



**ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION**

Leading Education's Advocates

Ontario Public School Boards' Association

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Michael Barrett
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Jennifer Franks, Manager (A)
Local Government Policy Branch
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
13th Floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario M5G 2E5

Dear Jennifer Franks,

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) represents the province's 31 public district school boards. Together our members serve the educational needs of almost 70% of Ontario's elementary and secondary students. In addition to advocacy on behalf of Ontario students, our Association provides services to school boards and to school trustees who are elected to public office through Municipal elections. We are an organization that has a strong history of advocacy and have consistently participated in consultation around many pieces of legislation that affect our members.

Trustees perform an extremely crucial job. As elected officials, they serve as representatives for public education with their local communities. This week OPSBA is actively promoting the work of school board trustees as part of Local Government Week as well as during the run-up to next year's municipal elections.

This submission is our response to the proposed changes being made to regulations under the Municipal Elections Act, 1996. We understand that there are two regulations that are to be amended:

- 1) Ontario Regulation 101/97 (General) to allow the nomination fee to be paid by an electronic method and to update the prescribed forms for the 2014 municipal elections; and
- 2) Ontario Regulation 500/09 (Voter Identification) to remove the requirement that identification show an elector's signature.

With regards to changes to the first regulation, we are fully supportive of any change that modernizes the payment of nomination fees and does not limit this to strictly being paid in cash. We would appreciate further details when they are available as to what other methods are being considered (debit, credit card, mobile payments etc.) While we understand that nomination forms will still have to be filed in the clerk's office, we look forward to future changes that would allow both nomination forms and fees to be completed and paid online. The second change under this regulation considers updating forms and, from discussions with ministry staff, we have been informed that these forms are to be more streamlined, easy to understand and in general, more user-friendly. In particular, we hope that this applies to the financial statements (forms 4 and 5).

This request was also part of the feedback OPSBA gave both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing after the 2010 Municipal election.

As for changes to the second regulation, again it is our understanding that this is designed to make the voting process less complicated as not all the documents listed as voter identification qualifiers, in fact, require a signature. Although this is not a proposed change, we are wondering if consideration has been given to include the Ontario Photo Card in the listing of Voter Identification documents. This card, issued by the provincial government, is meant to be used as identification for people who are over 18, that do not have a passport, driver's license or an Ontario Health Card with a photo.

As you are aware, within Regulations created under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 there are accessibility standards with regard to Information and Communication. This will have to be taken into account in devising forms and processes for municipal elections and we would assume this is well in hand. We note that in 2009, OPSBA commented on changes to the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 as part of the omnibus bill, Good Government Act, 2009. In that legislation, we supported changes that ensured voting locations were to be accessible.

In summary, we found all of the above proposed changes are things that will make the nomination and voting process easier. Our hope is that it will strengthen the democratic process and provide more clarity around the process involved. With nomination day being January 1, 2014, we would appreciate communication regarding these changes as soon as possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these comments.

Sincerely,



Michael Barrett
President
Ontario Public School Boards' Association

cc. Minister of Education