

2019/2020

ANNUAL REPORT



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates



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

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



Without a doubt, 2019-20 was one of the most unusual and eventful school years in recent memory.

We started the year reaching out to, meeting and working with a new Minister of Education, Stephen Lecce, after a cabinet shuffle earlier in summer 2019. As fall progressed, central collective bargaining became one of the major early themes of the school year, until the COVID-19 pandemic forced the government of Ontario, in concert with jurisdictions around the world, to close school buildings for what ended up being the entirety of the school year following March Break. Following a brief hiatus, our schools resumed instruction remotely in early April, providing hours of work and synchronous learning opportunities for students from kindergarten to Grade 12 each week. Along the way, the social issues of society manifested in our schools, as equity, racism and bullying became top of mind in many member boards. By late May, three-year central collective agreements expiring in 2022 had been ratified with all English public sector federations.



Following a year like no other, we must 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, and of course, during the pandemic period in particular. Across the province, OPSBA and our member boards shifted quickly to working primarily remotely, holding virtual board and staff meetings via platforms like Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams. We 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.

With regard to equity and anti-racism, we will be looking closely at our future conferences and events, and seeking to bring in appropriate speakers, have discussions, provide professional development and more to ensure we are doing everything we can to fight racist structures that exist in society. We must examine our operational activities to see what changes may be necessary, and whether there are additional policy or advocacy positions we can take in support of the fight against racism. We also want to find ways to increase the representation of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) running for Trustee or OPSBA positions, and look to provide the ability for these critical voices to be heard more easily by our Board of Directors, Executive Council and work teams. As we head into the 2020-21 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.

There are certainly a number of additional challenges that lie ahead this upcoming school year, but we are more confident than ever that our system will rise to meet them and find ways to offer a world-class educational experience to our students.

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 2019-20

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.

- **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.

- **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.

OPSBA's priorities and key activities are designed to improve the academic achievement of all students and promote opportunities that offer Ontario's children and youth success in school and in life. The Association advocates not only for first-rate programs, pedagogy and resources, but for a social and educational environment that nurtures the values of universality, inclusiveness, human rights, respect and kindness. OPSBA's multi-year priorities reflect these values.

Our efforts are dedicated to investing expertise and energy in ways that we know will have positive impacts on a wide variety of student needs across the province. We are known for having expertise in education program and curriculum, policy, labour relations and finance. While this has most definitely been a school year like no other, highlights of our advocacy and work in the past year include:



The COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on the school year will undoubtedly be remembered as the defining issue of 2019-20. The last day of full in-person classes was March 13, and following the March Break, schools and child care centres were closed across the province by the Ministry of Education, acting on public health authority advice.

Within weeks, the Ministry of Education had launched the Learn at Home remote learning portal, and school boards were providing both asynchronous and synchronous remote learning opportunities for students from Kindergarten through to Grade 12.

The Association shifted its way of operating to adapt to the new normal, and continued to advocate effectively on behalf of the best interests and needs of the public school system in Ontario. Throughout this process, OPSBA remained in constant contact with the ministry and member boards to ensure an information flow between school boards and the government.

Due to the pandemic, and the restrictions on public gatherings in place from March onwards, OPSBA – like other organizations – was forced to adapt the way it conducted business. Similarly to what occurred at our member boards, business was shifted to online meetings held on platforms such as Zoom. The annual Education Labour Relations and Human Resources Conference that was scheduled for April 30 and May 1, 2020, was cancelled. OPSBA’s May 3 and 4 Board of Directors meeting was rescheduled to be conducted via Zoom on May 23, and Education Program and Policy Development Work Team meetings were held via Zoom as well. The Board of Directors made the decision to postpone the June 4 to 6, 2020, Annual General Meeting, which is now to be held virtually in September 2020.

Following consultation with OPSBA, and other stakeholders, on May 9, the government approved an emergency order that enabled available school board employees to be voluntarily redeployed to congregate care settings during the COVID-19 pandemic, including hospitals, long-term care homes, retirement homes, and women’s shelters. Many of these congregate care settings were in need of staff such as custodial and maintenance workers. OPSBA was supportive of school boards across the province providing this opportunity for their staff to give back to their communities during this time of crisis. Each school board decided whether they had the capacity to redeploy staff, and only those staff who volunteered were eligible for redeployment. Hundreds of English public school board employees volunteered, and while few temporary matches were found, the significant willingness of board employees from the English public sector to take part greatly impressed the government.

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF 2019-20

Throughout June, July, and August 2020, as COVID-19 case numbers decreased from earlier peaks, school boards worked with the ministry to develop multi-option plans for students and staff to restart in-person learning in September. OPSBA conducted public polling with Nanos Research to gauge public opinion on a number of important issues including levels of satisfaction with remote learning during the early stages of the pandemic, and comfort levels with a return to in-person learning. Nearly 70% of Ontarians who reported having experience with online learning in the 2019-20 school year said the experience was positive (21%) or somewhat positive (48%). A highlight from the Nanos polling conducted from June 23 to 28 showed that more than half (53%) of Ontarians with children in the public school system were somewhat comfortable or comfortable with students, staff, and education workers returning to the school environment in September on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health. This percentage clearly increased at most boards over the summer months as community spread of COVID-19 was significantly reduced and much of the province moved into Stage 3 of the reopening plan.

Following consultation with trustees from across the province, OPSBA developed its recommendations on reopening schools, and submitted them to the government prior to the announcement on July 30 of a plan to reopen schools in September 2020. School boards were expected to implement the options for parents to send their children in-class or to enter online remote learning.

The ministry's plans were informed by experts at SickKids and other paediatric hospitals in Ontario. As of the time of publication of mid-August, elementary schools (Kindergarten to Grade 8) were expected to reopen province-wide, with in-class instruction five days a week. Secondary schools with lower risk would reopen with a normal daily schedule, five days a week, while most secondary schools would start the school year in an adapted model of part-time attendance with class cohorts of up to 15 students alternating between attending in-person and online. Students from Grades 4 to 12 and school staff would be required to wear masks.

The coronavirus/COVID-19 situation in Ontario remains fluid. At OPSBA, and in every English public school board, the health and safety of all students, staff and school communities is the top priority.



Legislative Submissions and Government Consultations

OPSBA has engaged in a wide range of advocacy work related to the provincial government's legislative and regulatory agenda, including submissions and letters regarding:

- Bill 197, COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, 2020
- Ontario's Plan to Reopen Schools
- Northern Ontario concerns related to public education
- 2020-21 Education Funding and 2020-21 Pre-Budget Consultations
- Anti-bullying consultations
- Indigenous Education
- Cannabis consumption and Special Occasion Permits
- Education Development Charges and Land Expropriation
- Local Government Week
- Automated Speed Enforcement (photo radar) in school zones
- The Climate Action Incentive Fund for Schools

Labour Relations and Collective Bargaining

OPSBA remained fully engaged in its role as the bargaining agent for all English public school boards in the province, which occurred actively throughout much of the 2019-20 school year. The Board of Directors ratified the 2019-2022 central terms for all English public school boards in late spring 2020.

