



ONTARIO PUBLIC  
SCHOOL BOARDS'  
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

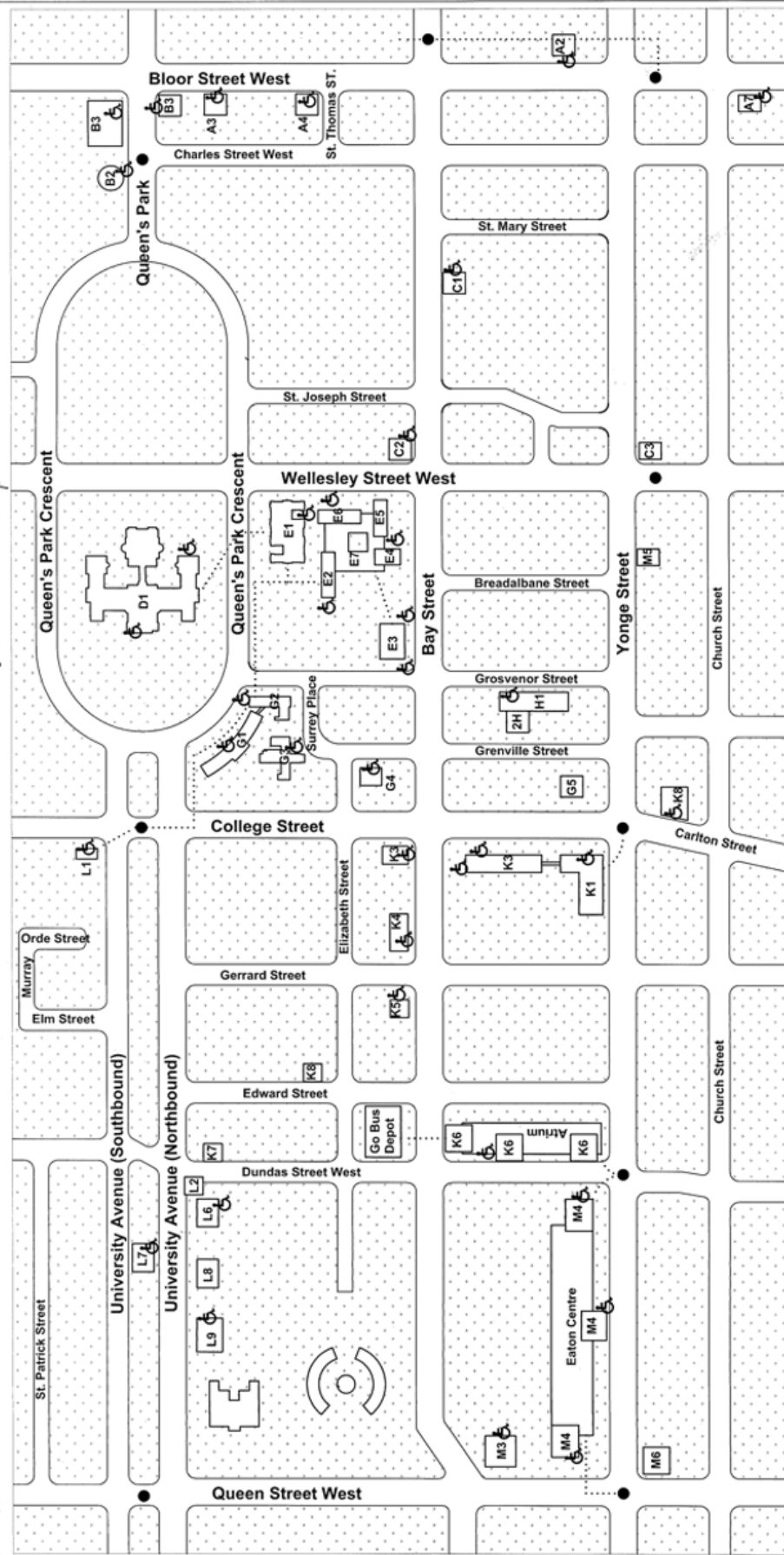
# OPSBA Advocacy Day Information Package







M11-21-4 MacDonald Block, 300 Bay Street  
Toronto Ontario M7A 1N3  
FNU11



**LEGEND:**

## Subway

## Wheelchair

**Wheelchair  
Access** 

Tunnel .....

