



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

2020/2021 ANNUAL REPORT





STATEMENT OF MISSION AND BELIEFS

The mission of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) is to promote and enhance public education by: helping member boards to fulfil their mandates; developing effective partnerships with other groups interested in public education; and providing a strong and effective voice on behalf of public education in Ontario.

OPSBA believes that the role of public education is to provide universally accessible education opportunities for all students regardless of their ethnic, racial or cultural backgrounds, social or economic status, individual exceptionality, or religious preference.

Excellence in education is achieved by:

- promoting high standards of individual achievement;
- providing the understanding and basic skills required for active and compassionate participation in the life of the family, the community, the province, the nation, and a global society;
- cultivating a love of learning;
- employing highly qualified, highly motivated teachers, strongly committed to ongoing professional development;
- recognizing the value of diversity among learners and communities; and
- exploring creative educational alternatives.

To maintain excellence, the public school system must be accountable to the community it serves and must build effective partnerships throughout the community.

Local, elected school boards play a key role as part of a democratic process of checks and balances in decision-making by ensuring that schools remain responsive to both provincial program requirements, local needs, and resources.

MESSAGE TO MEMBERS





Resilience, innovation, leadership, mission-focused, grieving for those lost to an elusive adversary — these are the words that come to mind when we think of what was needed to get us through a full school year in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. English public school boards across Ontario went above and beyond throughout the year, responding to the needs of students, families and communities in a constantly changing learning environment.

This was a year in which the majority of students moved from in-class learning to remote and back again, several times. The school year started later than usual in many boards, and in-class students were kept home for many weeks and months in January, February and again after the week-long spring break in April. This invisible threat also kept many additional staff and students home for weeks at a time, whether it was because they had unfortunately tested positive for COVID-19 and were suffering the effects, or simply exhibiting symptoms as mild as a runny nose. Public health rose to become the dominant concern for most Ontarians, and with good reason.

This school year has certainly been unique, and we must continue to acknowledge the tremendous amount of hard work, innovation, creativity, and compassion that has been exhibited by trustees, directors of education, superintendents, principals, teachers, education workers, and school communities across the province throughout the entire school year. Across the province, OPSBA and our member boards continued working primarily remotely, holding virtual board and staff meetings via platforms like Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams. Our Association shifted our way of operating to adapt to the pandemic, and continued to advocate effectively on behalf of the best interests and needs of the public school system in Ontario.

We continued our important work on embedding the principles of equity and anti-racism in everything OPSBA does, and have acquired the services of a consulting firm to conduct an equity audit of our internal documentation and processes.

As we head into the 2021-22 school year, we will continue our strong advocacy with the current government and the wider public in support of the important cause of ensuring Ontario's public education system remains strong in an uncertain time.

This September, it will be of utmost importance to ensure our students and schools are properly supported for the return to school. To quote our new discussion paper, *Transitioning from the COVID-19 Experience* (available at www.opsba.org), we will need “to challenge our collective selves to reimagine what schools could become to ensure that each and every student in our care thrives in school and in life.”

Will we gradually be able to lift restrictions on extracurriculars, distancing and PPE to give students that well-rounded whole-child experience they require for student success? We hope, but as of press time, we cannot say for certain. There are certainly a number of additional challenges that lie ahead of us, but we know our incredible world-class public education system will rise to meet them.

Handwritten signature of Cathy Abraham in black ink.

Cathy Abraham
OPSBA President

Handwritten signature of W.R. (Rusty) Hick in black ink.

W.R. (Rusty) Hick
Executive Director

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF 2020-21



The Highlights of 2020–21

Through our Board of Directors, OPSBA's member boards establish multi-year strategic priorities that position the organization to engage with the key forces affecting high quality public education in Ontario today. They drive how the Association uses its expertise, time and resources. The priorities offer a framework for decision-making and help shape action on ongoing initiatives and emerging issues that are relevant to the Association's mission. OPSBA's multi-year strategic priorities are:

Advocating for the Whole Child and Student Well-Being

OPSBA believes that improving student achievement and student engagement is directly linked to ensuring that we work collaboratively to support the social, emotional, mental and physical well-being of all children and youth in our increasingly complex world.

Advancing Reconciliation: First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education

OPSBA believes that through education we will move towards a Canada where the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians is founded on mutual respect and OPSBA, therefore, supports the Calls to Action of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

Supporting Trustees as Leaders in Public Education

OPSBA believes that local democratically elected trustees make a significant and direct contribution to the achievement of all students through their leadership in directing the policies and priorities of the local school board that shape a culture of continuous improvement.

Strengthening Positive Labour Relations

OPSBA believes that teachers and education workers deeply influence a positive and productive learning environment for students and are supported in this role through the peace and stability engendered by successfully negotiated collective agreements.

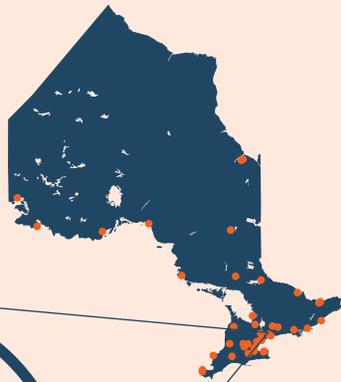
Advocating for Sustainable and Equitable Education Funding

OPSBA believes that strong and equitable education funding is a foundational factor in setting the conditions that promote and sustain student achievement.

Ontario's English Public Education System

31

District school boards



10

School authorities and treatment centres

317

Publicly elected trustees

18

Appointed indigenous trustees

27

Appointed school authority and treatment centre trustees

OPSBA



10

Executive Council members



49

Board of Directors members



24

Work Team members



5

Regions

Our Work

14

Written submissions to government

8

Central Terms bargained by the Labour Relations Team

4

FSL-related reports

1

Discussion Paper

280

Attendees at the Public Education Symposium



13

Board of Directors and Executive Council Meetings

186

Attendees at the 2020 AGM

4

Indigenous Trustees' Council Meetings

16

Regional Meetings

8

OPSBA Speaker Series sessions

11

Work Team meetings

900

OPSBA Speaker Series attendees



Our Work

66

Media hits since the start of September 2020

16

News releases and statements

8,833

Twitter Followers

30,800

Total Twitter engagements

709

Total tweets

1,180,000

Total tweet impressions



Equity, Inclusion and Diversity

OPSBA has taken note of the persistence of overt and systemic racism throughout the United States, and indeed right here at home in Canada throughout the past year. Across the province, many BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) students and families in particular felt a variety of emotions, and it was important for all Ontarians to acknowledge the ongoing trauma they continue to experience as a result of recent events.

To implement a motion passed by the Board of Directors, OPSBA is in the process of conducting an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Audit to “determine the best approach to combatting systemic racism and oppressive practices introspectively within our own organization with an expected outcome of determining best practices, strategies, and approaches to advocate and support an inclusive OPSBA organization and to support school boards with regard to Anti-Black and Anti-Indigenous Racism.”

In November 2020, the Association hired Turner Consulting Group, a consultancy firm that focuses on equity, diversity and inclusion. As of May 2021, the audit is well underway with a review of internal documentation and processes. This audit will also include consultations with staff, the Executive Council, the Board of Directors, the Indigenous Trustees’ Council, and Ministry of Education staff in order to provide a clearer picture of where OPSBA is and the path forward to ensure we are doing our best to be a leader and champion of equity, inclusion, and anti-racism in the sector.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Professional Development

"I will be attending every one I am able to."

OPSBA's professional development services support trustees in their role of ensuring Ontario's education system continues to consistently produce excellent results in student achievement and well-being. As leaders in school board governance, trustees are committed to initiating the important conversations that improve life chances for students and to engaging in vital professional and personal learning that hones leadership skills.

Our professional development offerings enhance skills, build capacity and provide the kind of information and analysis that supports informed decision-making.

The 21 professional learning modules for trustees and school boards are available at www.ontarioschooltrustees.org. The Association, in partnership with the Ontario Education Services Corporation (OESC), recently updated the modules and coordinated a promotional push during the COVID-19 pandemic to encourage trustees to access them remotely from home during the lockdown. The modules reflect the needs articulated by Ontario trustees for greater clarity on their roles as governors of school boards. The new website allows trustees to track their progress through the modules – each one has been updated with the latest legislation, education policy and research. Trustees who complete the program are now invited to apply for a Certificate of Completion in recognition of their commitment to leadership and the good governance of Ontario's education system.

OPSBA Professional Development and Speaker Series

From December 2020 to May 2021, OPSBA offered virtual professional development workshops and a speaker series to trustees. The sessions, delivered over the lunch hour, were designed to help trustees connect, build capacity and thrive as boards responded to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and other critical educational issues.

OPSBA delivered a total of eight sessions. Content and speakers were chosen to align with OPSBA's strategic priorities. Session topics included: Leading in a Time of Crisis: School Boards in the Era of COVID-19; Mental Health Among Students and Adults; An Anti-Oppression Approach for Public Schools; School Board Conflict Management; The Arts and Public Education; Advancing Reconciliation: Indigenous Education; Heightening Support for Public Education; Transitioning from the COVID-19 School Experience.

On average, each session drew 80 attendees with approximately 40 additional viewers watching the recordings afterwards.

"Thanks for offering these opportunities for valuable PD for trustees."

"Thank you very much for this opportunity."

"Insightful and thought-provoking."



CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS



OPSBA conferences and seminars offer trustees and school board staff a dynamic opportunity for professional learning that is uniquely tailored to the needs of Ontario's education leaders. In the 2020–21 school year, OPSBA's events and meetings were held exclusively on Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2020 OPSBA Annual General Meeting (AGM)

At OPSBA's AGM, members determine priorities and directions for the coming year, elect officers and plan for the future. The event also offers a comprehensive professional development program for trustees.