Staff continues to provide support for the implementation of the 2019-2022 central agreements. OPSBA is greatly appreciative of the tremendous contributions of board staff throughout the labour negotiations process.

Equity and Anti-Racism

In late May and early June, as the Black Lives Matter movement became ascendant following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, the Association took note of the persistence of overt and systemic racism throughout the United States, and indeed right here at home in Canada. 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. President Cathy Abraham noted in a message to trustees that "racist behaviour cannot be allowed to exist in our system. We need to stand

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF 2019-20

up and confront racism when it appears and be actively anti-racist.” OPSBA will be looking closely at future conferences and events, and seeking to bring in appropriate speakers, have discussions, provide professional development and more to ensure everything possible is being done to fight racist structures. Operational activities are being examined to see what changes may be necessary, and whether there are additional policy or advocacy positions that could be taken in support of the fight against racism.

The Association will also seek to find ways to increase the representation of BIPOC running for Trustee, or OPSBA positions, and look to provide the ability for these critical voices to be heard more easily by our Board of Directors, Executive Council and work teams.

OPSBA Advocacy Day

OPSBA’s President, Board of Directors members, Indigenous Trustees’ Council Chair, student trustee leaders and OPSBA senior staff participated in the Association’s second Advocacy Day at Queen’s Park on November 25, 2019. The day provided an opportunity for OPSBA representatives to build on collaborative relationships with provincial stakeholders – both MPPs and political staff. OPSBA’s advocacy was focused on a commitment to supporting and investing in public education. An additional local advocacy initiative, Take Your MPP to School Day, was planned for spring 2020, however it was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.





THE HIGHLIGHTS OF 2019-20

Mental Health and Well-Being

OPSBA continues in its role as founding member of the Ontario Coalition for Children and Youth Mental Health, which has positioned itself in an advisory capacity with various ministries to support and model collaborative efforts to positively impact children and youth mental health. The Coalition's focus this past year was continuing with networking opportunities, building government relationships and promoting evidence-based practices, especially during the pandemic. Coalition meetings continue to promote cross-sectoral and inter-ministerial collaboration and recognition of shared goals on behalf of children and youth mental health.

French as a Second Language (FSL)

OPSBA continues to lead the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities-funded Labour Market Partnership Project with all education partners, including the Ministry of Education, to determine recommendations to support increasing the supply pipeline with qualified and language proficient French language teachers. During Phase II of a planned three-year timeline, project partners focused on action planning and facilitating the implementation of the Phase I recommendations as well as research to examine the availability of French-speaking education workers in Ontario schools. Phase III of the initiative is running from February 1, 2020, to January 31, 2021. The final phase of this complex initiative will have a province-wide focus and will endeavor to share and deepen the implementation of the evidence-based strategies and approaches identified in the first two phases.

Indigenous Education

OPSBA's Indigenous Trustees' Council (ITC) has engaged 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 2019-20 school year, Algoma DSB Trustee Elaine Johnston served as the Chair of the Indigenous Trustees' Council (ITC) and sat as the Council's representative on the OPSBA Board of Directors. Members of the ITC provided input during the consultations leading up to the 2020-2021 provincial budget and the Grants for Student Needs. The ITC held productive face-to-face meetings in August 2019 and at the Public Education Symposium in January. A further meeting was held via Zoom in August 2020.



Education Funding

In 2019-20, OPSBA staff submitted a formal brief during the Ministry's consultations regarding the development of the 2020-21 Grants for Student Needs and the Ontario Budget. OPSBA identified several areas of advocacy and concern that have been expressed to the Association through consultation with school boards and school authorities including student transportation, Special Education, supports for mental health, and facilities and capital-related costs. Formal and informal advocacy for sufficient funding is a continual focus for OPSBA.

Conferences and Seminars

The 2019 Annual General Meeting, 2020 Public Education Symposium, and fall Regional Meetings offered new and returning trustees and school board staff dynamic opportunities for professional learning uniquely tailored to meet the needs of Ontario's education leaders. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Education Labour Relations and Human Resources Symposium, 2020 Annual General Meeting and Spring Regional Meetings were cancelled or postponed.

Daily Services

While we work to achieve concrete outcomes in our priority areas, we are also proud to continue to offer a full range of valued ongoing services. These include: continuous updates on education in the news and support for local media relations, rapid turnaround analyses of funding announcements, daily and weekly reports from the provincial legislature that focus on school board concerns, timely response on labour relations matters, development of policy positions on critical educational issues and highly topical professional development.

Progress on our multi-year strategic priorities is covered on the following pages. As an Association, we take pride in the range of successful outcomes and the impact they have had. With a shared goal of building a better environment and greater opportunities for Ontario students, we have worked productively with our partners in education and across the health and children's services sectors and throughout our communities.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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), updated the modules this year 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 and each one has been recently 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.





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.

2019 OPSBA Annual General Meeting (AGM) and CSBA Congress

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 2019, OPSBA was the host province for the annual Canadian School Boards Association's (CSBA) Congress and held the 31st AGM concurrently with CSBA Congress from July 3 to 6, in Toronto. Cathy Abraham, Trustee with the Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB, was acclaimed as President for the 2019-20 term, as were both Michael Barrett, Trustee with the Durham District School Board, 1st Vice-President, and Carol Ann Sloat, Trustee with the Grand Erie DSB, 2nd Vice-President. Chief Elaine Johnston was acclaimed as the Indigenous Trustee representative to the OPSBA Board of Directors.

Congress 2019 began with a National Gathering on Indigenous Education, followed by Congress and OPSBA's AGM. The theme was "*Leading Today with a Vision for Tomorrow.*"

Keynote speakers - National Gathering on Indigenous Education:

- Kevin Lamoureux, Associate Vice President, Indigenous Affairs, University of Winnipeg, provided an engaging session on the subject of *Healing the Wound with the Weapon: Reconciliation and Public Education*. He explored the role of public education in reconciliation,

particularly with regard to trauma and identity and provided practical ways to work together in public education in the future.

- Susan Dion, Associate Professor, Indigenous Education, Faculty of Education, York University, spoke about *Decolonizing Our Schools*, a process that begins with hearing Indigenous people's voices.

