



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

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To: PTPSB@ontario.ca

The Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education

Cc: Nancy Naylor, Deputy Minister
Yael Ginsler, Assistant Deputy Minister, Student Achievement Division
Andrew Davis, Assistant Deputy Minister, Education Labour and Finance Division

The recent revocation of *Regulation 274/12: Hiring Practices* (Regulation 274) was a positive step for Ontario's public schools and their communities, and we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft of the interim Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) on School Board Teacher Hiring Practices.

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association represents English public school boards and 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 students in the English public school system in Ontario. OPSBA believes that the role of public education is to provide universally accessible education opportunities for students of all ethnic, racial or cultural backgrounds, social or economic status, individual exceptionality and faith. Under the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Act* (SBCBA), OPSBA is the designated employer bargaining agent for all 31 English Public School Boards as well as the school authorities.

In order to ensure the feedback provided for this consultation is reflective of the views of our member boards, OPSBA consulted with trustees and school board staff through our Board of Directors, at the Public Education Symposium, with PCODE and the Senior Negotiators of school boards, and at the Education Labour Relations and Human Resources Symposium.

Throughout the time Regulation 274 was in force, OPSBA held numerous consultations with our member boards. Those consultations consistently revealed the many challenges and inequities this regulation created in the hiring of teachers, including:

- An inability to address diversity and equity in hiring
- Limitations on boards to hire teachers that reflect the needs of the school community
- The pressure occasional teachers feel to be on multiple school board lists
- The inability of permanent teachers to seek employment at a different school board; and
- The restrictions for principals and vice-principals to return to teaching.

Regulation 274 also disadvantaged teachers who were new to the profession, and it had become a deterrent to entering the teaching profession.

Upon review of the draft PPM, OPSBA is pleased that the vast majority of recommendations we have provided to previous consultations on the subject of teacher hiring practices have been incorporated. We agree with the expectation set out in the draft PPM, that “all school boards in Ontario’s publicly funded education system are expected to establish fair, consistent, and transparent hiring,” and our member boards wholeheartedly support the inclusion of the components identified by the PPM in their teacher hiring policies.

In particular, OPSBA has in previous submissions intimated the importance of ensuring that school boards’ hiring policies must include the following principles:

- A posting protocol for vacant teacher positions, including timelines
- Use of hiring teams that value equity and diversity
- An interview process for every teacher vacancy of more than 30 days
- A common and consistent set of questions and rubrics to evaluate applicants
- Involvement of the Board Equity Officer/Board Integrity Officer/other appropriate staff in the development of policies and procedures
- Candidate debriefing upon request, and
- Periodic auditing of the process.

Additionally, previous OPSBA submissions have highlighted the importance of the inclusion strategies to prevent nepotism in teacher hiring such as the public posting of policies, practices, and procedures that address conflicts of interest. Accordingly, we were pleased with the inclusion of a broad spectrum of Fairness and Transparency initiatives.

OPSBA is supportive of the need for school boards to monitor and evaluate the impact of the updated hiring practices. With that said, given the current financial constraints faced by many school boards, additional resources may be required in order to fully comply with certain aspects set out in the PPM, such as, for example, data collection.

In conclusion, students need to see themselves reflected in the curriculum, the resources they use and in the staff that support them. Eliminating the unfair restrictions created by Regulation 274 is the right thing to do and will better position school boards to hire the right teachers for the job.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cathy Abraham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Cathy Abraham
President
Ontario Public School Boards' Association