In 2020, OPSBA held its AGM on Zoom on September 26. Cathy Abraham, Trustee with the Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB, was re-elected as President for the 2020–2022 two-year term. Michael Barrett, Trustee with the Durham District School Board, was re-elected as 1st Vice-President, and Kathleen Woodcock, Trustee with the Waterloo Region DSB, was elected 2nd Vice-President. Chief Elaine Johnston was acclaimed as the Indigenous Trustee representative to the OPSBA Board of Directors.

Regional Meetings

OPSBA's five regional councils – Northern, Western, Eastern, Central East, and Central West – share information related to issues and matters affecting their school boards with the Executive Council and Board of Directors. In the 2020–21 school year, the member boards of each region held meetings on Zoom throughout the year, including in November, January, February, and April.

2021 Public Education Symposium (PES)

Close to 300 trustees, student trustees, Directors of Education and senior school board administrators participated in PES 2021 on Zoom, jointly hosted with the Association des conseil scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario (ACÉPO) on January 28, 2021. This leading professional development symposium, specifically designed for school board leaders, offered dynamic sessions on topics directly affecting the role of trustee and the broader environment within which school boards operate.



This year's topic focused on anti-racism. Keynote speaker Kerry-Ann Douglas-Powell, Manager of Policy and Systems Transformation, Anti-Racism Directorate, Ontario Ministry of the Solicitor General, gave a presentation on *The Way Forward: Deconstructing Systemic Racism*. She explored how systemic racism manifests within institutions and the impact on Black, Indigenous and racialized communities. Tools and strategies that can be incorporated to dismantle systemic racism within institutions were identified, as well as the successes and challenges of addressing systemic racism in the Ontario Public Service.

Minister of Education Stephen Lecce gave an update on the situation at schools across the province and Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health for the province of Ontario, provided a Provincial COVID-19 Update for attendees.

A variety of workshops, including a student panel, a panel of school board communications experts, and a Chairs and Directors of Education panel were part of the program. Three workshops that garnered much interest were *A Conversation with two Directors of Education on Equity, Anti-Black Racism, Anti-Oppression and Inclusion*; *Reframing Governance: Human Rights, Equity, Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression in the Board Room and Beyond*; and *Lands-based Education and Indigenous Ways of Knowing*.

2021 Education Labour Relations and Human Resources Symposium

OPSBA's annual Education Labour Relations and Human Resources Symposium is designed to provide professional development to trustees, directors of education, senior human resources officials and labour relations staff. This event, originally scheduled for April 30 and May 1, was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

INDIGENOUS TRUSTEES' COUNCIL



OPSBA's Indigenous Trustees' Council (ITC) is composed of First Nations trustees appointed to school boards and other Indigenous trustees elected through the municipal electoral process.

One of OPSBA's multi-year strategic priorities is Advancing Reconciliation: First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education. The Association believes that through education we will move towards a Canada where the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians is founded on mutual respect and OPSBA, therefore, supports the Calls to Action of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Association continues to practice traditional land acknowledgements before all formal meetings of the Board of Directors and Executive Council.

The ITC regularly engages in a range of initiatives to support the education of Indigenous students, and to ensure all students are educated about the history and culture of Indigenous peoples.

For the 2020–21 school year, Algoma DSB Trustee Elaine Johnston served as the Chair of the ITC and sat as the Council's representative on the OPSBA Board of Directors. Hastings and Prince Edward DSB Trustee Lucille Kyle served as the ITC's Vice Chair. Members of the Council are also part of OPSBA's Education Program and Policy Development Work Teams.

The ITC held virtual meetings in August and December 2020 and May 2021, as well as a joint meeting with Northern Region in January 2021. The ITC schedules meetings every two months where possible to discuss and advance education issues facing First Nations children and their families. All meetings are attended by Indigenous and non-Indigenous trustees.

The ITC reaffirmed support for its identified Four Priorities by consensus:

1. Building Our Capacity
2. Indigenous Student Well-Being
3. Enabling Indigenous Education
4. Advancing Reconciliation

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted challenges that have long faced First Nations students, and issues such as connectivity, remote and virtual learning, mental health and adequate funding continue to be concerning for ITC members. The importance of land-based learning has been emphasized, especially as keeping Indigenous students engaged is already a challenge. Remote learning made it even more difficult and the ITC has expressed concern about the continuation of virtual learning beyond the pandemic. Many Indigenous communities are in dire need of targeted, consistent and predictable resources, both monetary and human. The ITC has also expressed concern about systemic racism and suggests that the specific Constitutional rights of First Nations peoples need to be recognized. Letters were written to the Minister of Education expressing ongoing concern around the immediate and longer-term impact as a result of the pandemic and school closures.

On January 13, 2021, ITC members participated in the re-established Ministry of Education "Indigenous curriculum revision" writing sessions, which has up until this past school year been paused. The focus at the Ministry of Education session was on furthering the "Indigenizing" of the Grades 1 to 3 curriculum, with an emphasis on consulting traditional knowledge keepers as professional resources. There has been an effort to include ITC members in provincial discussions with the ministry around the implementation of de-streaming of the Grade 9 curriculum for September 2021. The impact of streamed courses at the secondary level has historically resulted in First Nation students being disproportionately over-represented in applied-level courses.

In February 2021, ITC Chair Elaine Johnston and Northern Regional Chair Sheryl Evans met virtually with Northern MPPs to inform the government about emerging and urgent Indigenous education issues, many of which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

ITC members also provided input during the consultations leading up to the 2020–2021 provincial budget, the development of the 2020–21 OPSBA strategic priorities and the Grants for Student Needs.

