



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

The Role of Trustee

Sheila M. MacKinnon, B. Comm. (Hons.), LL.B.

Managing Partner, Shibley Righton LLP

&

Jennifer McIntyre, OPSBA Director of Policy

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Roles and Responsibilities



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A Board of Trustees is responsible for governing the school system in the best interests of all students in its jurisdiction and on behalf of the communities it serves.

The school board, as a corporate body, is the legislative source of all decisions, and individual trustees are granted no authority through the *Education Act*.

Both the board as a whole and individual trustees have roles and responsibilities.

Individual Trustees



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A school trustee is a member of a board, not a member of a parliament, and it is important for both trustees and the general public to understand that school board trustees hold no individual authority.

Trustees must familiarize themselves with the Board's by-laws, rules of parliamentary procedure, duties and responsibilities of the Board and individual Trustees under the *Education Act*, its regulations, guidelines and directives; *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act*, the Trustee Code of Conduct and its enforcement, etc.

Individual Trustees

As required under the *Education Act*, individual school board trustees are to:

- Carry out his or her responsibilities in a manner that assists the board in fulfilling its duties under this *Act*, the regulations and the guidelines issued under this *Act*, including but not limited to the board's duties under section 169.1
- Attend and participate in meetings of the board, including meetings of board committees of which he or she is a member
- Consult with parents, students and supporters of the board on the board's multi-year plan under clause 169.1 (1) (f)
- Bring concerns of parents, students and supporters of the board to the attention of the board
- Uphold the implementation of any board resolution after it is passed by the board
- Entrust the day-to-day management of the board to its staff through the board's director of education
- Maintain focus on student achievement and well-being
- Comply with the board's code of conduct.

Community Representation



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Individual trustees interpret the role of representing their community in different ways. Some community members expect a trustee to be very active, others do not. Because Ontario's communities are so diverse, the job of school trustee varies widely.

What all trustees have in common is serving the community as elected representatives while focusing on the primary task of acting as members of a board that makes policy decisions, oversees curriculum and program delivery, and fulfils its responsibilities as an employer.

Advocates of Public Education



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Trustees act as education advocates at various levels.

Local -- work on behalf of the community and must consider the unique needs of their communities when deciding what position to take on any issue.

Municipal -- connect with municipal counterparts, regular meetings and discussion on common issues.

Provincial -- liaise with their local MPP and other members of the provincial government regarding public education.

Meeting Commitments



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A trustee must be physically present in the meeting room of the board for at least three regular meetings of the board in each 12-month period beginning December 1.*

A trustee cannot miss three consecutive meetings unless approval is granted by the board.

Recent amendments to the *Education Act* now allow trustees to take parental or pregnancy leaves for up to 20 weeks without authorization from their board.

* COVID-19 Pandemic amendments have been made

Board Meetings – Best Practices



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- Only decisions/motions of the Board of Trustees passed at a legally constituted meeting of the Board of Trustees bind the Board (Proper notice, agenda, supporting materials and quorum).
- Sufficient advance information to inform a Trustee
- Know the rules of parliamentary procedure
- Fairness
- How to move a motion
- When to move a motion
- Follow the rules of order to maintain order
- Maintain confidentiality of in-camera meetings

Board Meetings – Best Practices



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Remember:

- Lead by example
- It is not what you say but how you say it
- Reasonable people can disagree
- Professionalism

Electronic Meetings – What's New



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- Waive the requirement for in-person attendance by specified individuals e.g. the chair and director (until Nov. 30, 2021)
- Waive the requirement for trustees to physically attend a minimum of three meetings during the next 12-month period (Dec. 1, 2020 – Nov. 30, 2021)
- Waive the requirement for the meeting room of a board or of a committee to be open to permit physical attendance by the public (until Nov. 30, 2021)
- Include a new requirement for boards to provide members of the public with participatory electronic access to open board/committee meetings i.e. two-way means of participation (effective February 1, 2021).

Electronic Meetings – Best Practices



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Use of Cameras:

Most boards allow their trustees the option to have their camera on or off.

How has the role changed during the pandemic?



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Governance – related Issues. What we heard:

- Maintaining a focus on governance leadership vs. operations
- Respecting the leadership team and their role
- Amount of meetings and their duration has increased significantly
- Needing to fully understand government and ministry's direction and decisions
- Need for regular and informative operational updates from Director of Education and senior staff
- Pausing on non-essential committee work
- Adapting to participating in more virtual meetings
- Timely communications

How has the role changed during the pandemic?



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Community – related Issues. What we heard:

- Being able to share and explain operational decisions to a diverse community stakeholder group (i.e. masking, asymptomatic testing etc.)
- Ongoing community support needed (numerous emails and telephone calls)
- Re-establish key partnerships (especially local Public Health Unit, libraries for broadband support)
- Working closely with local media (Chair's role with senior staff)
- Connecting with school based child care operators
- Regular check-ins with parents, grandparents, municipal leaders, and MPPs
- Connecting with other boards to seek support, best practices etc.
- Communicating via individual trustee updates to local community



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Questions?