Keynote speakers - Congress 2019:

- Dr. Gabor Maté, a recently retired family physician, internationally known for his work on mind/body unity in health and illness, attention deficit disorder and other childhood developmental issues, as well as his breakthrough analysis of addiction as a psycho-physiological response to childhood trauma and emotional loss, gave a riveting presentation on *Peer Orientation: Why Children are Stressed, Why Parents and Teachers are Disempowered, and How to Restore a Healthy Balance in Adult-Child Relationships*. This presentation was followed by an equally excellent workshop titled *Fostering Resilience in a Stressed Culture*.
- Brian Woodland, head of the communications firm BrianInspires and with many years of experience as Director of Communications at the Peel District School Board, provided a provocative and amusing session titled *Making Public Education - and Your Leadership - Matter in a Kim Kardashian World*.

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 2019-20 school year, the member boards of each region held meetings in November, except for the Northern Region which

held their meeting in October in Thunder Bay. In addition, regional meetings were held at the Public Education Symposium. The Regional Meetings scheduled for April and the Annual General Meeting were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As well, the OPSBA Board of Directors members from the Northern Region meet prior to each Board of Directors meeting in Toronto.

2020 Public Education Symposium (PES)

More than 320 trustees, student trustees, Directors of Education and senior school board administrators participated in PES 2020, jointly hosted with the Association des conseil scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario (ACÉPO) from January 23 to 25, 2020. 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 theme was "*The Building Blocks of Leadership*." Keynote speakers on January 23 were Nik Nanos, Chief Data Scientist and Founder of Nanos Research, who gave an outstanding presentation on *Polling, Politics and the Public*; and Michael Fullan, Global Leadership Director of New Pedagogies for Deep Learning, who spoke on *Core Governance, Leadership and Deep Learning*. On January 24, the opening keynote speaker was Ziya Tong, former co-host of Discovery Channel's science magazine *Daily Planet*. Ziya gave a fun and informative presentation on *The Nature of Leadership*. Nouman Ashraf, Assistant Professor of the Teacher Stream and Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at the Rotman School of Management, shared strategies on *Connecting*

Governance and Leadership to Maximize Impact within Public Education.

A panel of Chairs and Directors of Education, a variety of workshops, a student panel, student entertainment, and OPSBA business meetings, were also part of the program for PES 2020.

2020 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 (TRC). 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 2019-20 school year, Algoma DSB Trustee Elaine Johnston served as the Chair of the Indigenous Trustees' Council (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.

ITC members 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.

The ITC held productive face-to-face meetings in August 2019 and at the Public Education Symposium in January. Meetings moved to being held via Zoom during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ITC met virtually for its regular summer discussion in mid-August 2020. All meetings are attended by Indigenous and non-Indigenous trustees. Key items of discussion this year included:

- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Indigenous children and communities
- The inclusion of mandatory Indigenous curriculum throughout the Ontario curriculum
- The processes for electing or appointing Indigenous student trustees
- The formal role of the ITC within OPSBA
- Reciprocal Education Agreements and Education Service Agreements

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



SUPPORTING POSITIVE LABOUR RELATIONS



ACTIONS TAKEN IN 2019-20

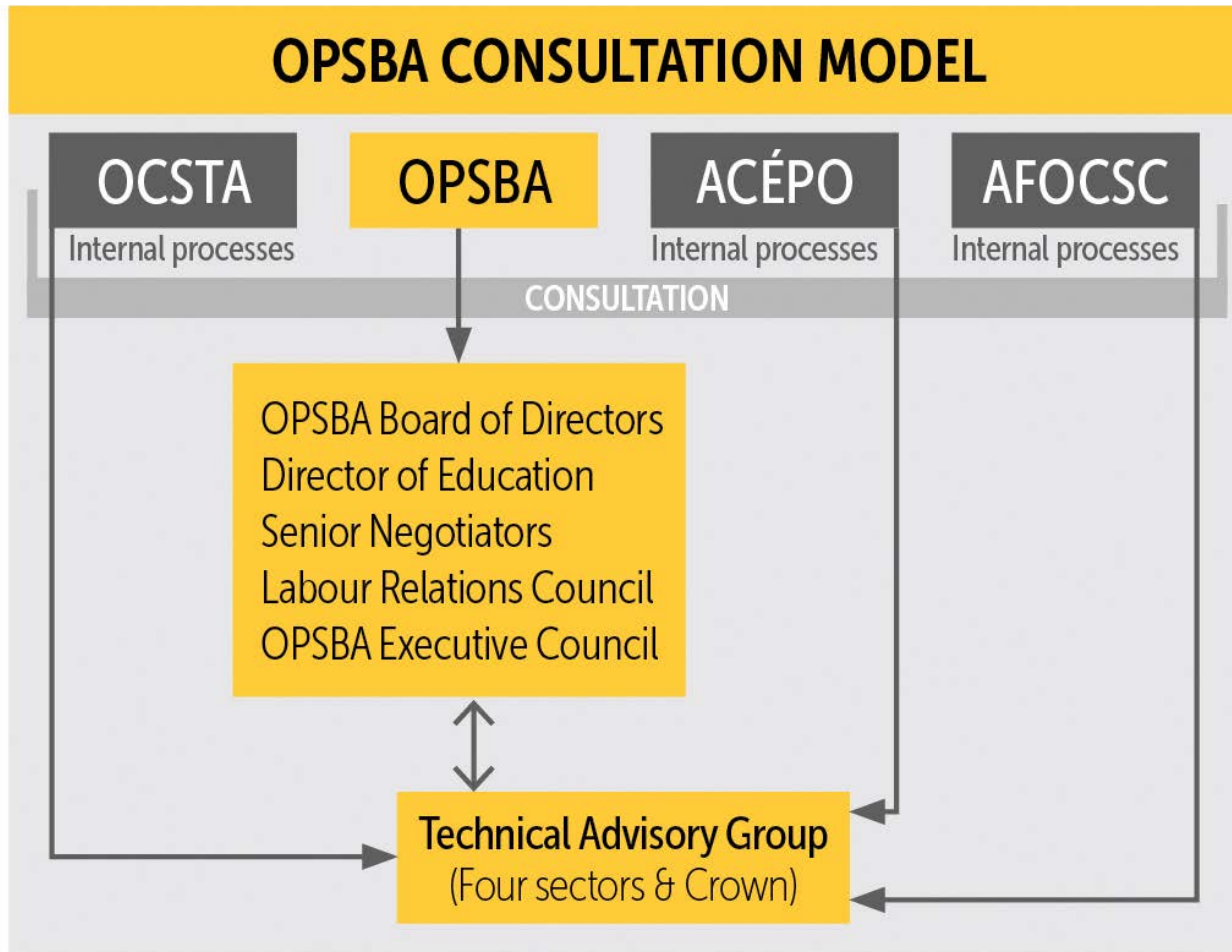
- Under the direction of Executive Council and OPSBA, the Board of Directors concluded and ratified the 2019-2022 central terms for all English public school boards.
- Provided support for the implementation of the 2019-2022 central agreements.
- Heard grievances and disputes through the central grievance/arbitration process included in the central agreement.
- 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 the status of bargaining at Labour Relations Council (LRC), Senior Negotiators and the Public Council of Ontario Directors of Education.
- Participated at: Technical Advisory Group (TAG), LRC, Council of Trustees' Associations (CTA), and co-chaired meetings of Central Labour Relations Committees (CLRC) for all union groups to problem solve and build relationships.
- Provided professional development to OPSBA Board of Directors, CEN, and other professional organizations.
- Provided input into provincial redeployment planning of school boards' staff to address the needs in long term care homes in Ontario.
- Participated in discussions with the Ministry of Education and teacher and education worker unions regarding reopening schools for September 2020.