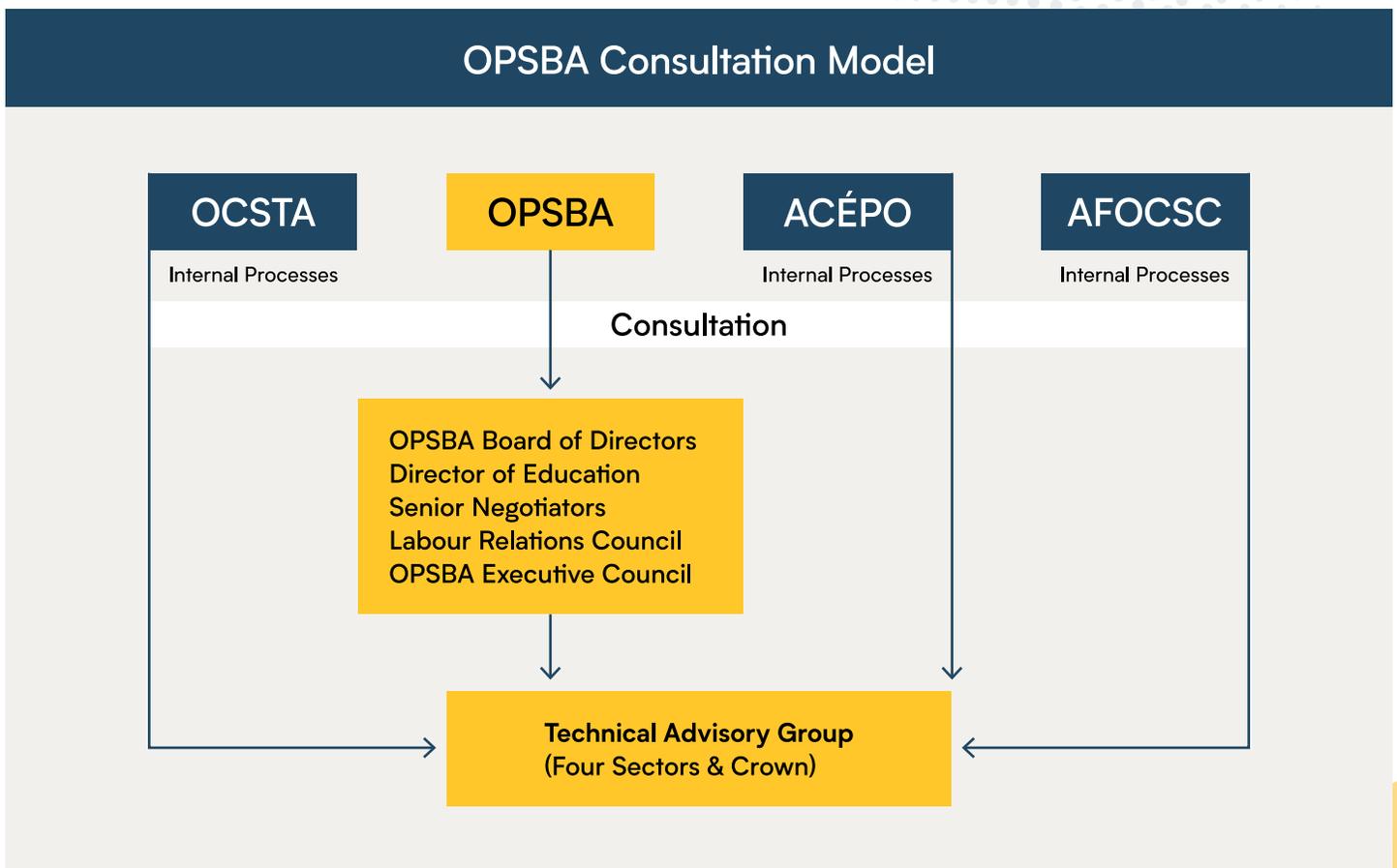
SUPPORTING POSITIVE LABOUR RELATIONS



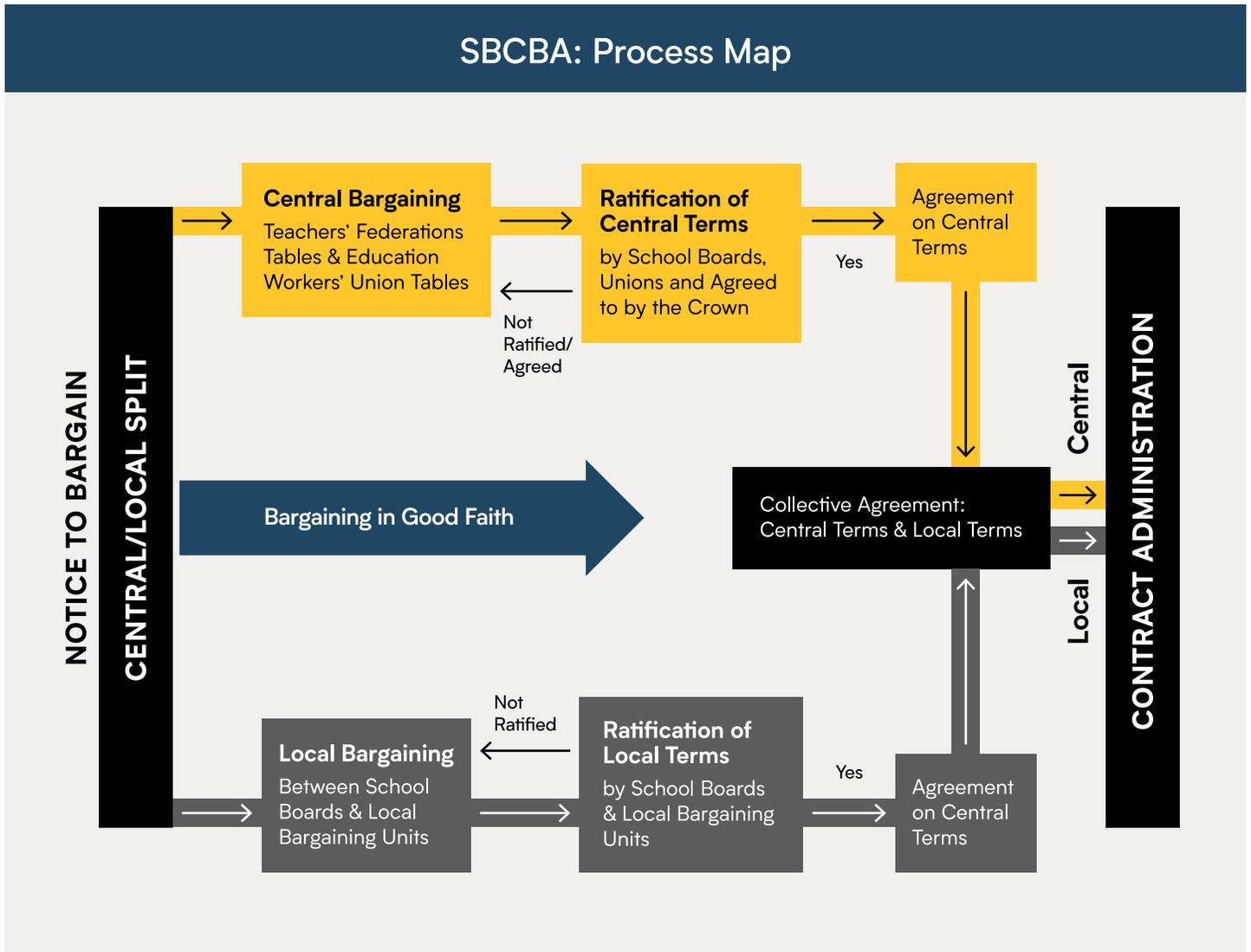
OPSBA believes that teachers and education workers deeply influence a positive and productive learning environment for students and are supported in this role through the peace and stability engendered by successfully negotiated collective agreements. (See OPSBA priorities on page six)

Central Bargaining

Following the establishment of the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Act*, the OPSBA Board of Directors established the following collective bargaining and consultation models. This decision was taken by the Board of Directors on May 3, 2014. These models were designed to create mandates and local mechanisms to ensure all voices are heard.



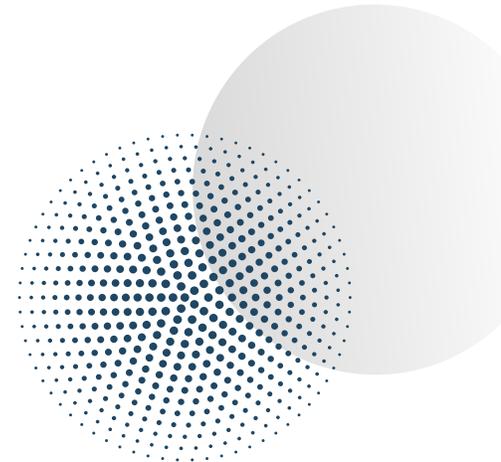
School Boards Collective Bargaining Act: Process Map

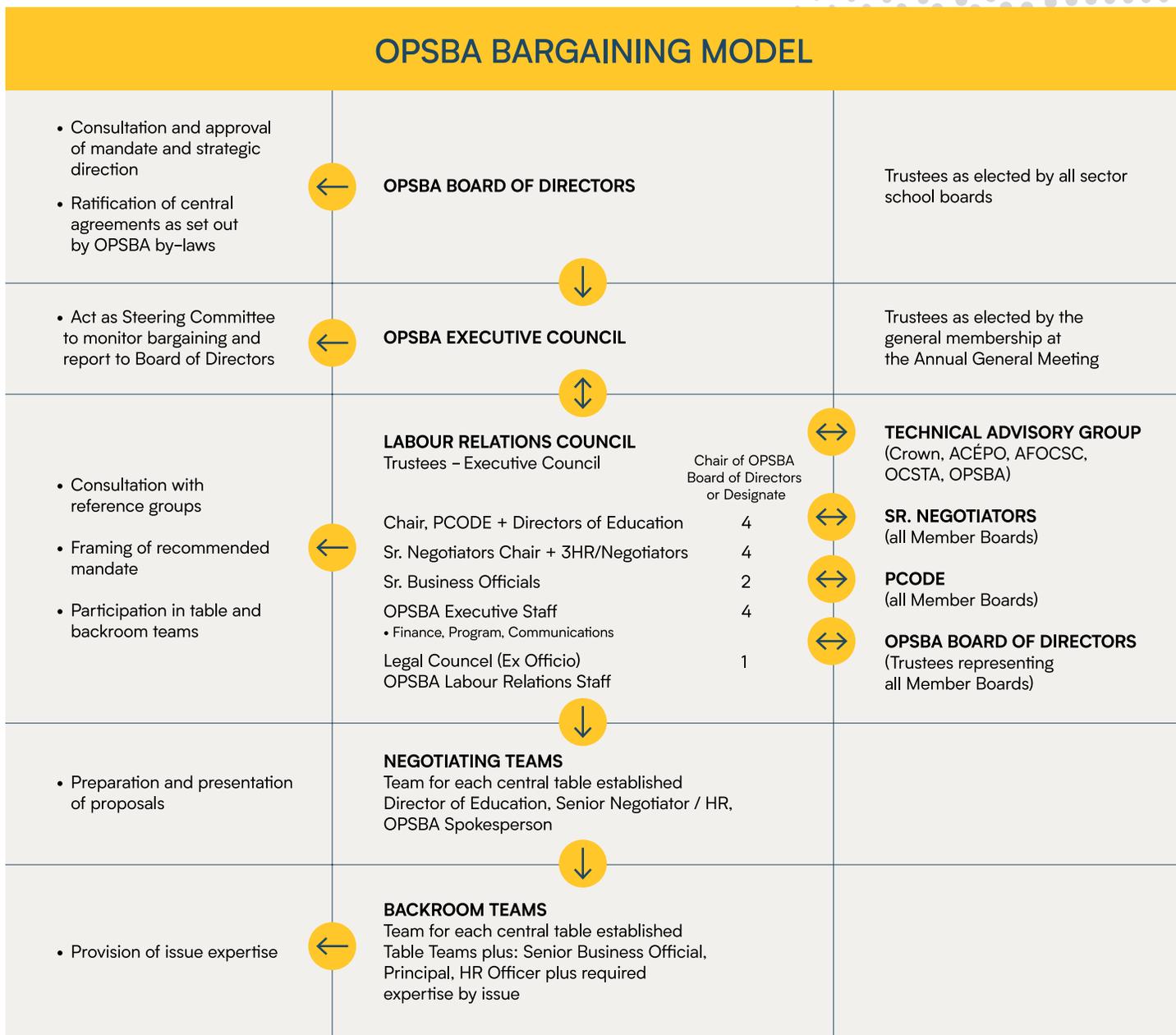


Under the SBCBA:

Local bargaining may occur at the same time as, or after, central bargaining.

Provided by the Ontario Ministry of Education, Education Labour Relations Office





Bargaining Model

OPSBA is the designated bargaining agent for 31 English public school boards and 10 public school authorities and negotiates with seven bargaining groups/federation. There are a total of 259 bargaining units. These bargaining units are members of CUPE, OSSTF Teachers and Education Workers, ETFO Teachers and Education Workers, EWAO and OCEW.

School boards are concluding local bargaining and implementing central and local terms of the collective agreement.

This round of bargaining has had unique challenges including the requirement for virtual bargaining as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, rotating job action, and limitations on Broader Public Sector (BPS) compensation. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly slowed local bargaining.

Actions Taken in 2020–21

- Supported local collective bargaining for 2019–2022 when requested.
- Provided support for the implementation of the 2019–2022 central terms.
- Heard grievances and disputes through the central grievance/arbitration process included in the central terms.
- Maintained and improved the OESC/OPSBA Portal.
- Tracked grievances, disputes and arbitrations through the Grievance Tracking System (GTS) in coordination with the Council of Trustees' Associations and the Ministry of Education.
- Established framework to compile, post and update frequently asked questions from school boards regarding contract implementation.
- Provided presentations regarding Labour matters at Labour Relations Council (LRC), Senior Negotiators and the Public Council of Ontario Directors of Education.
- Participated at: Technical Advisory Group (TAG), LRC, and Council of Trustees' Association (CTA).
- Co-chaired meetings of Central Labour Relations Committees (CLRC) for all union groups to problem solve and build relationships.
- Coordinated contract implementations at CTA Tables for CUPE, OSSTF EW, and ETFO EW as well ETFO and OSSTF Teachers.
- Provided input into provincial redeployment planning of school boards' staff to address the needs in long term care homes in Ontario.
- Began discussions with Principals/Vice Principals on their Provincial Terms and Conditions.