C1 - 1075 Bay St. (The Citadel)	E6 - 77 Wellesley St. W. (Ferguson Block)	K1 - 444 Yonge St. (Provincial and Small Claims Courts)	M1 - 130 Queen St. W. (Osgoode Hall)
C2 - 56 Wellesley St. W.	E7 - 900 Bay St. (Macdonald Block)	K3 - 123 Edward St.	M3 - 60 Queen St. W. (Old City Hall)
C3 - 101 Bloor St. W.	G1 - 7 Queen's Park Cr. (Frost Building South)	K2 - 777 Bay St. (College Park)	M4 - Eaton Centre; includes:
D1 - 175 Bloor St. E.	G2 - 95 Grosvenor St. (Frost Building North)	K3 - 790 Bay St.	1 Dundas St. W. (North Tower)
D1 - 199 Wellesley St. W. (Whitney Block)	G3 - 2 Surrey Place	K4 - 720 Bay St. (Attorney General)	250 Yonge St. (East Tower)
E2 - 80 Grosvenor St. (Hepburn Block)	G4 - 77 Grenville St. (Archives of Ontario)	K5 - 770 Bay St. (Lucill Place)	20 Queen St. W. (South Tower)
E3 - 880 Bay St. 50 Grosvenor Street	G5 - 18 Grenville St. (Q.P. Credit Union)	K7 - 400 University Ave.	M5 - 415 Yonge St.
E4 - 900 Bay St. (Mowat Block)	H1 - 25 Grosvenor St. (George Drew Bldg.)	L3 - 393 University Ave.	M6 - 1 Queen St. E.
E5 - 900 Bay St. (Hearst Block)	H2 - 26 Grenville St. (Coroner's Office)	L3 - 361 University Ave. (Court House)	

# I. Context and Messaging

This package is designed to provide key messages and information for the members of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association to engage in government meetings during the November 28th Advocacy Day at Queen's Park in Toronto.

We encourage members to use your personal stories as much as possible to make a genuine connection with the MPP you are speaking with. For example, it may be helpful to include examples from your experience as a trustee or member of your school community, to really bring the issues to life for politicians and their staff.

## OPSBA BACKGROUND

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) 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 English public school system in Ontario.

OPSBA members represent public school boards of all sizes and from all regions of the province of Ontario. Our association provides advocacy and conveys the concerns, views, and recommendations of public-school boards and their students and communities.

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.

### OUR MISSION

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) advocates for public education in Ontario.

### OUR VISION

OPSBA will be public education's expert voice, promoting a high-quality system, focused on improving every student's success and well-being.

### OUR VALUES

OPSBA will be public education's expert voice, promoting a high-quality system, focused on improving every student's success and well-being.

**Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**

**Truth and Reconciliation**

**Valuing Student Voice**

**Quality and Innovation**

**Environmental Stewardship, Good Governance, Accountability, Collaboration, and Integrity**

# II. Advocacy Day Priorities

## CAPITAL AND FACILITIES

### WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

School boards spend much of their time and effort developing Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategies – a ministry-mandated document, with a 10-year outlook, that is updated and approved each year.

This strategy enables boards to balance student enrolment among overcrowded and under-used schools while maintaining equitable access to programming. Consideration is also given to the use of schools by local childcare partners and community groups. In many areas, schools are community hubs and need to be supported as such for widespread before-and-after school use.

In recent Nanos Research polling, 89% of Ontarians say more funding for the maintenance, repair and renewal of schools is important or somewhat important.