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.

CENTRAL BARGAINING 2019-2022

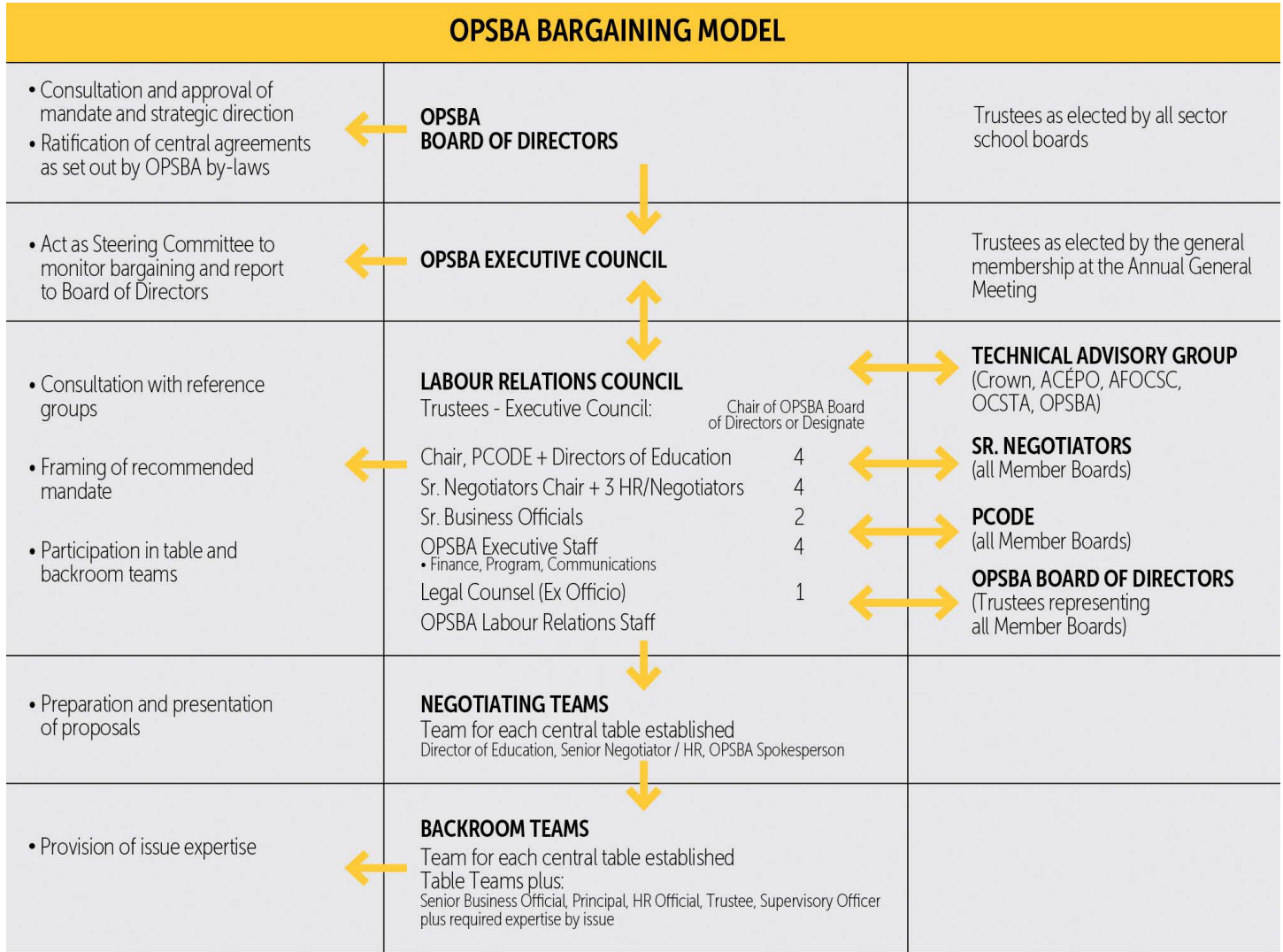
The OPSBA Board of Directors established the following collective bargaining and consultation models. These models were designed to create mandates and local mechanisms to ensure all voices are heard within the process created by the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Act (SBCBA)*.