Revocation of Regulation 274/12: Hiring Practices

- On October 29, 2020, the Ontario government revoked regulation 274/12: Hiring Practices and released PPM 165, requiring school boards to post public facing hiring policies for teachers.
- An OPSBA workgroup was established to facilitate this work and to provide a framework to boards.
- PPM 165 does not require the use of seniority in hiring practices.
- ETFO, OPSBA and the Crown are before the Ontario Labour Relations Board on this matter.

Committees and Workgroups Arising from Collective Bargaining

Coming out of collective bargaining of the central terms for the English public school boards, the following committees were established among the Crown, the unions and OPSBA/CTA. OPSBA is part of the CTA along with the

Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA), the Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario (ACÉPO) and the Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC).

Committees:	Mandate:
<p>Provincial Working Group Health and Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTA • Crown • OSSTF • ETFO • CUPE • Education Workers' Alliance of Ontario (EWAO) • Ontario Council of Educational Workers (OCEW) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consider areas related to health and safety in order to continue to build and strengthen a culture of health and safety mindedness in the education sector. • Areas of discussion may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Caring and Safe Schools ◦ Workplace violence prevention training ◦ Notification of potential risk of physical injury ◦ Occupational health and safety training <p>Much of the work of this Committee through 2021 has focused on policy implementation surrounding the pandemic.</p>
<p>One Benefit Plan Committee for each central table (OPSBA and the Crown attend all tables)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OSSTF • ETFO • CUPE • Education Workers' Alliance of Ontario (EWAO) • Ontario Council of Educational Workers (OCEW) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELHT Agreements are undergoing the respective review processes.
<p>Education Worker Diverse and Inclusive Workforce Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTA/school board representatives • Crown • CUPE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is an extension of the original committee from 2014–2017. The committee continues to support school boards with respect to the practices that support diversity, equity, inclusion and foster diverse and inclusive workforces. • A new school board focus group has been established with regional staff representatives to provide support and to help achieve the mandate and stated deliverables of the committee.

Committees:	Mandate:
<p>Support for Students Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OPSBA/school board representatives • Crown • ETFO Teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parties have met to identify and share best practices with respect to supporting students with special needs. • The committee's work will focus specifically on the integration process and instances where integration has been successful and is expected to be completed by June 2021.
<p>E-Learning Implementation Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OPSBA • Crown • OSSTF Teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parties have completed consultation required under LOA #13 E-Learning Alternative Models.
<p>Apprenticeship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTA • Crown • OSSTF Education Workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective March 4, 2021, the \$500,000 allocated during the 2021 school year has been distributed to implement this program. • The purpose of the funds is to provide on-the-job training for employees as apprentices.
<p>Ministry/School Board Initiatives Committees (OPSBA and the Crown attend all tables)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OSSTF • ETFO • CUPE • EWAO • OCEW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After a significant hiatus, the Crown reconvened this table to review new ministry initiatives including online learning.

Central Labour Relations Committees (CUPE, ETFO, EWAO, OCEW, OSSTF)

The purpose of these committees is to facilitate communication between rounds of bargaining on issues of joint interest.

Central Dispute Resolution Committees (CUPE, ETFO, EWAO, OCEW, OSSTF)

All collective agreements established a process by which disputes over the interpretation of collective agreement language are addressed in an orderly fashion and removed from the workplace through either informal or formal resolution. Central parties may file disputes as a grievance and engage in settlement discussions. It is the responsibility of each party to inform their respective local parties of each step in the dispute resolution process, and to direct them accordingly.

Provincial Labour Relations

In the role of designated employer bargaining agent, to systematize both the implementation of the current collective agreements and prepare for the next round of bargaining, OPSBA delivers professional learning throughout the year and at the annual Education Labour Relations and Human Resources Conference. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 conference was cancelled.

To facilitate consultation and communication, OPSBA has established or maintains participation in:

Labour Relations Steering Committee

The Executive Council of the OPSBA Board of Directors serves as the steering committee to consider and vet Labour Relations strategies.

Council of Trustees' Association (CTA)

The CTA involves Labour Relations Teams from ACÉPO, AFOCSC, OCSTA, and OPSBA. Consultation among the parties occurs regularly to ensure consistency of practice related to collective agreement implementation across all four publicly funded education systems.

Labour Reference Groups

Expert groups have been gathered from across the teaching and bargaining portfolios to offer advice to labour relations. These teams meet on an ad hoc basis.

Labour Relations Council (LRC)

The LRC is a cross section of OPSBA Executive Council, Directors of Education, HR Officials, Senior Business Officials and OPSBA staff. The LRC meets regularly to give advice and guidance to the bargaining process.

Principal and Vice-Principal Associations

The Ontario Principals' Council is composed of Principals and Vice-Principals in public school boards across Ontario and information is obtained and shared as needed.

Public Council of Ontario Directors of Education (PCODE)

PCODE comprises Directors of Education in public school boards across Ontario. Consultation occurs through the Labour Relations Council by Director members and updates are provided directly to PCODE by OPSBA staff.

Senior Negotiators

The labour negotiators from the 31 OPSBA member boards and school authorities meet four times annually to share issues, ideas and solutions from their respective education settings as well as through teleconferences to deal with specific issues.

Technical Advisory Group (TAG)

TAG is composed of Labour Relations teams from the Crown, ACÉPO, AFOCSC, OCSTA, and OPSBA. The purpose is to ensure communication and understanding of implementation issues across provincial educational sectors.

National and International Labour Relations

Canadian Education Negotiators (CEN)

CEN is an organization with representation from the provinces and territories who are bargaining on behalf of the employer in education settings. Membership comes from the school board associations and/or governments as applicable. OPSBA participates in these meetings to understand issues facing provincial jurisdictions including collective bargaining issues, and changes in legislative frameworks. For the 2020-21 school year, these meetings have been virtual.

North American Association of Educational Negotiators (NAEN)

NAEN is an annual conference that brings together educational negotiators and Human Resources professionals from across Canada and the United States to share challenges and solutions from the sector. This conference was deferred in 2021.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Khalid Abdi, Ottawa-Carleton DSB student



Education Funding

OPSBA continues its proactive approach in addressing the education funding issues identified by the Association and its member boards during regular dialogues with the Minister of Education and Ministry staff.

In January, OPSBA submitted its response to the Ministry of Education's call for feedback on the government's Grants for Student Needs (GSN) education funding plans for 2020–21 school year. The recommendations were the culmination of in-depth consultations with our member school boards and senior school board staff, and reflected the priorities of parents and students from across the province. Our message remains clear: strong, predictable, and equitable education funding is necessary to create the conditions that promote and sustain improved student achievement and well-being.

Our submission identified funding priorities in the following areas:

- COVID-19 pandemic-related pressures
- Anti-racism initiatives
- Indigenous Education
- Special Education
- Children and youth mental health
- School facilities and infrastructure
- Northern and rural challenges
- Professional learning
- French as a Second Language
- Skilled Trades and Apprenticeships
- Student Transportation
- E-learning, technology and broadband

This year, the ministry also asked stakeholders for initiatives that would “support reducing red tape and administrative burden for the education sector.” The Association continues to state that efficiencies are constantly being found by school boards and schools so that as much funding as possible is directed to students in the classroom. Numerous checks and balances in terms of reporting are required by the Ministry of Education and school boards have a history of collaborating in areas where it makes sense, such as back office operations and e-Learning consortia. With regard to reducing administrative burden and red tape, we suggested the ministry consider the following additional items:

- Amending the Education Development Charge (EDC) regulation to allow for flexibility for non-eligible boards to collect EDCs and increase the EDC rates to accurately match actual land purchase costs.
- Lifting the moratorium on school closures and releasing the revised Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines (PARG).
- Continuing to release capital priority funding on a regular planning cycle and to provide greater transparency in the decisions for why capital projects are approved and denied.
- Streamlining the centralized procurement distribution of key school and school board items, and taking into consideration the ability to service northern Ontario.

Highlights

Grants for Student Needs (GSN) funding for the 2021–22 year is projected to be \$25.6 billion, with an average provincial per-pupil funding amount of \$12,686. This represents an increase of approximately 2.2% over 2020–21.

The GSN announcement included \$1.6 billion in support for school boards to respond to ongoing COVID-19 safety needs and cost pressures, though boards are expected to budget for only half of that amount. School boards will be notified in the fall if the government deems the release of the second half necessary. The \$1.6 billion includes: \$104 million within the GSN, \$487.9 million through Priorities and Partnerships (PPF) grants, \$507 million through “unlocked” school board reserve funds and Ministry of Education top-up, \$450 million in centrally procured PPE, and \$86 million to support public health nurses.

Included in the GSN are updates to COVID-19 supports as noted above, as well as changes to how online learning classes are funded, transfers from PPF, enhanced accountability measures, and ongoing investments to reflect the third year of the labour agreements.

Online Learning

In 2020–21, the Online Learning Adjustment Allocation was based on the number of credits offered in 2017–18, funded at an average class size of 30. To align the policy with the funding benchmarks, beginning this year the secondary benchmark will use a funded average credit load of 7.5 credits per pupil split between online learning (approximately 0.081) and in-person learning (approximately 7.419). The online learning credit load benchmark assumes approximately 8% of secondary students will take one course online in 2021–22. For planning purposes, school boards can anticipate the participation rate to be adjusted to approximately 16% in 2022–23 and 26% in 2023–24.

