



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

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OPSBA 2018-19 Education Funding Grants for Student Needs (GSN)

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) again requests an early announcement of the 2018-19 GSN and Education Program Other (EPO) funding to allow our member boards the necessary time to make responsible budgetary decisions.

With regards to Labour Relations and Collective Bargaining, OPSBA recommends all agreements to be fully funded, including any provision included in contract extensions. Of note, from the last round of negotiations, Boards continue to identify cost pressures related to increased sick leave costs. OPSBA also requests that the government consider funding requirements for any new legislation, regulation, or curriculum changes that affect school boards. This includes, but is not limited to potential costs associated with:

- Pressures created by the pending increase in minimum wage especially in the area of student transportation;
- Pressures as a result of Regulation 243 related to safe drinking water;
- Bill 174, Cannabis Act and the education supports for its implementation;
- Supports for the curriculum changes to the Civics and Citizenship and Career Studies courses; and,
- Curriculum changes to include a revised curriculum for all students about the contributions, histories, culture and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples.

OPSBA urges the government to continue the ongoing review of key components of the current funding model and involve consultation with all stakeholders to ensure that the model meets the current & future needs of all students in the province. OPSBA acknowledges the current consultations that are underway that include member board representation and/or OPSBA senior staff attending these stakeholder discussions:

- Tuition Agreements
- Student Transportation
- Early Years Capital funding Benchmarks
- Benefits Technical Advisory committee

In June 2017 through B memorandum 2017:B9 the government announced additional funding to strengthen rural and northern education. Boards have provided positive feedback regarding this initiative and emphasize the need for this funding to be sustained.

We finally suggest the ministry attempt to use the most up-to-date Census data if possible.

In addition to the ministry's education funding consultation guide, OPSBA would like to identify several areas of advocacy that have been expressed to us through our consultation with school boards and school authorities:

Key Areas/Funding Lines of Advocacy

Funding Line / Advocacy	Recommendation / Rationale
<p>Local Priorities Grant</p>	<p>Boards continue to stress the need for local flexibility in order to balance their operating budgets and meet local unique cost pressures and needs. Boards also emphasized that they did not support any additional enveloping of current funding in the GSN.</p> <p>OPSBA recommends that the ministry re-establish the Local Priorities Grant. This local priority funding allotment could be used to support specific local board initiatives and funding challenges.</p> <p>Board support transparency and accountability and see the re-establishment of this fund as an opportunity to engage with communities and build public confidence.</p>
<p>Special Education Grant</p>	<p>Special Education continues to be an area in which boards request more supports and resources given the complexities of student needs. This is even more significant where community services and supports are not readily available or easily accessible.</p> <p>OPSBA and its member boards continue to monitor and track the impact of the phased-in Differentiated Special Education Needs Amount (formerly High Needs Amount) to ensure adequate supports and services for all special education students. OPSBA recommends the ministry assist school boards to continue to help parents/communities understand the funding elements of special education.</p> <p>Boards indicated that Special Incidence Portion (SIP) claims are not fully funded. OPSBA recommends this be investigated by the ministry.</p> <p>It is overwhelmingly agreed that more funding needs to be directed to special education supports and programs.</p>