Consultation Model



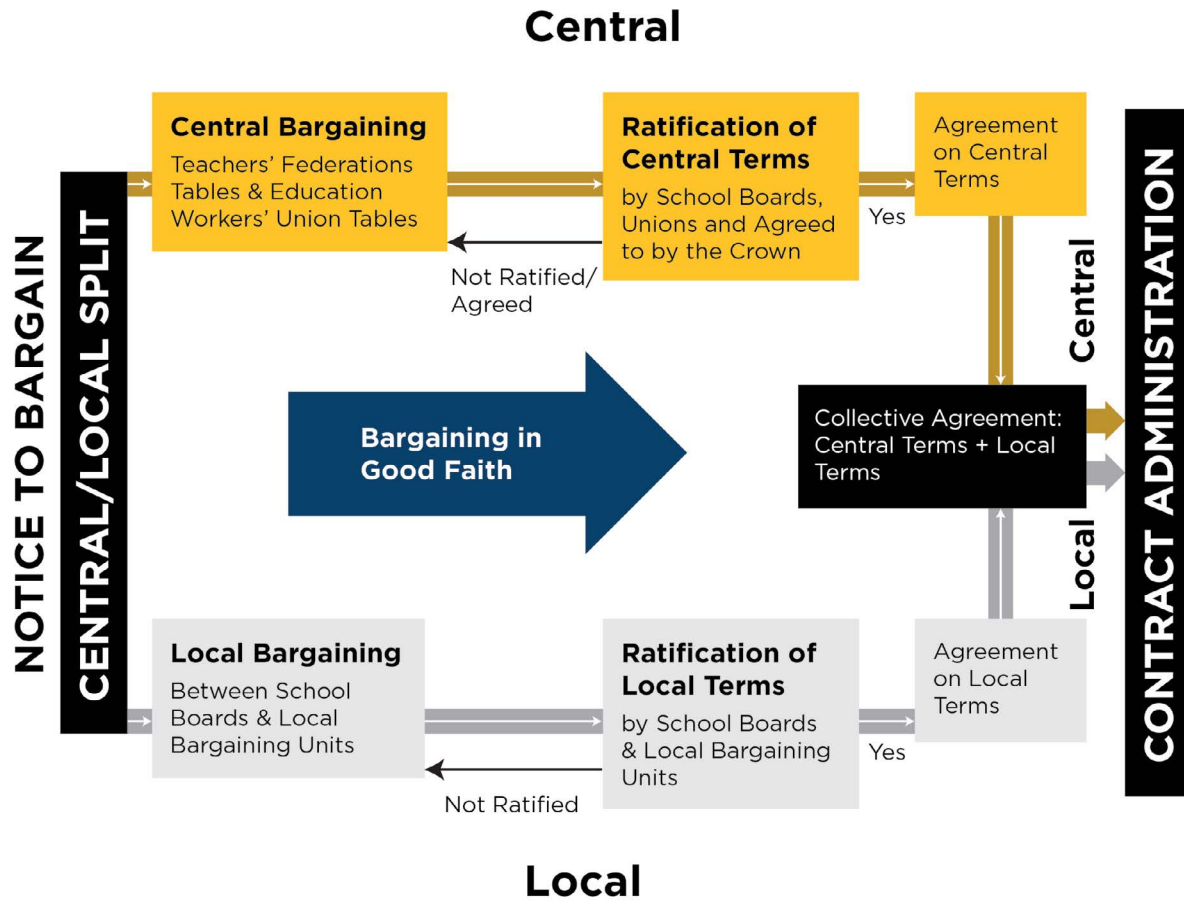
SUPPORTING POSITIVE LABOUR RELATIONS

Bargaining Model





School Boards Collective Bargaining Act: Process Map



Under the SBCBA:

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

A collective agreement is only completed once both central and local agreements are ratified.

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

SUPPORTING POSITIVE LABOUR RELATIONS

OPSBA is the designated bargaining agent for 31 English public school boards and 10 public school authorities. Represented bargaining units from the 2019-2022 collective agreements were ratified for these units:

SUMMARY		
CENTRAL TABLE	TOTAL BARGAINING UNITS	CENTRAL RATIFICATION DATE:
CUPE	48	November 4, 2019
ETFO Teachers	70 total (38 Permanent and 30 Occasional, 2 combined)	April 28, 2020
ETFO Education Workers	15	April 28, 2020
EWAO	6	February 4, 2020
OCEW	12	May 5, 2020
OSSTF Teachers	56 total (24 Permanent and 25 Occasional, 7 combined)	May 22, 2020
OSSTF Education Workers	55	May 22, 2020
Principal and Vice Principal Terms and Conditions expire August 31, 2020		

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.

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 • Best practices will be shared with boards.
<p>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"> • Will be established to discuss all matters relating to the delivery of the benefit plans.
<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 will continue to support school boards with respect to the practices that support diversity, equity, inclusion and foster diverse and inclusive workforces.

SUPPORTING POSITIVE LABOUR RELATIONS

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 will meet 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.
<p>E-Learning Implementation Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OPSBA • Crown • OSSTF Teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parties will meet to discuss and develop guidelines for boards regarding the implementation of the e-learning regulation and/or PPM.
<p>Apprenticeship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTA • Crown • OSSTF Education Workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$0.5 million to be allocated to school boards during the 2020-2021 school year to be used until the end of the 2021-2022 school year, on the basis of joint applications received from school boards and OSSTF locals for apprenticeship. • The purpose of the funds is to provide on-the-job training for employees as apprentices. • The committee will receive these applications.
<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"> • Committee continues to discuss the timing, pace, volume, coordination and coherence of Ministry of Education initiatives .

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

All collective agreements established a process by which disputes over the meaning 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.



GOVERNMENT CONSULTATIONS

OPSBA participated in the following consultations:

Redeployment

- The staffing needs in long term care homes in Ontario spotlighted a way in which Education Workers and Teachers could help. Unions, employers and the government worked together on a framework that would allow school board employees to volunteer their expertise in settings where help was required while maintaining their positions, entitlements and, as much as possible, their personal safety. Although there were significant numbers of volunteers for this program, matches to the work needed in the timeframe required was virtually impossible. The lack of placement in this program in no way diminishes the spirit of the volunteers who came forward.

Reopening Plans

- The challenge of safely reopening schools in September 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic required changes to the working and learning conditions in school boards. The June 19, 2020, directive of the provincial government for boards to create three possible school opening models included the following:
- Conventional return with enhanced safety protocols
 - Adaptive return
 - Distance education
- This directive resulted in discussions among the unions/federations with the employer represented by OPSBA on the impact that these models would have on employees. The discussions centred on the shared recognition that staff and student safety under the direction of public health units must be balanced with OPSBA's core values of equity of access to high quality of teaching and learning to meet the needs of all students.

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:

SUPPORTING POSITIVE LABOUR RELATIONS

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. These meetings take place twice annually and have provided valuable insights into other centralized bargaining models, particularly those that include the Crown.

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.

FINANCE ISSUES



OPSBA has continued 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 early spring, 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 investments in the following areas:

- *Special Education*
- *School-based mental health and addictions services*
- *Indigenous Education*
- *Classroom and learning technology*
- *School facilities and infrastructure*

This year, the ministry also asked stakeholders for “*initiatives that could 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. School boards have long been streamlining back office functions and taking advantage of technology. With regard to reducing red tape, we suggested the ministry consider the following additional items:

- Lift the moratorium on school closures and release the revised Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines (PARG). This will allow school boards to make prudent programming and financial decisions.
- Amend the Education Development Charge (EDC) regulation. Allow for flexibility for non-eligible boards to collect EDCs and increase the EDC rates to one that accurately matches actual land purchase costs.
- Use current census data and authentic benchmarks for funding calculations.

2020-2021 GSN FUNDING – \$ 25.52 BILLION

HIGHLIGHTS

Grants for Student Needs (GSN) funding for the 2020-21 year is projected to be \$25.52 billion, with an average provincial per-pupil funding amount of \$12,525. This represents an increase of approximately 2% over 2019-20.