PPF Transfers to GSN

- Specialist High Skills Major
- After-School Skills Development Programs
- Integrated Services for Northern Children

Accountability Measures

- The Indigenous Education Grant (IEG) is being adjusted to include greater accountability measures, including enveloping and requiring any surplus funding generated by running First Nations, Métis and Inuit Studies or Language course to be reported through the Board Action Plan.
- The ministry will be introducing additional requirements to enhance reporting for library staffing funding to get greater insight into how school boards are using the funding.

Central Agreements

Salary benchmarks will be adjusted by 1% for positions other than Senior and School Administration. The ministry will also provide benefits funding that vary by employee group, reflecting central agreements, which include up to 1% increases for benefits' plan maintenance or improvements and additional inflationary increases.

School Renewal Funding

The Ministry of Education will continue to invest approximately \$1.4 billion to maintain and improve the condition of schools. The School Condition Improvement is projected to be approximately \$940 million and School Renewal Allocation is projected to be approximately \$373 million.

Student Transportation

The Transportation review that started in January 2020 continues. While the review is underway, the overall Student Transportation Grant will remain unchanged, with adjustments only for enrolment growth.

2020–21 Priorities and Partnerships Fund (PPF)

To facilitate school boards' budget planning for 2021–22, the Ministry confirmed approximately \$122 million of PPF funding to school boards and school authorities to support ministry priorities. Additionally, PPF will provide up to \$288 million in funding to education partners to support student needs. While repurposing of 2019–20 PPF was permitted for emerging COVID-related supports, this approach is not being replicated for 2020–21 PPF funds. Given the additional COVID-related investments that have been issued via both GSN and PPF to support students in the 2020–21 school year, all PPF funds should be spent for the original purpose that is intended and articulated in signed transfer payment agreements. Unspent 2020–21 PPF funds must be recovered by the ministry and will not be available for repurposing or carrying forward.

Finance Database and Website (EdFinet)

A continuing focus in OPSBA's advocacy work is increasing public awareness on education finance issues. OPSBA's Education Finance Network — EdFinet — is a valuable resource in supporting the association's advocacy strategies in this area. These resources provide a solid foundation for the association's positions and messages. EdFinet ensures that we have accurate, factual and current information that positions us to speak with authority on emerging funding issues. Our finance consultants respond to user needs through ongoing database enhancements and provide timely analysis of government finance announcements. Access to these resources are available to OPSBA member boards on a request basis.

The site provides school board financial information from 1993 to present. Updates are added as they become available from the Ministry of Education.



OPSBA WORK TEAMS



OPSBA Work Teams

Members of OPSBA's two Work Teams play a meaningful role in advancing the Association's identified priorities through the initiatives they accomplish. They focus on OPSBA's identified priorities and take on tasks that are aimed at action on the Association's priorities.

Policy Development Work Team

The Policy Development Work Team (PDWT) was extremely active this past year and was involved in several of the Association's legislative and regulatory submissions. Meeting completely virtually via Zoom, the members' work supported the Association's priorities of Advocating for the Whole Child and Student Well-Being, Supporting Trustees as Leaders in Public Education, and Advocating for Sustainable and Equitable Education Funding.

Guest speakers contributed significantly to meetings and included: Assistant Deputy Minister Shannon Fuller, legal counsel Sheila M. MacKinnon, Shibley Righton LLP, TDSB Integrity Commissioner Suzanne Craig, Halton DSB Superintendent Mark Zonneveld, and Assistant Deputy Minister Phil Graham. The PDWT was also greatly supported by regular education finance updates provided by David Wright, Associate Director — Corporate Services, Durham District School Board.

In addition to the items led by the guest speakers, the topics of discussion included:

- *Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA)* review and regulations
- COVID-19 pandemic related issues
- Education Funding — Provincial Budget and the Grants for Student Needs
- Food Literacy
- Free menstrual products for students in schools
- Human Trafficking of Elementary and Secondary Students
- Integrity Commissioners
- Local Government Week
- Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines
- Remote learning — PPM 164 and TVO Consultation
- School Board Governance issues
- School Board and Municipal Election voters list
- Student Transportation

Submissions

Throughout the year, PDWT members provided input on the following matters:

- May 25, 2021 – OPSBA Response to Bill 288, Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021
- May 12, 2021 – OPSBA Response to Bill 216, Food Literacy for Students Act, 2020
- April 29, 2021 – OPSBA Response to Bill 276, Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act, 2021
- April 8, 2021 – OPSBA Letter to Minister Lecce regarding the government's remote learning proposal
- March 25, 2021 – OPSBA Letter to Minister Lecce regarding the vaccination of education workers
- March 19, 2021 – OPSBA Response to the Ministry of Education Questionnaire: Helping to Combat Sex Trafficking of Elementary and Secondary Students in Ontario
- February 11, 2021 – OPSBA Submission to the 2021 Ontario Budget Consultation
- January 21, 2021 – OPSBA Submission regarding 2021–22 Education Funding (Grants for Student Needs)
- December 10, 2020 – OPSBA Submission to the Ministry of Education and TVO
- November 27, 2020 – OPSBA Response to Bill 229, Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act (Budget Measures), 2020
- November 19, 2020 – OPSBA Submission to the Minister of Education's Consultation Document Regarding Proposed Regulatory Amendments under the *Childcare and Early Years Act, 2014*
- November 16, 2020 – OPSBA Submission regarding the Draft PPM on Teacher Hiring Practices
- October 27, 2020 – OPSBA Submission regarding PPM 164: Requirements for Remote Learning
- October 8, 2020 – OPSBA Letter regarding virtual committee and school board meetings
- October 7, 2020 – OPSBA Letter regarding Bill 204, Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act, 2020

Areas for ongoing consideration

An initial focus for next year's PDWT advocacy work will include the reopening of schools and the return to in-person learning for students and staff, vaccinations for younger students and many other remaining COVID-19 issues that affect education. The work team will also continue to be engaged in the following issues: Ministry of Education's online learning proposal, school board governance, student transportation, Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines, integrity commissioners, Local Government Week, provincial and municipal/school board elections, federal/provincial child care plans, capital and renewal, and ESL language services.

Work Team Members

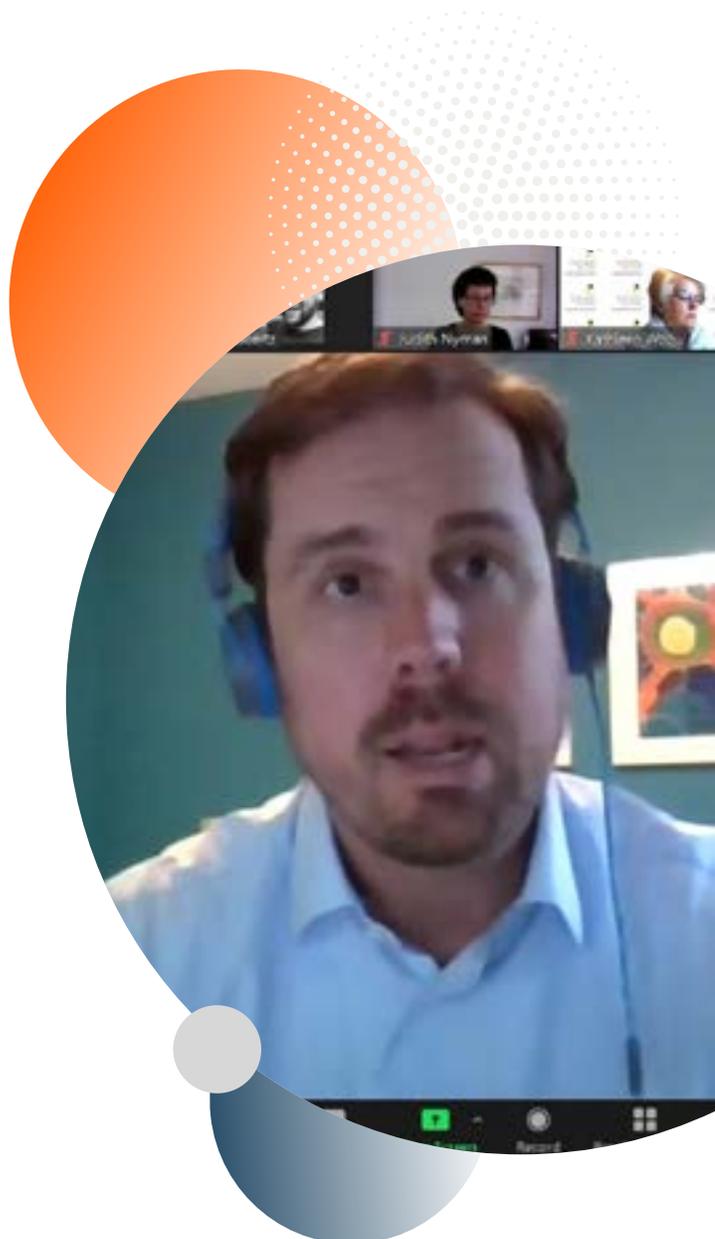
Angela Lloyd, Kawartha Pine Ridge, Central East
Shelley Laskin, Toronto, Central East
Scott Piatkowski, Waterloo Region, Central West
Linda Busuttil, Upper Grand, Central West
Robin Hutcheon, Limestone, Eastern
Marjorie Adam, Renfrew County, Eastern
Tom Henderson, Ontario North East, Northern (E)
Mark Mannisto, Superior-Greenstone, Northern (W)
Julia Burgess, Greater Essex County, Western
Arlene Morell, Thames Valley, Western
Howard Archibald, Ontario North East,
Indigenous Trustees' Council Representative

Executive Council Liaison

Michael Barrett, First Vice-President, Durham DSB

Alternates

Donna Edwards, Durham, Central East
Don Werden, Grand Erie, Central West
Christine Boothby, Ottawa-Carleton, Eastern
Marie Murphy Foran, Algoma, Northern (E)
Cecile Marcino, Keewatin-Patricia, Northern (W)
Jane Thomson, Bluewater, Western
Claudine VanEvery-Albert, Grand Erie,
Indigenous Trustees' Council Representative



Education Program Work Team

Government Consultations

OPSBA, through the Education Program Work Team (EPWT), provided responses to provincial government consultations and advocated through letters to the Minister of Education, and through meetings and discussion with Ministry of Education political and ministry staff on remote/online learning, the new Grade 9 mathematics curriculum, EQAO modernization, Grade 9 de-streaming, and mental health and well-being. Jointly with the Policy Development Work Team, the EPWT took positions on a number of program-related issues and made submissions to the Ministry of Education including the consultation regarding the Proposed Regulatory Amendments under the *Childcare and Early Years Act, 2014, PPM 164: Requirements for Remote Learning*, the proposed expansion of the TVO mandate and input into the OPSBA GSN submission.

