



**ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION**

Leading Education's Advocates

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February 9, 2018

To: Debbie Thompson
Director, Indigenous Education and Well-Being Division - Safe and Healthy Schools Branch
Ministry of Education

Email: debbie.thompson@ontario.ca

Dear Ms. Thompson,

First, thank you very much for receiving our feedback past the posting deadline. This is very much appreciated as it allowed our two work teams to discuss Bill 193, Rowan's Law (Concussion Safety) and the regulatory registry questions during our recent Public Education Symposium. These two work teams, Policy Development and Education Program, are composed of trustee representatives from across the province, including members of our Indigenous Trustees' Council.

It should be noted that the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) has been following the concussion dialogue for many years, beginning in 2012 with the introduction of concussion legislation that instead eventually led to the 2014 release of PPM 158 – School Board Policies on Concussions. OPSBA did provide feedback to the drafting of the PPM, which led to many discussions among our senior staff and member boards about our role in the education of brain injuries and concussions. We have held professional development sessions on this topic and many boards have hosted their own conferences. PPM 158, which required boards to have policies, allowed us all to continue the work of raising awareness about concussion prevention, identification and management and outline expectations for school boards.

We have shared information about Bill 193's proposed requirements and we are aware of one board that has passed a motion for its support. While we will have the opportunity to further comment on the bill should it move to Standing Committee, we offer preliminary comments at this time in addition to the three questions posed on the regulatory registry.

An overarching comment expressed by trustees is that all teachers, coaches, administrators and other staff need to be provided with regular training and that this must be fully supported by annual government funding.

Please find below our responses to the question on the regulatory registry posting. With regards to the proposed requirements of Bill 193 Rowan's Law (Concussion Safety), we have compiled our preliminary feedback in the accompanying document.

Rowan's Law (Concussion Safety) Regulatory Questions:

Question 1: There is a significant body of research confirming the harmful long-term effects of undetected concussions, as well as those that are not managed properly. If passed, Bill 193 is intended to increase concussion safety of athletes, including students, in amateur competitive sport and in schools. Do you have any comments about potential impacts of the draft framework legislation on concussion safety for athletes in sport and schools?

OPSBA Response:

- We suggest a consistent approach for all stakeholders. This should include common definitions, process for diagnosis, return to learn and return to play policies and protocols.
- To ensure the safety of our students, there will be a need for regular training for all relevant stakeholders.
- This may require the need to have more health professionals onsite during games (rugby, hockey and football for example). Currently many leagues require first aid attendants to be on site. This would come at a cost.
- OPSBA would monitor the issue to determine future advocacy action such as the need for health practitioners in our schools. This would help to address a number of serious issues within our schools including prevalent medical conditions, and more recently, the addition of Naloxone kits.

Question 2. Should the proposed legislation pass in the Legislature, how would you ensure that all implicated individuals in your organization meet the mandatory elements of the Bill?

OPSBA Response:

- OPSBA would continue to share all relevant information with our member boards including – all trustees, Directors of Education, Senior Human Resources staff, Senior Business Officials, Program Superintendents and Communications Officers. Information would be sent directly and posted on our website.
- OPSBA would also consider this a future Professional Development (PD) topic.
- OPSBA would work with our federation partners to ensure front line employees receive professional development, training and support. This could include annual training for all coaches (and others) involved.

Question 3. What types of government tools/supports would be most helpful for organizations, to ensure compliance with the legislative framework?

OPSBA Response:

- As mentioned above, we suggest the Ministry of Education provide templates and annual funding to support boards and offer regular PD for all members in a school and school board.
- We suggest the ministry also connect with our Public Health partners and OPHEA for coordinating training and resource efforts.
- It has also been recommended that there be a public awareness campaign for students and parents/guardians.

Finally, we recommend the government consider the impacts of standalone legislation and suggest a comprehensive approach to the management of multiple medical conditions within our school communities.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and we look forward to the survey that is to be sent to boards this month that is part of Dr. Charles Tatar's evaluation of PPM 158's implementation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laurie French". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Laurie French
President
Ontario Public School Boards' Association

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.

**OPSBA’s Preliminary Comments regarding the proposed requirements of
Bill 193 Rowan’s Law (Concussion Safety), 2017**

Bill Requirements	OPSBA Initial Comments and Questions
<p>An annual review of concussion awareness resources by athletes, parents/guardians of athletes under 18 years of age, coaches, and any other positions, such as officials, as prescribed by regulation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who would conduct this review at a school board or school level? • Would this person have medical training? • Would this require PD time (and release time)? • Could this include a confidential form/waiver that is signed by everyone and kept on file? • We need to partner with external community-based athletic associations, referees and officials to ensure we are all on the same page. • Some concern that this review just adds another layer of complexity on top of an already pressing agenda.
<p>Establish a removal-from-sport protocol for athletes suspected of having sustained a concussion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A consistent template for all stakeholders would be helpful. • Need to ensure that this is not only for the Physical Education teachers to monitor (some students get concussions from non-sport activities. All staff need to be aware). • Whose responsibility is it to initiate the removal from sport protocol – is it the Doctor, the School Principal, the Coach, the Parents/Guardian, the athlete? • What happens if concussion is undiagnosed? (Parents don’t know how to diagnose or don’t take child to doctor. What happens if student/parent does not tell school about diagnosis?) • How are school coaches informed if the protocol is initiated by community coaches? • There is also the question of students who participate in multiple sports outside of school. They could be concussed after participating in one of them and then that information may not always readily flow back to the school. We need to ensure good flow and communication and deal with issues of confidentiality and privacy. The onus is on the student and parent, but also on professionals outside of school boards.
<p>Establish a return-to-sport protocol for athletes who have sustained a concussion or who are suspected of having sustained a concussion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A consistent template for all stakeholders would be helpful. • What happens if a student continues to attend school, go to gym class, and play on a sports team? Who makes the final decision? • Should the parent/guardian have to sign off on their child’s participation? • Should students require a doctor’s note to return to school once officially diagnosed with a concussion?

<p>Establish a concussion code of conduct</p>	<p>Code of Conduct refers to acceptable and respectful behaviours.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does this mean exactly? • Who would create this? • Who will be included in the code of conduct? • Does OFSAA have a role in developing this code of conduct? • We should ask for a template for concussion codes of conduct. • How do we ensure inter-board sports are governed by the same protocols? • What do we do when someone doesn't follow the protocol? A code of conduct is asking for consistency in how everyone adheres to the protocol.
<p>Proclaim a Rowan's Law Day, to be held every year on the last Wednesday of September</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would this be promoted? Would there be supports for boards? • Some concern that this could create an expectation for other health-related issues and lose its importance. • Instead, perhaps this information could be made part of the grade 9 Health and Physical Education curriculum?
<p>Require the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport to prepare and publish reports on the progress made in implementing recommendations set out in the report of the Rowan's Law Advisory Committee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this to be shared with the Ministry of Education and all stakeholders?