



**ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION**

Leading Education's Advocates

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

Cathy Abraham
President

W.R. (Rusty) Hick
Executive Director

September 29, 2022

To: The Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education

Dear Minister:

On behalf of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA), we are requesting that your ministry extend the current provisions in Ontario Regulation 463/97: Electronic Meetings and Meeting Attendance to allow school boards to continue meeting virtually for the duration of the 2022-23 school year. We are aware that many of our member boards have also written and asked for your consideration of this extension and we are hopeful that this change can be done quickly, as the regulation currently allowing virtual meetings (committee and board) is only in effect until November 14, 2022. Since this particular regulation require the Lieutenant Governor in Council (Cabinet) approval, we feel this needs to be addressed as soon as possible. This will allow school boards to properly plan and communicate their meeting calendars to their communities and demonstrate good governance. We recently informally surveyed our member boards and the strong majority were in favour of an extension.

The allowance of virtual meetings and increased electronic participation was welcomed by all. School boards were very adaptive and it allowed them to continue their extraordinary work during the pandemic. School boards continue this work as things return to a new normal, but we know that COVID is still being transmitted. We are also aware that the ministry had asked school boards to provide virtual learning options for this school year and of note, our association recently passed a resolution at its Annual General Meeting to ensure its Board of Directors meetings continue to offer a hybrid format. With this in mind, we are asking the government to continue to provide the flexibility for committee and board meetings. Many boards would say that this allowance has led to an overall increase in trustee and community participation, reduced barriers, and supported greater accessibility, all while boards continued to complete their business. Moreover, most boards do provide electronic access to past meetings via recordings on their websites.

We suggest a small working group be convened to look at this issue more closely for a revised regulation with appropriate exemptions. While we recognize that face-to-face meetings with all trustees present do allow for rich dialogue, respectful debate and abundant discussion, we have

seen that electronic and hybrid meetings have also been successful. We respect the commentary from our northern and more rural school boards that have huge geographic distances to cover and weather situations to contend with. These boards should have more options and allowances for the in-person attendance requirement.

As democratically elected officials, school board trustees want to do their best for their communities and remain dedicated to public education. We would be happy to discuss this issue with you further and look forward to hearing from you soon.



Cathy Abraham
President



Rusty Hick
Executive Director

cc.

Nancy Naylor, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education

Dasha Androusenkov, Deputy Director, Stakeholder Relations, Ministry of Education

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