Please see full list of 2020–21 OPSBA submissions on page 29.

The Ontario Coalition for Children and Youth Mental Health

OPSBA was the founding member of the Coalition, which is now in its 11th year of operation. Through the EPWT, the Coalition provides ongoing advice to the Ministry of Education. The Coalition's focus this past year was continuing with networking opportunities, sharing evidence-based practices, and co-creating new resources and materials especially needed during the pandemic. The Coalition members identified just how important the established relationships have been to their collective efforts throughout COVID-19. Coalition meetings continue to promote cross-sectoral and inter-ministerial collaboration and the recognition of shared goals on behalf of children and youth mental health.

First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education

The EPWT continues to advocate for the implementation of Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Committee's Final Report with regards to a need for a mandatory curriculum.

French as a Second Language (FSL)

OPSBA, through the EPWT, has been successful in securing a labour market partnership funded by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD) for a three-year project to study labour market needs for FSL instruction in the province. The third phase of the project entitled Implementation of Evidence-Based Strategies and Practices to Improve the Recruitment, Hiring, Retention and Professional Support of Ontario FSL Teachers and French-Speaking Education Workers has been completed and published. This phase focused on the implementation of the action plans from Phase II to expand and disseminate high potential strategies to school boards in Ontario. Given that the three-year funded mandate was completed with the MLTSD, OPSBA was successful in securing additional funding for 2021–22 to mobilize the promising practices with English language school boards in Ontario.

FSL continues to be identified, both in OPSBA's GSN submission and in discussion with the Ministry of Education, as an area that requires a provincial focus to address issues impacting school boards' ability to deliver high-quality and sustainable programming and instruction.

To further support this key priority, OPSBA was approved to lead three pan-Canadian initiatives to support English language school boards that address the issues of the French as a Second-Language teacher shortage as part of the FSL teacher recruitment and retention strategy funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Province of Ontario. These initiatives represent high-potential strategies that were identified through the three phases of the FSL-Labour Market Partnership Project. Each of the initiatives is designed to be completed over three years, and will be approved on a year-to-year basis pending the successful completion of annual deliverables.

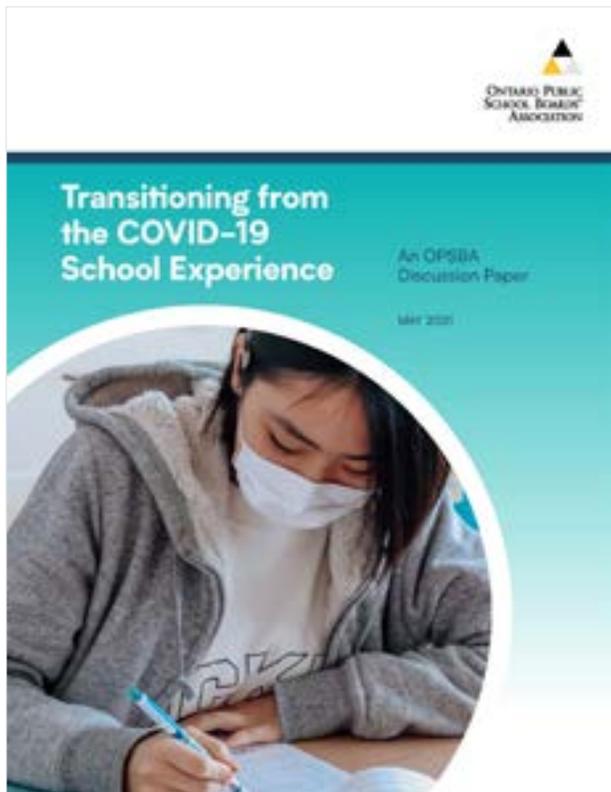
Year 1 of the three initiatives is complete and the reports have been published. OPSBA has been approved for Year 2 to continue this work. The three initiatives are:

- Recruitment Guide for English Language School Boards
- French Language Proficiency Assessment Toolkit and Resource Guide
- Supporting Principals to Address Challenges in Retention and Professional Support of French as a Second Language Teachers



Transitioning from the COVID-19 School Experience: An OPSBA Discussion Paper

This discussion paper reflects the proactive thinking of OPSBA membership from first-hand accounts of remote learning during the pandemic. This process of reflection has revealed two compelling realities: that a worrisome number of students have been unable to profit from remote forms of learning; and that several innovative practices in pedagogy and leadership have emerged that should be preserved and implemented on a broader scale post-pandemic. This document builds on OPSBA's two previous discussion papers, *What If?* and *A Vision for Learning and Teaching in a Digital Age*.



Committees

OPSBA staff sat on and contributed to the following provincial committees in 2020-21:

- EQAO Advisory Committee
- FSL Provincial Working Group
- Ministry Initiatives Committee

Work Team Members

Patrice Barnes, Durham, Central East
Cynthia Cordova, York Region, Central East
Joanna Oliver, Halton, Central West
Carol Ann Sloat, Grand Erie, Central West
Karen McGregor, Limestone, Eastern
Alison Kelly, Hastings and Prince Edward, Eastern
Jennifer Sarlo, Algoma, Northern (E)
George Saarinen, Lakehead, Northern (W)
Lynette Geddes, Avon Maitland, Western
Jan Johnstone, Bluewater, Western
Ryan Jacobs, Upper Canada, Indigenous Trustees' Council Representative

Executive Council Liaison

Kathleen Woodcock, Second Vice-President, Waterloo Region DSB

Alternates

Michelle Aarts, Toronto, Central East
Kate Baggott, Niagara, Central West
Tom Gingrich, Limestone, Eastern
Bill Steer, Near North, Northern (E)
Trudy Tuchenhausen, Lakehead, Northern (W)
Sarah Cipkar, Greater Essex County, Western
Keith Penny, Ottawa-Carleton, Indigenous Trustees' Council Representative

Supporting Northern School Boards

Throughout the 2020–21 school year, OPSBA continued to work with Northern Ontario school boards and advocate on their behalf with Minister Stephen Lecce and ministry staff. The 2021–22 OPSBA Grants for Student Needs submission identified the continued need for differentiated funding and recognition of the unique needs of northern, rural and remote school boards.

The Northern Region embarked on a project for the 2020–2021 school year in which the region concentrated on advocacy for one major Northern priority per meeting. Four Northern priorities, aligned with OPSBA Priorities, were identified at a regional meeting in 2019 and re-affirmed at the 2020 regional meeting: Indigenous Education; Mental Health and Well-Being; Special Education; and Experiential Learning Supports for Multiple Program Pathways.

Each Northern regional meeting is followed up with a letter to Northern MPPs and the Ministry of Education, requesting a meeting and outlining concerns and proposed strategies for the specific priority. The region received a successful response from Northern MPPs regarding the Indigenous

Education priority. Members of the Indigenous Trustees' Council were invited to collaborate with Northern Trustees in meeting to co-create the content of the proposed letter. A virtual meeting with Northern MPPs was held in February to discuss Indigenous Education and another was held in April to discuss the region's second priority, Mental Health. The connections made with Northern MPPs are followed up with correspondence, in an effort to ensure that these issues receive the attention they deserve.

Northern Ontario experienced a rising number of cases of COVID-19 at the beginning of 2021. Asymptomatic testing occurred in some schools in the north, with others reporting that, due to outbreaks of COVID-19 in their area, asymptomatic testing has been temporarily deferred. Public health nurses were forced to stop servicing schools as they had been reassigned due to the pandemic.

The Northern Region has received approval from OPSBA to begin conversations surrounding research for Northern education issues and forming partnerships with universities and colleges.

OPSBA-OSTA Liaison Committee

The OPSBA-OSTA Liaison Committee continued its commitment to support student trustees and student voice. The Public Board Council's President Mahek Dhaliwal (Thames Valley DSB) and Vice President Zachary Garbaty (Grand Erie DSB) were the lead contacts in joining OPSBA's work teams and participating in other Association advocacy initiatives.

The Committee's work this year included:

- Redefining the Ontario Public Student Trustee Leadership
- Award application form and determining successful applicants;
- Reviewing Ontario Regulation 7/07 Student Trustees Amendments; and
- Drafting the content for Best Practices Handbook

Committee representation included trustees from across OPSBA's membership and governance levels.

Members

Mark Mannisto, Superior Greenstone DSB (Chair)
 Sarah Cipkar, Greater Essex County DSB
 Michael Brant, Indigenous Trustees' Council,
 Hastings and Prince Edward DSB
 Margo Shuttleworth, Halton DSB
 Cathy Abraham, OPSBA President,
 Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB
 Laurie French, Limestone DSB

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY



Legislative Advocacy

As a non-partisan association, OPSBA advocates for public education regardless of which political party is in power at Queen's Park. The Association is proud of its expertise and track record in the area of effective advocacy to support its priorities.

OPSBA monitors legislation, regulations, and policy directions that could affect our students and member boards. With the support of our Work Teams, Executive Council and Board of Directors, staff provide submissions and feedback to many government consultations.