The GSN announcement included support for school boards in responding to COVID-19 as well as enhancements included in ratified central agreements:

- COVID-19 – Includes a \$10 million investment in mental health to support the continued learning and well-being of students and a \$15 million investment for technology related costs.
- Central Agreements – Enhancements in ratified central agreements include increases to salary and benefits benchmarks, with benefits benchmarks also receiving additional inflationary increases. The funded average class size in the Pupil Foundation Grant for Grades 9 to 12 will be reduced from 28 to 23. The Supports for Students Fund (SSF) provides flexible funding for school boards to support the learning needs of students, which may include special education, mental health and well-being, language instruction, Indigenous education and STEM programming. In the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and the Educational Workers' Alliance of Ontario (EWAO) agreements this is referred to as Investments in System Priorities (ISP).
- Additional Support for Sick Leave – Supply teacher benchmarks are being increased by the equivalent of one day to recognize school board's experience with sick leave usage.
- School Operations Allocation – A 2% cost benchmark update to the non-staff portion to assist boards in managing the increases in commodity prices (electricity, natural gas, facility insurance, and other costs).
- School Renewal Funding – The Ministry of Education will invest approximately \$1.4 billion to maintain and improve the condition of schools. This includes \$1.07 billion in school condition improvement funding and \$375 million in school renewal.
- Student Transportation – In January 2020, the ministry launched a review of student transportation. While the review is underway as of August 2020, the overall Student Transportation Grant will be maintained at the previous year's funding level, with adjustments for enrolment growth. In addition, as a result of COVID-19-related school closures, the 2019-20 Student Transportation Grant was reduced by \$24.8 million.

2020-21 Priorities and Partnerships Fund

On June 19, 2020, the ministry issued memo B10 providing details on the Priorities and Partnership Fund (PPF). For 2020-21, the PPF will provide up to \$300 million in funding to education partners to support student needs. To facilitate school boards' budget planning for 2020-21, the ministry confirmed approximately \$117 million of PPF funding to school boards and school authorities to support ministry priorities.

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

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

Members of the Policy Development Work Team (PDWT) were actively involved in the Association's legislative and regulatory submissions, meeting initially in person as well as consulting over teleconference, through many email discussions, and virtually via Zoom. This past year, the PDWT dedicated its work to supporting the Association's priorities of The Whole Child and Student Well-Being for Today and Tomorrow, Trustees as Leaders in Public Education and Education Funding.

The group also had guest speakers who attended face-to-face meetings early in the year, including Kathy Georgiades, Ontario Child Health Study, Offord Centre; Sam Oosterhoff, MPP (Niagara West), Parliamentary Assistant to the Ministry of Education; Cameron Montgomery, EQAO Chair and Norah Marsh, now former EQAO Chief Executive Office; and Sheila M. MacKinnon, Shibley Righton LLP.

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

- Free menstrual products for students in schools
- Immunization of School Pupils Act
- PD Days on Municipal Election and School Board Election Day
- Local Government Week Activities and Resources
- Motions, Policies and Procedures Review
- Federal Election Resource Guide for School Boards and Trustees
- Take Your MPP to School Day
- Student Transportation
- Pandemic Related Governance Issues – i.e. school board meetings

Submissions

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

- July 20, 2020 - OPSBA Submission to the Ministry of Education regarding Bill 197, *COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, 2020*
- June 15, 2020 - OPSBA Submission to the Ministry of Education regarding Ontario's Plan to Reopen Schools
- May 26, 2020 - OPSBA Letter to the Ministry of Transportation regarding proposed amendments to Ontario's *Highway Traffic Act* to develop a regulatory framework that would allow for evidence from a school bus camera to be introduced in court without the need for a witness
- April 30, 2020 - OPSBA Submission on bullying in schools and anti-bullying initiatives
- March 10, 2020 - OPSBA Submission regarding Cannabis Consumption and Special Occasion Permits
- January 31, 2020 - OPSBA Submission regarding 2020-21 Education Funding
- January 23, 2020 - Submission to the Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs regarding the 2020-21 Pre-Budget Consultations
- December 12, 2019 - Letter to Minister Lecce regarding Education Development Charges
- December 6, 2019 - Letter to the Standing Committee on Social Policy re: Bill 116, Foundations for Promoting and Protecting Mental Health and Addictions Services Act, 2019

- October 31, 2019 - Letter to Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing regarding Local Government Week
- October 10, 2019 - Letter to the Minister of Education following his attendance at the September 29 OPSBA Board of Directors Meeting
- October 3, 2019 - Letter to the Ministry of Education regarding Education Development Charges and Land Expropriation
- October 2, 2019 - Letter to the Ministry of Transportation regarding Automated Speed Enforcement (photo radar) in school zones
- July 17, 2019 - Letter to Minister Lecce re: the federal government's Climate Action Incentive Fund for Schools

Areas for ongoing consideration

Next year, the work team will continue to be engaged in the following issues: School Board Governance; Student Transportation; Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines; Integrity Commissioners and Local Government Week. There will be ongoing discussions as well about return-to-school plans and implementation.



Members

- CHAIR** - Sheryl Evans, Algoma, Northern (E)
- VICE-CHAIR** - Shelley Laskin, Toronto, Central East
- Donna Edwards, Durham, Central East
- Jeanne Gray, Halton, Central West
- Linda Busuttill, Upper Grand, Central West
- Robin Hutcheon, Limestone, Eastern
- Marjorie Adam, Renfrew County, Eastern
- Jennifer Kitowski, Keewatin-Patricia, Northern (W)
- Julia Burgess, Greater Essex County, Western
- Arlene Morell, Thames Valley, Western
- Howard Archibald, Ontario North East, Indigenous Trustee

Executive Council Liaison

Michael Barrett, Durham and OPSBA 1st Vice-President

Alternates

- Colleen Wilcox, Trillium Lakelands, Central East
- Kate Baggott, Niagara, Central West
- Alison Kelly, Hastings and Prince Edward, Eastern
- Michael Brant, Hastings and Prince Edward, Indigenous Trustee
- Herb Klassen, Avon Maitland, Western
- Bill Steer, Near North, Northern (East)
- Kathryn Pierroz, Rainy River, Northern (West)

OPSBA WORK TEAMS

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, and through meetings and discussion with Ministry of Education political and ministry staff, regarding distance learning, the new mathematics curriculum, northern and rural education, 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 reopening of school facilities, *The Framework for Continued Learning*, the *Ministry of Education's Bullying in Ontario Schools Consultation*, and the ministry's Grants for Student Needs consultation process. *Please see the full list of submissions on pages 30 and 31.*

The Ontario Coalition for Children and Youth Mental Health

OPSBA was the founding member of the Coalition, which is now in its tenth year of operation, and through the EPWT provides ongoing advice to the Ministry of Education. The Coalition's focus this past year was continuing with networking opportunities, building government relationships and promoting evidence-based practices, especially during the pandemic. Coalition meetings continue to promote cross-sectoral and inter-ministerial collaboration and recognition of shared goals on behalf of children and youth mental health.

The Coalition held a Roundtable/Think Tank session in October 2019 to bring key education


partners together to identify challenges and opportunities to inform the next 10-year strategic plan and three-year operational plan. The significant 2014 Ontario Child Health Study findings were used as a guide for actions going forward. The next Summit on Children and Youth Mental Health is tentatively scheduled for April 2022 in Toronto and the format and approach will be informed through the recommendations of public health and the Coalition membership.

