranging from strategic plans, to policies to setting the budget, responding to constituent concerns, supporting school events and corresponding with a broad range of stakeholders. They are the voice of public education when they engage with other sectors within their communities and hold the only democratically elected office that is dedicated specifically to the education of the province's children and youth. As Ontario continues to address its economic challenges, trustees are tasked with doing more with less while responding to the very broad and increasing range of expectations the public has of the school system. At the same time, they are not being adequately recognized by the province in terms of professional development support and financial compensation.

School board trustees have not seen a remuneration increase since 2006. In addition, Ontario Regulation 357 Honoraria for Board Members, the regulation that governs honoraria, continues to be amended to impose a restraint on any increase. It began with a restraint period beginning March 25, 2010 that was to end March 31, 2012. This was extended until March 31, 2014. At the end of March of this year, the Ministry informed us that the restraint period was further extended to November 30, 2014. Then recently, the memo dated September 23, 2014, has now, yet again, indicated a restraint on any increases until the end of this upcoming term of office 2014-2018. The timing of this memo, in the midst of school board election campaigns, is troubling when we are actively seeking incumbent and new trustees to take on this important role.

The memo also refers to the attendance amount component and what the ministry refers to as the four committees that require trustee membership. In addition to those four, we know that many of our trustees are members of other groups including their transportation consortia, expulsion hearings, accommodation

reviews, and First Nations Education Advisory Committees. These are important responsibilities of the role and should be considered for attendance purposes as they require trustee participation and decision making.

In 2010, we wrote to then Minister of Education Leona Dombrowsky outlining our concerns regarding Regulation 357. One concern that remains is the inclusion of an enrolment component. Even with declining enrolment, the work of trustee has not decreased. In fact, the number of government and program initiatives continues to grow and the needs of our students continue to evolve. We suggested at that time that honoraria not be directly linked to enrolment. We had said that enrolment is a “statistic that is variable and has little to do with or has no bearing on the amount or type of work done by a trustee.” We had indicated that we would like to be part of any future consultation about the honoraria regulation and how it could better support trustees. Since that time, we have been in regular communication with ministry staff about the changes and direction we would like to see but these have not yet been taken into consideration.

A relevant issue in considering trustee remuneration is comparison with other municipally elected officials particularly with regard to the respective budgets for which they are responsible.

As in 2010, we are also suggesting that our appointed trustees who serve at children’s treatment centres across the province should receive an honorarium. They too deserve recognition and compensation for their service to public education.

We have a shared commitment to create an equitable system that supports all students and their education pathways. This commitment should extend to recognition and fair treatment for the democratically elected trustees who govern school boards in the best interests of Ontario’s students.

We look forward to discussing this with your staff soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Barrett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Michael Barrett, President
Ontario Public School Boards’ Association

Copy: George Zegarac, Deputy Minister
Bruce Drewett, Director – Leadership Development and School Board Governance Branch
Howie Bender, Chief of Staff