Legislative Updates are shared with all member boards on a regular basis and our advocacy efforts can be seen at all levels of government.

Municipal

In 2020, Local Government Week occurred from October 19 to 23. This advocacy week aims to increase youth and public awareness about the important role local governments — specifically school boards — play in our communities. Due to COVID-19 pandemic concerns, OPSBA staff coordinated a social media campaign with video posts on Twitter and Instagram on each day of the week, highlighting the different types of trustees, the long advocacy history of trustees and the importance of their work.

All videos can be found on our YouTube channel, and include messages from OPSBA President Cathy Abraham, Bloorview School Authority Trustee Richard Volpe, Indigenous Trustees' Council Chair Elaine Johnston, OSTA-AECO's Mahek Dhaliwal, and a wrap-up thank you video. Additionally, the Canadian School Boards Association, OPSBA member trustees, Ministers Stephen Lecce and Steve Clark, the NDP's Education Critic Marit Stiles and numerous OPSBA member boards supported the #LocalGovWeek campaign with tweets and Instagram posts.

OPSBA supported Bill 204, Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act, 2020 that moved the responsibility for preparing the preliminary voters' list in municipal elections from the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation to the Chief Electoral Officer at Elections Ontario.

The next Municipal and School Board election is Monday, October 24, 2022.

Provincial

The Honourable Stephen Lecce (MPP King-Vaughan) is the Minister of Education and Sam Oosterhoff (MPP Niagara West) remains the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Education. OPSBA continues to have a good working relationships with both offices and has regular direct communications with their staff.

Minister Lecce presented at OPSBA's annual Public Education Symposium, held virtually this year and participated in a Question and Answer session.

In addition to these formal meetings, Minister Lecce has connected with President Cathy Abraham on a regular basis and continued his weekly teleconferences with school board chairs. Deputy Minister Nancy Naylor conducts a similar weekly call with Directors of Education that OPSBA also participates in. OPSBA staff have important contacts with many senior Ministry of Education staff.

OPSBA also maintains regular contact with the other political parties and their education critics. This includes Marit Stiles (New Democratic Party Education Critic), Kathleen Wynne (Liberal Party Education Critic), and Mike Schreiner (Green Party Leader and Education Critic). In addition, OPSBA also connects with Steven Del Duca, the leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario. Staff in the minister's and critics' offices help in the planning and organization of this year's advocacy days.

Building on the success of the provincial polling done by Nanos Research in fall 2019, OPSBA engaged Nanos in late spring 2020 to gauge parental comfort of students, staff and education workers returning to the school environment for the 2020-21 school year, education delivery models, and funding. A report was shared with OPSBA members and released publicly.

In addition, OPSBA partnered with students in the Wilfrid Laurier University Applied Masters of Applied Politics Summer Practicum. Students worked with OPSBA staff on a research project that examined the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and access to learning. Member boards were surveyed and interviews conducted with individual trustees. A final report was presented to the Board of Directors.

This year, OPSBA's Northern Ontario Trustees have engaged in an advocacy campaign regarding priority areas: Indigenous Education, Mental Health and Well-being, Special Education, and Experiential Learning.

The next provincial election is on before June 2, 2022, and OPSBA will continue to ensure education is at the forefront of any party's election campaign platform.

OPSBA Advocacy Days



A series of meetings were secured for the Executive Council to participate with one provincial party caucus at a time over Zoom. Joining the Executive Council were representatives from the Indigenous Trustees' Council and provincial student trustee leaders. The meetings were one hour in length and included two agenda items: 2021-22 Education Funding and The Future of Public Education.

The purpose of OPSBA's Virtual Advocacy Day meetings were to re-introduce OPSBA and its priorities to the government and the opposition parties. It was also an opportunity to increase and elevate the overall awareness of the Association and its advocacy efforts. Trustees were encouraged to reach out to their local MPP(s) to set up a phone call or virtual meeting during a constituency week.

Federal

As a member of the Canadian School Boards Association (CSBA), OPSBA examines provincial and federal legislation that affects Ontario students and our member boards. In areas such as copyright or Indigenous Education, the CSBA gives its members a national voice and opportunities for influence beyond the provincial level. President Cathy Abraham and Executive Director Rusty Hick represented OPSBA on the CSBA Board of Directors in 2020-21. Laurie

French, a past president of OPSBA, remains the current President of CSBA.

A significant change affecting a fellow member of the CSBA is currently being considered in the province of Manitoba. In March 2020, the province's Education Minister released plans outlining monumental changes to the Manitoba school system, including the elimination of all but one of the province's school boards and elected trustees. The legislation to enable these changes is Bill 64, The Education Modernization Act, which was introduced on November 2, 2020.

The Manitoba School Boards Association (MSBA) has a dedicated webpage for more information and a campaign called Local Voices, Local Choices to encourage individuals to comment about the implications of Bill 42. OPSBA will continue to monitor the legislation and work with the MSBA and CSBA on joint advocacy efforts.

An Advisory Role

OPSBA's political leadership and staff continue to be active participants in the many consultations that cover a broad range of topics that involve the Ministry of Education and other ministries. Many of the previously existing ministry committees, of which OPSBA senior staff and representative trustees were contributing members, were discontinued in the 2018-19 school year, however some resumed their work in 2020-21, including the FSL Provincial Working Group and Ministry Initiatives Committee. OPSBA continues to advocate for collaborative Ministry of Education committee structures to facilitate education partner dialogue and input into any proposed changes within the education sector.

OPSBA also participates in a number of other external organizations through senior staff and trustee membership including:

- Canadian School Boards Association (CSBA)
- Ontario Coalition for Children and Youth Mental Health
- Public Services Health and Safety Association
- Ontario School Bus Association
- OMERS

COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA RELATIONS



Communications and Media Relations

The focus of OPSBA's communications and media relations is to ensure that the Association's identified priorities are presented in a strong light, positively showcasing public education and the achievements of school boards.

OPSBA's communications and media relations strategies are designed to increase public confidence in the effectiveness of our public school system. OPSBA continues to stand out as a credible and primary voice of public education in Ontario.

As the voice of public education in Ontario, the 2020-2021 year was another successful year for OPSBA in achieving sustained media coverage on a variety of issues, including the massive impact of COVID-19 on public education, and teacher hiring practices. OPSBA is a consistent point of contact for journalists when they are looking for a provincial perspective on education issues. Throughout the year, OPSBA president Cathy Abraham was a valued commentator, interviewed by the mainstream media on issues that impacted public education. The Association had more than 60 appearances in a variety of media sources throughout the year, including:

Ontario school board group calls for teachers to get vaccinated over spring break

The Canadian Press, March 26, 2021

Cathy Abraham, president of OPSBA, says the education minister's decision to delay the March break until April 12 gives the province the perfect opportunity to make a difference this school year. She made the request in a letter to Education Minister Stephen Lecce that was sent Thursday, and says she has yet to hear back.

Virtual learning plan gets poor grade from teachers, school boards

Toronto Sun, March 25, 2021

A statement from the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) also cautioned there are significant negative implications for students, including reduced funding levels over the long term and diminished local influence on education.

Is cancelling March break a prudent move — or March madness?

Toronto Star, February 8, 2021

Cathy Abraham, president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, said "the regularly scheduled March break would provide a much-needed time to rest and recharge, and would help ensure that our staff, students and school communities are best positioned to face the remainder of the school with a renewed focus."

Public opposes Ontario government's changes to education, poll suggests

CTV News, November 25, 2020

"Education is the second largest funding line in the provincial budget and it is our hope that these results can help inform decisions to ensure public education is supported by stable and predictable funding," OPSBA president Cathy Abraham said in a statement.

Our ongoing commitment to keeping the membership of OPSBA informed on critical issues meant frequent development of up-to-date analysis of breaking news and reports.

In 2020–2021, OPSBA staff provided comprehensive communication support and leadership to member boards on key issues impacting education across the province to ensure positive and consistent messaging and positioning to highlight the strength of public education including COVID-19 impacts, a proposal to make remote/virtual permanent and the release of the 2021 Ontario Budget and 2021–22 Grants for Student Needs funding.

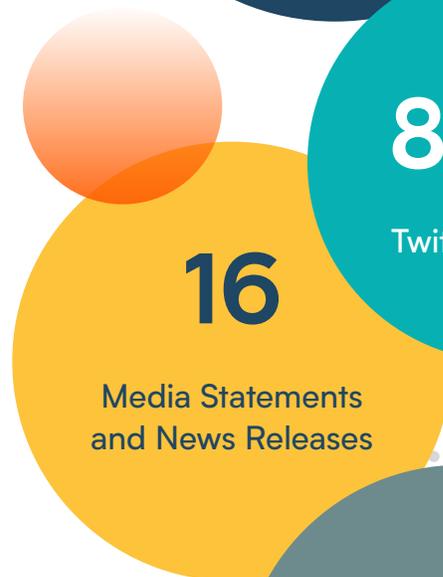
OPSBA’s popular daily “Media Report” service, launched in 2013 in response to a pressing need to issue breaking labour negotiations news to hundreds of trustees and board staff on a daily basis, continues to serve staff and trustees.

Since the last OPSBA Annual Report was published in September 2021, 11 media statements and five news releases (as of May 2021), templates and other communication vehicles and supports were regularly developed and distributed to all trustees, directors of education, senior human resources and finance officials, and communication officers.

Communications officers from all 31 OPSBA member boards regularly participated in Zoom conference calls with OPSBA staff to discuss items of mutual interest, and share best practices and key messages on the pressing issues of the day.

At OPSBA’s annual Public Education Symposium in January, a panel discussion hosted by OPSBA staff and featuring communications staff from the Renfrew County DSB, DSB of Niagara, DSB Ontario North East, and the Thames Valley DSB, was attended by dozens of trustees.