Children and Youth Mental Health	<p>OPSBA continues to support Ontario's 10-year Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. There needs to be a continued focus on maintaining and expanding the resources and supports to children and youth that were the primary focus of the strategy in years 1 to 3. In addition, OPSBA has and will continue to provide feedback to the consultation regarding the province's Well-Being Strategy for Education.</p> <p>OPSBA recommends the ministry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• continue to provide funding to effectively implement Mental Health Literacy supports K-12, incorporating on-going training for all staff working directly with children and youth in schools;• continue to ensure that in years 4-10 of the government's comprehensive strategy, the gains and funding for children and youth mental health are sustained and expanded as required;• maintain the increased ASSIST coaching support to continue to support all school boards with mental health leads;• provide funding support for school-wide promotion of positive social and emotional development to strengthen mental health literacy among children and youth themselves;• provide a core of sustainable funding to Kids Help Phone for children and youth mental health;• provide an increase in the number of mental health workers, registered nurses in schools and community supports for sufficient pathways to care across the province, especially in northern and remote areas; and• continue to support Working Together for Kids Mental Health in all communities in the province <p>All boards have taken Syrian refugees (and other newcomer students) into their communities. These students often arrive with very high needs that are taking a toll on existing resources. It is recommended that dedicated funding be developed outside of the special education envelope that reflects the on-going specialized needs of refugees.</p>
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School Board Administration and Governance Grant	<p>Boards continue to express concern about pressures caused by increased demands for data and information from administrative staff. There is a need to assess the sufficiency of administrative funding. On two specific matters:</p> <p>OPSBA recommends that additional funds be directed to this line to deal with the impact of the <i>Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act</i> and the frameworks that have been created. This will result in funding changes for Directors of Education and Superintendents.</p> <p>OPSBA recommends an increase in the allotment for trustee compensation. We have provided specific feedback to the government through the governance consultation.</p>
Professional Development	<p>Boards highlighted the need for funding of professional development related to new initiatives such as the early learning curriculum and grade 9 de-streaming. Professional development funding should be aligned with new initiatives.</p>
Capital Funding	<p>OPSBA recommends the ministry review the current education development charges regulation to allow boards more flexibility in terms of capital funding. OPSBA recently sent a letter to Minister of Education asking her to conduct a provincial review of Education Development Charges and to convene a working group to review the current regulation and suggest changes to make it fairer to those boards with pockets of growth and are being unfairly penalized.</p> <p>In terms of overall capital and renewal funding there are school board(s) dealing with very unique circumstances and as a result are challenged with capital and renewal costs for their aging schools. Many schools have needs that are serious and urgent impacting the ability to meet current program requirements including funding to adapt or change classrooms that are no longer relevant or being used. Action must be taken to best serve the interests of students.</p> <p>OPSBA recommends the ministry continue to consult with school boards regarding capital funding especially in view of developments with respect to community hubs.</p>

School Facility Operations and Renewal Grant	Many boards have noted their struggles with the complete elimination in top-up funding and delays caused by the current PARG review. This has caused additional pressures on school board operating budgets.
Utilities	OPSBA is concerned about cost pressures as a result of an expected increase in rates related to Ontario Power Generation (OPG) and generally increasing transmission & distribution rates.
New Generation Education	<p>OPSBA recommends the continued investment through the technology & learning fund to enrich the classroom experience for students through access to tools and software, and to strengthen professional learning for educators who will use technology and digital resources to enhance student engagement, learning and achievement. These monies and future investments will allow school boards to ensure that technology in schools is current and relevant for the various student pathways.</p> <p>Regarding broadband, OPSBA recommends the government continue the work of its Broadband Modernization Program to ensure there is equity of access for all school boards across the province.</p> <p>OPSBA recommends that action and funding be based on a well-articulated vision rather than a "pilot project" approach and that the ministry coordinate efforts with other ministries to ensure an accessible, equitable technology infrastructure across the province.</p>
French As A Second Language (FSL)	<p>OPSBA is currently leading the FSL Labour Market Partnership Project to research and provide workable solutions for FSL teacher supply and demand issues. OPSBA continues to recommend that the government undertake a comprehensive provincial review of FSL opportunities with a focus on teacher availability issues in an effort to alleviate significant school board pressures and to more accurately reflect the current reality of parent/guardian choice in a plurilingual society.</p> <p>School boards have been struggling with providing opportunities for student and parent choice for FSL options that the Ministry still categorizes as "optional." Issues relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• significant accommodation pressures causing multiple

	<p>boundary changes leading to a lack of predictability for families;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• inability to recognize French Immersion as a rationale for Capital projects;• significant transportation costs not recognized for this "optional program";• a lack of sufficient numbers of qualified French teachers at both the elementary and secondary level as well as French language ECE's and support staff;• limiting Core French to only 600 hours of instruction which begins in Grade 4 rather than starting earlier in Grade 1;• maintaining English track viability in dual track schools; and• relocating English track students out of neighbourhood schools to accommodate French immersion <p>These issues are leading school boards to make decisions that limit access to the programs that parents want for their children and creating unnecessary tension between parents and school boards. This is leading to solutions that no one wants, (e.g. caps, lotteries, changes to the percentage of instructional time for French Immersion classes), but have become necessary for the benefit of all students and their families.</p>
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The 2018-19 Education Funding Engagement Guide / Grants for Student Needs (GSN) Consultation

This year's Ministry of Education consultation guide included a focus on:

1. Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG)
2. Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline (PARG) / Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline (CPPG)
3. Early Years Capital
4. Indigenous Education
5. Accountability Measures and Technical Updates (New Teacher Induction Program, Board Leads, EPOs, Efficiencies and Reinvestments)

For each of these main discussion items, we offer the following commentary:

1) Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG)

The data used to generate LOG is from 2006 and is significantly outdated. Funding calculations for this grant are based on that data which does not provide a true reflection of the current local demographics that drive board decision-making. Schools boards know their local context, community needs and programs and they require the flexibility to make those spending decisions in the best interest of their students.