**It is important for capital projects (new builds, additions, and retrofits) to be announced regularly and predictably, and they need to reflect the local needs of the school board.**

### OPSBA RECOMMENDS:

- Capital priority project funding needs to be released on a regular planning cycle.
- Capital funding benchmarks need to reflect the increased cost of construction.
- Delays between the approval and release of funding must be minimized, to avoid increased costs for goods and services, which are typically absorbed by school boards and further delay students' access to optimal learning environments.
- The Education Development Charge (EDC) regulation needs to allow flexibility for non-eligible boards to collect EDCs. These rates need to be increased to accurately match actual land purchase costs.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How can school boards and the government work together to ensure that schools are built in the right place, for the right price, with the best interest of students and our communities at the forefront?
- How can approvals for childcare and school capital projects be prioritized and sped up?
- What are some creative options that could be considered when planning and building future schools and learning places?
- What can be done to further support school board facilities and their outdoor areas during non-school hours?

# EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

## WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Ontario's public education system plays a critical role in providing educational leadership, instruction, and support to ensure equitable access, opportunities, and outcomes for all students. This commitment relies on the continuous analysis of learning outcomes for all students through critical rights-based, identity-affirming, anti-racist analysis of past practices to support diverse, decolonized, new approaches. The experiences of student learning during the pandemic have shed a stronger light on the latent effects of historic patterns of discrimination, which further underscores the urgency of this work.

In recent Nanos Research polling, more than four in five Ontarians (82%) say it is important or somewhat important to provide more funding for school boards to ensure positive and inclusive school climates for all, regardless of an individual's background or identity.

More than four in five Ontarians (81%) say it is important or somewhat important to have mandatory anti-racism education for all students, teachers and education workers.

**More than four in five Ontarians (91%) support more funding being provided to school boards to ensure schools are accessible for all individuals with disabilities.**

**School boards operate with a fundamental principle that every student should have equitable access and opportunity to succeed personally and academically, barrier and bias-free, regardless of background, identity or personal circumstances.**

## OPSBA RECOMMENDS:

- The Ministry of Education should develop an updated three-to-five-year Equity Action plan that prioritizes funding for the following areas:
  - o Research and Data
  - o Safety and Human Rights
  - o Leadership Capacity, Education, and Assessment

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How should the government and boards use identity demographics, achievement and human rights-related reporting data to help prioritize funding, programming, and supports for students from all backgrounds?
- How should the government work with school boards on implementing the K-12 accessibility standards, especially regarding funding and coordination of capital improvements?
- How can all levels of government work together to support the integration of EDI, human rights and demographic identity data in hiring, recruitment, promotion, mentoring, and leadership roles?

# STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

## WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Ontario's public education system plays a critical role in providing educational leadership, Student transportation is critical for many students and their families. It encompasses much more than the morning and afternoon rides to and from school. It includes school field trips, sporting events, other extracurricular activities, and additional service for before-and-after school care. It is a complex issue that requires detailed analysis to ensure appropriate funding, while considering local circumstances. The coordination often involves several partners; multiple school boards, different school bus operators, a separate consortium, and in many instances, school boards working directly with their municipalities' local public transit systems.

**Transportation issues for school boards include inadequate funding, driver recruitment and retention, and safety. Many boards continue to regularly overspend their transportation budgets to meet their own unique needs.**

## OPSBA RECOMMENDS:

- Any policy or funding framework must consider the unique student transportation circumstances and needs of each board (northern, rural and urban).
- Investments targeted at attracting and retaining school bus drivers.
- Updating the funding benchmarks to reflect increased costs, especially related to inflation.
- Finding ways to support student participation in field trips, sporting events, and extracurricular activities.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How can we move on new solutions to support local student transportation challenges, including more closely connecting with municipal partners?
- What more can be done to attract and retain school bus drivers?
- Are there other actions that could be done to ensure school buses are safer for students and drivers?