OPSBA’s communications team continues to work proactively with the Minister of Education’s Office, the Ministry of Education and other branches of the provincial government, seeking to cooperate and collaborate on issues of mutual interest.



OPSBA Advocacy Campaign for Public Education

OPSBA worked with an agency to produce a multifaceted public awareness campaign, Above and Beyond, which launched in May. Some of the goals of the campaign included highlighting the strengths of our public education system, dispelling misconceptions, raising awareness about the important role local governance plays in our system. Outreach was done to all OPSBA member boards for relevant stories. A launch occurred during Education Week (the first full week of May). The campaign continued to ramp up until the end of the school year, and will look to maintain momentum over the summer break, and ramp up again for the return to school in September.

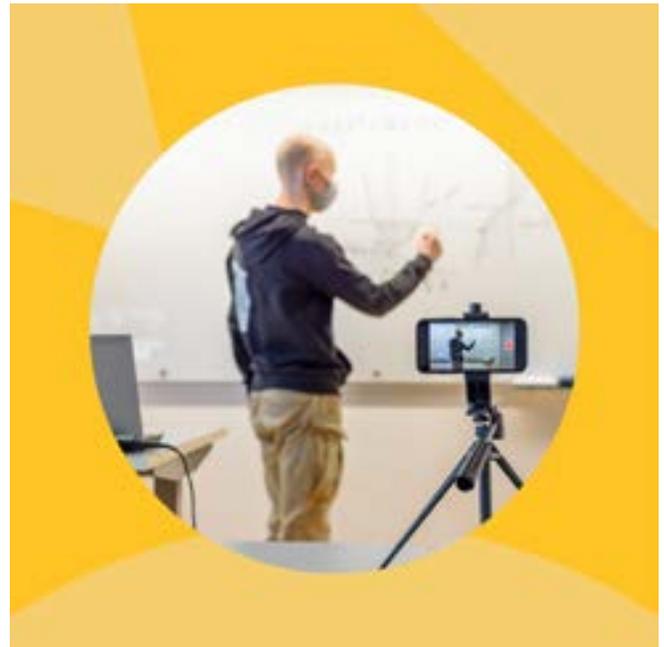
OPSBA on Twitter and Instagram

OPSBA has proactively used Twitter since 2012 as an important digital tool to engage with key stakeholders and strengthen its online presence. It allows direct communication with key online audiences as part of ongoing efforts to be accountable and transparent to member boards. As of April 2021, @OPSBA has more than 8,800 followers.

The Association also launched its second social media account on the Instagram platform in late January 2019. With more than 150 posts and 310 followers as of April 2021, the account is giving the Association another way to share its strategic messaging through the use of images and Instagram Stories.

 Follow OPSBA on Twitter: @OPSBA

 Follow OPSBA on Instagram: @OPSBA_Official



This year's theme for Education Week is **#StrongerTogether**, which best describes how the system works. From the caretakers to our trustees, COVID-19 has altered our work in significant ways, but we've adjusted to ensure strong public education continues.





2021 OPSBA AWARDS

2021 OPSBA Awards

Each year, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association honours individuals who have made significant contributions in the field of education. While it is impossible to honour all those special people who make a difference, the recipients of these awards represent the many who contribute to the creativity and hard work that make our schools and education system leaders in the world.

Jack A. MacDonald Award of Merit and Certificate of Recognition

The winners of these student awards are selected on the basis of a sound academic record throughout their career, accompanied by outstanding community service and leadership. This year's Jack A. MacDonald Award of Merit was presented to *Suraj Bansal*, Bayview Secondary School, York Region DSB.

Certificates of Recognition were awarded to *Aaliyah Jaleel*, Dunbarton High School, Durham DSB, and *Maya Lekhi*, Thornlea Secondary School, York Region DSB.

OPSBA Award of Excellence and Achievement Award

The OPSBA Award of Excellence and the Achievement Award are presented by the local board to volunteers for outstanding, exemplary and/or unique contributions to the overall well-being of the school or community through in-school, board-wide, extra-curricular and/or volunteer activity.

This year's Award of Excellence was presented to *Tanya Moses*, Alternative Secondary School Support Worker, Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre, Lakehead DSB.

The Achievement Award was presented to the following individuals:

- *Tanya Moses* — Alternative Secondary School Support Worker, Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre, Lakehead DSB
- *Steve Shonosky* — Volleyball Coach, Westgate Collegiate and Vocational Institute, Lakehead DSB
- *Wilma Kleynendorst* — Member, Dilico Anishinabek Family Care Representative, Special Education Advisory Committee, Lakehead DSB

The President's Award

This award recognizes trustees who have given 25 or more years of service to public education. This year's recipient is *Colleen Schenk*, Trustee, Avon Maitland DSB. Trustee Schenk is also a past president of OPSBA.

Dr. Harry Paikin Memorial Award

This award is given to an active or retired public school trustee for outstanding service. This year's recipients are *Colleen Schenk*, Trustee, Avon Maitland DSB, and *Ted Martin*, Retired Trustee, Waterloo Region DSB.

The OPSBA Public Property Assessment Network Scholarship

The Public Property Assessment Network Scholarship is being awarded in the amount of \$1,000 to one recipient in each of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association's (OPSBA) five regions, for three school years – 2019–20, 2020–21, and 2021–22. Scholarship recipients are students of strong character, leadership skills and potential, who care deeply about their communities and furthering their own learning. Each of OPSBA's regions fine-tuned the eligibility and selection criteria that would be taken into consideration. The 2021 winners will be announced after the publication of this Annual Report and will be included in the 2021–22 OPSBA Annual Report.

The Ontario Public Student Trustee Scholarship

OPSBA and the Public Board Council of OSTA-AECO announced the winners of the first ever Ontario Public Student Trustee Scholarship in June 2020. The 2021 winners will be announced after the publication of this Annual Report and will be included in the 2021–22 OPSBA Annual Report.

9 Reasons Why School Boards Belong in OPSBA

Effective advocacy on issues that make a difference for students, including: education funding, COVID-19, child care, Indigenous Education, children and youth mental health, French as a Second Language, Special Education, and Northern and remote challenges

Effective leadership in collective bargaining

High quality professional development opportunities for school trustees

Media relations, social media and information services support on key issues

United and credible voice in advocacy and action in legislative and policy changes

Democratic environment and responsiveness to member board needs

Practical support for complying with legislative and regulatory change

Strategic relations with education partners across Ontario and Canada

Access to financial savings stemming from interventions on copyright tariffs, and natural gas and electricity rates

Khalid Abci, Ottawa-Carleton DSB



BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2020–2021

(as of May 2021)

Michelle Aarts
Central East
Toronto District School
Board

Lisa Anne Chatten
Eastern
Hastings and Prince Edward
District School Board

Jack Fletcher
Western
Lambton Kent District
School Board

Jan Johnstone
Western
Bluewater District School
Board

Cathy Abraham
President
Kawartha Pine Ridge District
School Board

Bob Clement
Northern (East)
Rainbow District School
Board

Laurie French
Eastern
Limestone District School
Board

Jaine Klassen Jeninga
Central East
Kawartha Pine Ridge District
School Board

Carrie Andrews
Central West
Peel District School Board

Louise Clodd
Central East
Trillium Lakelands District
School Board

Jeanne Gray
Central West
Halton District School Board

Gerald Kleist
Northern (West)
Keewatin–Patricia District
School Board

Kate Baggott
Central West
District School Board of
Niagara

Dr. Paul Cormier
Northern (West)
Superior–Greenstone
District School Board

David Green
Vice-President, Enrolment
Peel District School Board

Jodi Lloyd
Central East
Simcoe County District
School Board

Patrice Barnes
Central East
Durham District School
Board

Lynne Cousens
School Authorities
The Protestant Separate
School Board of the Town of
Penetanguishene

Tom Henderson
Northern (East)
District School Board
Ontario North East

Ron Lynn
Central East
York Region District School
Board

Michael Barrett
First Vice-President
Durham District School
Board

Donna Danielli
Regional Chair, Central West
Halton District School Board

Susan Humphries
Eastern
Renfrew County District
School Board

David McDonald
Eastern
Upper Canada District
School Board

Christine Boothby
Eastern
Ottawa–Carleton District
School Board

Stephanie Donaldson
Vice-President, Enrolment
Toronto District School
Board

Robert Hunking
Regional Chair, Western
Avon Maitland District
School Board

Julia Burgess
Western
Greater Essex County
District School Board

Donna Edwards
Regional Chair, Central East
Durham District School
Board

Elaine Johnston
First Nations
Algoma District School
Board

Linda Busuttill
Central West
Upper Grand District School
Board

Sheryl Evans
Regional Chair, Northern
Algoma District School
Board

Alex Johnstone
Central West
Hamilton–Wentworth District
School Board

Chris Moise
Central East
Toronto District School
Board

Arlene Morell
Western
Thames Valley District
School Board

Keith Penny
Eastern
Ottawa-Carleton District
School Board

Kathryn Pierroz
Northern (West)
Rainy River District School
Board

Corrine Rahman
Western
Thames Valley District
School Board

Russell Reid
Northern (East)
Algoma District School
Board

Nancy Rothwell
Western
Avon Maitland District
School Board

George Saarinen
Northern (West)
Lakehead District School
Board

Dave Shields
Regional Chair, Eastern
Renfrew County District
School Board

Dr. Elizabeth Sinclair
Central East
York Region District School
Board

Bill Steer
Northern (East)
Near North District School
Board

Carolyn Tavolieri
Treatment School Authorities
John McGivney Children's
Centre School Authority

Christine Thatcher
Central East
Durham District School
Board

Laurie Tremble
Central West
Waterloo Region District
School Board

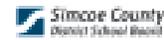
Don Werden
Central West
Grand Erie District School
Board

Kathleen Woodcock
Second Vice-President
Waterloo Region District
School Board



ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates





ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
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