Until more current census data is available, boards need even greater ability to ensure students get what school boards know is required to support student needs locally. There are many ways in which funding can be effectively deployed to support student learning and achievement. How the funding should be allocated should be left up to the school boards.

School boards will always advocate for decision-making flexibility on how funds are allocated in support of student's needs

2) Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline (PARG) / Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline (CPPG)

We have concerns with the extension of any of the minimum mandated PAR timelines beyond the current five months. Eliminating the option to complete a modified PAR process impedes a board's flexibility as there can be circumstances where an expedited decision is required to address local issues. There are also concerns with extending the timeframe to submit an administrative review from 30 to 60 calendar days. This, along with extending the timeframe for the minimum PAR process, could make it difficult to complete a PAR within a single school year. We would expect local boards to be given the flexibility to identify the appropriate local requirements for a modified process as the factors being considered vary by board and geographical region.

We support a revised PARG that clearly defines roles for our municipal and community partners. Our members see them as a key source in information gathering for any report. Building the background for planning must include consultation with municipalities and community partners. We are strongly in support of a broader role for democratically elected trustees throughout the PAR process but we are seeking clarification as to what this will mean in practice.

We support clearly defined communications requirements with community partners, particularly with regards to municipal staff and elected officials. We also request that municipalities are required to consult with school boards in their planning decisions and that education be provided to municipal representatives on the mandated process for PARs.

With regards to the CPPG, we are fully in support of better integrated local planning processes, provided there is an expectation or mandate for more meaningful consultation meetings between school boards and municipalities (including staff and elected officials). Consistency between the PARG and CPPG must be ensured, particularly where they overlap in terms of planning processes and communication with municipalities.

3) Early Years Capital

We suggest the ministry use an updated and more suitable benchmark for early years capital instead of the FDK benchmark that supports an average of 26 students in that particular age room classroom. The requirements for a child care room are quite different to deliver for a quality learning space than FDK. This includes different plumbing, electrical, appliances, furniture, parking and drop off areas.

We are aware of the current work being done by the Ministry of Education's Reference Group on Early Years Accommodation Costs. OPSBA surveyed member boards a few years ago about accommodation costs and there were varying responses as to what should be included. Currently under the *Education Act*, board must operate on a cost-recovery basis which typically includes heat, lighting and custodial expenses. However, with child care now governed under the Ministry of Education, many question the need for confusing transfer payment costs and process for paying/using these spaces. The funding and use of space in schools needs to be streamlined. We recognize there is variation in the range of fees currently charged to third party partners and boards would welcome a more consistent approach to this issue.

As a member of the Minister's Early Years and Child Care Advisory Committee, we are also aware of the appointment of Dr. Gordon Cleveland, who is undertaking an Affordability Study with a final report due this winter. Feedback to date indicates that the government needs to provide additional funding to lower current parent fees and also improve subsidy access.

4) Indigenous Education

In 2017-18, the ministry moved to envelope all of the Per Pupil Amount (PPA) Allocation of the Indigenous Education Grant to ensure this funding is used to support programs and initiatives aimed at improving Indigenous student achievement.

Boards continue to be required to spend at least \$84,083.77 on a dedicated Indigenous Education Lead (Lead). Any remaining funds in the PPA must be used to support the implementation of the Ontario First Nation Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework (Framework) through the Board Action Plan on Indigenous Education.

Boards have indicated that class size funding benchmarks should be lower than the current regulated class sizes. Funding benchmarks present a challenge to providing Native Language program (number of students needed to fund a teacher/program) and the hiring of Native Language teachers.

5) **Accountability Measures and Technical Updates**

Eligibility for the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) should be aligned with the timeframe resulting from Regulation 274 Hiring Practices. As well boards should have the flexibility to support teachers outside NTIP's current mandatory eligibility.

All "Leads" are important positions that should be continued and we recommend funding for an additional Lead (or 2) role, where a board has the flexibility to identify a specific local need. It should have the same parameters and expectations/accountability as the other lead positions but directed to help support a local need. We note that the equity and inclusion lead position is not listed, yet many boards have created them in many different forms and levels in a board.

There is an incredible amount of statistical reporting required of school boards by the ministry to account for how funding is spent. OPSBA suggests that efficiencies would be achieved with greater use of business intelligence tools and the Ministry should consider supporting an initiative in this area.

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) represents public district school boards and public school authorities across Ontario. Together our members serve the educational needs of almost 70% of Ontario's elementary and secondary students. The Association advocates on behalf of the best interests and needs of the public school system 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 affiliation.