



**ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION**

Leading Education's Advocates

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Cathy Abraham
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May 22, 2019

The Honourable Lisa Thompson
Minister of Education

RE: A Minister's Task Force on School Boards

Dear Minister,

We are writing this letter regarding the inclusion in the 2019-20 Ontario Budget for the creation of a "Minister's Task Force on School Boards." At our recent meeting of our Board of Directors, this was discussed among our members but staff were unable to provide much information. We are looking for additional details and would like to offer suggestions about the task force's composition and the timing of its consultative work.


We have been told that a task force framework will be available by the end of the 2018-19 school year and that a focus would be back-office efficiencies. With less than 6 weeks of classes, school boards are extremely busy with end of year activities and are keen to know if this task force will begin its work over the summer months or begin in the Fall. To aid the government in its ability to ensure ample participation and a comprehensive consultation, we recommend there be a sufficient time period for stakeholder engagement. We would also suggest there be multiple ways in which stakeholders could provide comments including face-to-face meetings, teleconferences, and an online feedback option. Our members include not only school boards, but school authorities, and we would also strongly recommend our Indigenous Trustees' Council and the voices of student trustees be invited to participate.

We believe the task force should include a panel of individuals, rather than one person, to ensure there are different perspectives of education expertise represented. The composition of this panel should include current and former Directors of Education, current and former trustees, current senior business officials, and representation from school board associations. The individuals must be seen as credible and fair and understand how school boards operate. Our senior staff can provide a list of suggested individuals.

Finally, although we recognize the government's commitment to finding efficiencies across all sectors, including education, school boards have, and continue to, find efficiencies that make sense locally (shared payroll, benefits, transportation, etc.). These decisions are made while advocating for stable public education funding that supports achievement and well-being for all students.

We look forward to this discussion and we will follow up with your staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cathy Abraham". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Cathy Abraham
President,
Ontario Public School Boards' Association

cc. Nancy Naylor, Deputy Minister

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association represents 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 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.

**Excerpt from the 2019-20 Ontario Budget:
Creating a Minister's Task Force on School Boards**

The government is committed to ensuring that every dollar spent in the classroom is having the greatest impact on student achievement. This involves looking at all aspects of the education system, including school board operations, while respecting the four publicly funded education systems in Ontario. The Ministry of Education will be undertaking a thorough review of how boards can conduct their operations in the most efficient manner to best serve students and parents while ensuring their long-term sustainability. This process will be kicked off by the creation of a minister's task force. The government looks forward to engaging with experts and education partners in this important conversation.