Indigenous Education

EPWT continues to advocate for the implementation of Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Committee's Final Report with regards to curriculum. An Indigenous trustee representative co-chairs the Work Team of the Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Education. More information related to this topic is available on page 16.

French as a Second Language (FSL)

OPSBA, through the EPWT, submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, to establish a three-year Ontario Labour Market Partnership project to study labour market needs for FSL instruction in the province. The third phase of the project is 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*. This phase is focused on the implementation of the action plans from Phase II and expanding and disseminating high potential strategies to 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 has been approved to lead three new provincial initiatives to support English language school boards that address the issues of the FSL 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 new 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.

All of the three-year initiatives are interrelated and will include data-gathering from stakeholders across Canada, collaborative opportunities to problem-solve, and recommendations for action. The three initiatives are:

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

After March 31, 2021, final reports for each initiative will be made available.

Exemplary Programs to Support Skilled Trades Programs

The work team selected exemplary Programs to Support Skilled Trades Programs as the focus of its 2019-20 survey of member boards. This survey builds on the OPSBA website repository of effective practice and results are posted at www.opsba.org.

Members

CHAIR - Jan Johnstone, Bluewater, Western
VICE-CHAIR - George Saarinen, Lakehead, Northern (W)
Jaine Klassen Jeninga, Kawartha Pine Ridge, Central East
Stephanie Donaldson, Toronto, Central East
Alex Johnstone, Hamilton-Wentworth, Central West
Amy Collard, Halton, Central West
Lucille Kyle, Hastings and Prince Edward, Eastern
Donald Cram, Upper Canada, Eastern
Jennifer Sarlo, Algoma, Northern (E)
Lynette Geddes, Avon Maitland, Western
Ryan Jacobs, Upper Canada, Indigenous Trustee

Executive Council Liaison

Carol Ann Sloat, Grand Erie and OPSBA 2nd Vice-President

Alternates

Cynthia Cordova, York Region, Central East
Karen McGregor, Limestone, Eastern
Tom Henderson, Ontario North East, Northern (E)
Trudy Tuchenhagen, Lakehead, Northern
Sarah Cipkar, Greater Essex County, Western
Keith Penny, Ottawa-Carleton, Indigenous Trustee
Joanna Oliver, Halton, Western

OPSBA WORK TEAMS

Supporting Northern and Remote School Boards

Throughout the 2019-20 school year, OPSBA continued to work with northern school boards and advocate on their behalf with Minister of Education Stephen Lecce and ministry staff. The 2020-21 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 annual Northern Regional Meeting was held in Thunder Bay in October 2019, with Minister of Energy, Mines, Northern Development and Indigenous Affairs Greg Rickford in attendance for a discussion with trustees. Association staff facilitated a process to identify priorities and key messages, which resulted in a follow-up letter to Minister Rickford and Minister Lecce. In March 2020, a letter was sent to Minister Lecce's office, in response to the student transportation review, to reinforce the unique circumstances related to transportation in northern school boards.

OPSBA-OSTA Liaison Committee

Since 2018, the OPSBA-OSTA Liaison Committee has met to further support the opportunities for, and the voice of, student trustees. Student trustees from the Public Board Council continue to be included as part of both the Policy Development and Education Program Work Teams. Discussions and activities this past year included:

- Facilitation of a student trustee workshop at the Public Education Symposium
- Contribution and participation in OPSBA's Advocacy Day
- Creation of the first ever Ontario Public Student Trustee Scholarship
- Review and contribution to Ontario Regulation 7/07 Student Trustees amendments
- Ongoing work on a Best Practices Handbook

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

Members

CHAIR - Alex Johnstone, Hamilton-Wentworth DSB
 Cathy Abraham, OPSBA President, Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB
 Mark Mannisto, Superior Greenstone DSB
 Sarah Cipkar, Greater Essex County DSB
 Michael Brant, Indigenous Trustees' Council, Hastings and Prince Edward DSB
 Laurie French, ex officio, Limestone DSB



LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

OPSBA is a non-partisan association that 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 and regulations 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.

Effective advocacy entails sharp analysis of the emerging issues and trends in our sector, confidence that we are representing the thoughtful consensus of our member boards, choosing strategic opportunities for presenting our positions in ways that engage audiences, and, where appropriate, drawing media attention.

OPSBA continues to issue regular Legislative Updates to all member boards on a regular basis. Our Advocacy can be seen at all levels of government.

MUNICIPAL

Local Government Week (LGW) occurred from October 20 to 26, 2019. This advocacy week aims to increase youth and public awareness about the important role local government plays in our communities. OPSBA conducted a social media campaign to promote LGW and to highlight the long advocacy history of trustees and the importance of their work. Resources were updated to include current information and were posted on the Association website. Trustees visit their schools regularly and it was left to individual trustees to determine locally if a school visit to either a Grade 5 or Grade 10 class was appropriate at the time as it was in the middle of collective bargaining, and to follow

their board protocols for setting up these visits.

OPSBA President Cathy Abraham and staff attended the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) annual meeting in Ottawa in August 2019, meeting with AMO President Jamie McGarvey and participating in numerous conversations and sessions.

PROVINCIAL



On June 20, 2019, Premier Doug Ford announced a cabinet shuffle that included the addition of one new ministry (Health was split into two ministries)

as well as five new associate ministers. Stephen Lecce became the new Minister of Education, replacing Lisa Thompson, who became the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Stephen Lecce is the MPP for King—Vaughan and was first elected to the Ontario Legislature in 2018. He was formerly the Parliamentary Assistant to the Premier and the Minister of Infrastructure. Sam Oosterhoff remained the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Education. Minister Lecce contacted OPSBA soon after his appointment and senior staff in both his office and OPSBA met as well.

In one of his earliest stakeholder meetings, Minister Lecce attended OPSBA’s Board of Directors meeting in September. He also spoke at the Public Education Symposium in January 2020 and participated in the May 2020 Board of Directors meeting via Zoom.

In addition to these formal meetings, Minister Lecce has connected with OPSBA’s President Cathy Abraham on a regular basis and has conducted

teleconferences with school board chairs since school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic began in mid-March 2020. Senior staff also connect with members of his political staff on a regular basis.

OPSBA ensures regular contact with the other political parties and their education critics. Throughout the year, meetings took place between OPSBA President Cathy Abraham and 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 connected with Steven Del Duca, the new leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario.

In October, Greg Rickford, the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines and Minister of Indigenous Affairs, attended OPSBA's Northern Regional Meeting. Our northern member boards were able to articulate the many unique challenges facing schools in the region. School boards and trustees in the North want their students to have the same opportunities as other students across the province. Declining enrolment, loss of community employers, and the overall geography of the landscape all contribute to obstacles in delivering quality educational programming for our students.

With the current government mid-way through their mandate, OPSBA will continue to advocate for our priorities and ensure education is at the forefront of any party's election campaign platform.