# III. Key Messages

- Most Ontarians agree that spending on public education is an investment in the future.
- A strong majority of Ontarians support more funding for:
  - Maintenance, repair, and renewal of schools
  - Special Education Programs
  - Mental Health Supports
- Investing in public education is about two times more important to Ontarians than eliminating the deficit.
- Ontarians are split on the job done by our public education system on reconciliation with Indigenous peoples:
  - Three in four Ontarians support a mandatory indigenous education curriculum for all students, and this support has increased between 2019 and 2022
- Ontarians are over four times more likely to say it is better to elect school board trustees than to have them appointed by the government.
- Over four in five Ontarians feel that school boards should have more autonomy to ensure their budgets reflect local needs.
- Most Ontarians oppose public tax dollars being used to help fund the private education system.
- Ontarians are most likely to say that funding for education should be set based on the number of students and inflation.
- Over nine in ten Ontarians support expanding the opportunities for students to learn computer coding and STEM.
- Over nine in ten Ontarians support more funding for school boards to ensure schools are accessible for all individuals with disabilities.
- Over eight in ten Ontarians support having mandatory anti-racism for education for all students, teachers, and education workers.
- Over three in four Ontarians support expanding opportunities for students to experience the arts.



# IV. Advocacy Day Advice

## **DRESS FOR SUCCESS – (AND THE WEATHER)**

- Business attire is the norm for most meetings with Ministers/MPPs and their staff
  - That said, the spectrum of acceptable attire is fairly broad
  - Plan for the weather – some meeting locations may require brief time outside

## **KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING, AND BE THERE EARLY**

- Scout the location the day before, or a couple hours earlier when possible
- Be aware of security restrictions, reception areas, and waiting rooms. Try to show up 20-30 minutes ahead of your meeting.
  - o All guests need to receive a pass from the security guards when entering the Main Legislative Building. The visitor entrance can be found to the left of the front doors
  - o When you arrive, you will go through airport style security, you will need photo ID. Security may take between 10-15 minutes depending on how busy it is
  - o Some Ministers or Parliamentary Assistants may have additional security for offices in different buildings.
  - o You will need to check your coat and any electronic devices before Question Period at the coat check booth near the cafeteria in the basement.

## **DON'T FORGET:**

- Bring your photo ID, business cards and OPSBA name tag.
- Take pictures during meetings & the reception
  - o When appropriate, ask the MPP, Minister or their staff for a picture
  - o Share the photo on social media using the hashtag #OPSBAadvocacy

## **MPP & SENIOR STAFF MEETINGS:**

- Know your audience, and what they can and can't do for you
  - Minister, MPP, Staff, Government vs. Opposition
  - Frame your ask accordingly
- Begin the meeting by addressing Ministers by their titles
  - Most will introduce themselves with their first name, follow their lead
  - The appropriate title for all Ministers (including Attorney General & Solicitor General) is "Minister [Last Name]." No need to include "honourable"
- Introduce yourself, what school board you represent and who OPSBA is
  - Don't assume they know who you are, even if you've met before
- Ministers/MPPs often have misconceptions about organizations:
  - Expect that people may show up otherwise unprepared
  - Don't be afraid to ask how familiar they are with OPSBA
- Focus on the Minister/MPP/Senior Staff in the meeting, but make sure to include everyone in the discussion
  - Each person in the room for the meeting is there for a reason
  - Staff play an important role in shaping MPPs' opinions, and are often the ones tasked with any follow-up
- Share the Agenda, and leave behind handouts
  - The leave-behind handouts may remain on someone's desk to be referenced later
- Be prepared to speak to OPSBA's three advocacy goals (Capital Investment, EDI, Student Transportation)
  - Determine your priority sequence based on your local needs, and what you know about the person with whom you are meeting.
  - Get to the point – have a 30 second, 2-minute, 10 minute pitch for each issue
  - Be aware of how much time the meeting is scheduled for, and, if possible, what the MPP has scheduled next
  - Watch body language to gauge interest, and adjust the topic of discussion accordingly
  - Share personal experiences to humanize the issues school boards are facing in Ontario and in your riding
- When the meeting ends thank the MPP and their staff for their time and invite them to the reception being held in Room 228 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.

## NOTES

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## ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

### OPSBA SOCIAL MEDIA

#### **TWITTER**

@OPSBA

#### **INSTAGRAM**

@OPSBA\_Official

#### **HASHTAG**

#OPSBAadvocacy

### OPSBA ADVOCACY DAY CONTACTS

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