OPSBA Advocacy Day - November 25, 2019

More than 50 public school board trustees and student trustees from all regions of the province took part in OPSBA's second Advocacy Day. The day began with a breakfast meeting between Minister of Education Stephen Lecce and the

OPSBA Table Officers. Following this, OPSBA held a news conference that released the results of polling and research done in partnership with Nanos Research. This initiative bolstered OPSBA's advocacy position on key issues, such as the importance of investment in public education, Indigenous Education, curriculum, mental health supports and the importance of electing trustees.

Many of our trustees attended in Question Period, where many were recognized by their local MPPs, and OPSBA was formally welcomed by all parties. The Association had meetings with 54 MPPs - 24 PC, 23 NDP, three Liberal, one Green, and one Independent.

An evening reception was attended by many MPPs, the Deputy Minister of Education and two Assistant Deputy Ministers, and featured remarks from Minister Lecce, Marit Stiles of the NDP, Kathleen Wynne of the Liberal Party, and Mike Schreiner of the Green Party.



LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

FEDERAL

The Federal Election took place on Monday, October 21, 2019. During federal elections, OPSBA advocates for non-partisan strategies to engage politicians on issues that affect public education and our children and youth.

OPSBA's Federal Election Resource Guide for School Boards and Trustees was developed with input from Association senior staff, the Policy Development Work Team, and from the Canadian School Boards Association (CSBA), which distributed a modified version of our Guide with other CSBA members across the country. The Guide included background information on several education related topics and questions to ask both candidates and parties.

Trustees were encouraged to use this information independently when approached by a candidate or party to answer questions and engage in an education discussion. Trustees could also work with other community partners to host an all candidates meeting and supplement education-related questions.

OPSBA created a social media campaign to demonstrate our leadership role in public education advocacy during the federal election campaign and to highlight education issues via media stories, opinion pieces and editorials. The Association also sent letters to each party asking for answers to key education questions.

As a member of the 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 2019-20. Laurie French, OPSBA's Past President, remains the current President of CSBA.

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. 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:

- Ontario Coalition for Children and Youth Mental Health
- Public Services Health and Safety Association
- Ontario School Bus Association
- OMERS



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 continues to stand out as a credible and primary voice of public education in Ontario. The 2019-20 year was another successful year for OPSBA in achieving sustained media coverage on a variety of issues, including collective bargaining, class sizes, and the massive impact of COVID-19 on public education. OPSBA is a consistent point of contact for reporters and columnists 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 including:

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

CTV NEWS, NOVEMBER 25, 2019

"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.

Historic moment in Ontario education as three Black women now lead school boards

TORONTO STAR, JULY 20, 2020

"We recognize the continued need for all of us all to listen, learn, speak up and act on racism, specifically anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism in Ontario," said Ontario Public School Boards' Association president Cathy Abraham. "Having diversity in leadership is an important part of this."

All 3-year education contracts in Ontario now ratified

TORONTO STAR, MAY 22, 2020

"Despite the many challenges caused by the current pandemic situation, all of the parties continued to work toward reaching a deal that will help to bring some stability to our system during what is obviously a rapidly evolving situation," said Cathy Abraham, president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association.

Ontario to close schools until May 4, unveils online learning plan


CANADIAN PRESS, MARCH 31, 2020

The president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, which represents trustees, said school boards have been hearing from parents in recent weeks that they need help teaching their children at home. Cathy Abraham said every board in the province has been crafting a local plan to address the needs of students who may not have access to the internet, computers or tablets, or whose parents may not have time to oversee their schooling. "This is uncharted territory for everyone," she said. "We're just asking parents to have a little bit of patience with their school boards while they try to figure it out. It's not going to be the same for everybody."

Ontario elementary teachers' union reaches tentative deal with province

GLOBE AND MAIL, MARCH 20, 2020

Cathy Abraham, president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, said that all parties worked toward an agreement despite the recent challenges caused by the pandemic. She said the deal will help "bring some stability to our system during what is obviously an unprecedented and rapidly evolving situation."



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 2019-2020, 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 collective bargaining, COVID-19 impacts, and the release of the 2020 Ontario Budget and 2020-21 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, a substantial number of media statements (14) and news releases (7), 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.

A range of feature stories in the fall 2019 issue of OPSBA's magazine *Education Today*, which moved fully online in 2018, touched on issues related to Indigenous Education. Due to COVID-19, an issue was not published in spring or summer 2020. At OPSBA's annual communications officer networking session at the Public Education Symposium in January, OPSBA communications and policy staff discussed updates relevant to the group of school board communications.


Communications officers also participated in a session on governance and leadership with Michael Fullan, Director of Global Leadership, heard from panelists Carla Pereira of Peel, Shawn McKillop of Hamilton-Wentworth, and Bruce Nugent of Lakehead regarding crisis communications, and had a unique opportunity to hear directly from Nik Nanos of Nanos Research regarding OPSBA's November 2019 public opinion polling and how to use the results in board communications strategies.

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 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 August 2020, @OPSBA has more than 8,500 followers. Since May 2019, the account has gained more than 1,750 followers, more than doubling the previous school year's growth.

Launched its second social media account on the Instagram platform in late January 2019. With more than 110 posts and 280 followers as of August 2020, the account is giving the Association another way to share its strategic messaging through the use of images and Instagram Stories. The account more than doubled its audience in 2019-2020.

 Follow OPSBA on Twitter: @OPSBA

 Follow OPSBA on Instagram: @OPSBA_Official

2020 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.

The President's Award

This award recognizes trustees who have given 25 or more years of service to public education. This year's recipients were Renfrew County DSB Trustee David Shields, and Algoma DSB Trustee Russell Reid.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the following awards were not presented this school year:

- OPSBA Award of Excellence and Achievement Award
- Jack A. MacDonald Award of Merit and Certificate of Recognition
- Dr. Harry Paikin Memorial Award
- Fred L. Bartlett Memorial Award
- Bernardine Yackman Memorial Award



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 OPSBA's 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. The 2019-20 winners were:

Central East Region

Owen Eccleshall, Georgian Bay DSS,
Simcoe County DSB

Central West Region

Hala Arafeh, Garth Webb SS, Halton DSB

Eastern Region

Amy Hookimaw, Trenton HS,
Hastings and Prince Edward DSB

Northern Region

Hope Peever, Iroquois Falls SS, DSB Ontario North East

Western Region

Simon Harris, Northern CVI, Lambton Kent DSB

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. This scholarship is based on an outstanding initiative accomplished during the student trustee's term and how the initiative positively impacted the students in their board. Two scholarships, in the amount of \$500 each, were awarded to Anumita Jain of the Greater Essex County DSB and Prasith Wijeweera of the Ottawa-Carleton DSB.



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 student transportation
- 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

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ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates





**ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION**

Leading Education's Advocates

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