



ONTARIO PUBLIC  
SCHOOL BOARDS'  
ASSOCIATION

**Leading Education's Advocates**

**Ontario Public School Boards' Association**  
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**May 15, 2017**

**To:** Grant Crack, MPP (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell) and Chair of the Standing Committee on General Government  
Sylwia Przewdziecki, Clerk of the Standing Committee on General Government

**Re: OPSBA Submission for Bill 114, Anti-Racism Act, 2017**

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) appreciates the opportunity to provide our comments, from a school board perspective, regarding Bill 114, Anti-Racism Act, 2017. As a leading voice in the advocacy of public education, we would like to state our support for this legislation's creation of the new ministry, the Anti-Racism Directorate and its work implementing the provincial Three Year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan. OPSBA has been following this work and shared information with our members about the public community meetings held in November and December 2016. We encouraged our members – both school board staff and trustees – to attend these sessions, share information and listen to other community members.

School boards and the public education system are strong advocates and promoters for equity and inclusion. In 2014, the Ministry of Education launched its *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools* strategy that included resources for school and system leaders as well as classroom teachers. Even with the best of tools, our students and staff are constantly affected by local and worldly events that demonstrate how different ethnic and racialized groups experience racism. We know that our school communities have, or are experiencing issues about racism (including Islamophobia, anti-black racism and discrimination towards our indigenous peoples) and religious accommodation.

As defined in this proposed legislation, a school board is a "public sector organization" and as such, would be subject to possible regulations requiring the collection of "specified information, including personal information, in relation to specified programs, services and functions for the purpose of eliminating systemic racism and advancing racial equality."

Our governing legislation, the *Education Act* (section 169.1), requires that every board shall:

*"(a) promote student achievement and well-being;*

*(a.1) promote a positive school climate that is inclusive and accepting of all pupils, including pupils of any race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status or disability"*

Furthermore, under the same section as part of School Climate Surveys, it states:

*(a.2), every board shall use surveys to collect information from its pupils and staff, and parents and guardians of its pupils at least once every two years in accordance with any policies and guidelines made....”*

We see a possible fit for the extension of this data collection to be built into existing surveys that school boards distribute to their students and parents. Recently, OPSBA met with the Honourable Michael Coteau, Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism, to discuss this proposed legislation and to set up future meetings with staff to continue this conversation.

With regards to the legislation and next steps, we offer the following suggestions and comments:

- OPSBA would like to be involved in staff discussions and education sector consultations to examine the impacts of this data collection;
- We recommend including the student voice in any consultation. We have a long standing relationship with our partner student trustee association, Ontario Student Trustees' Association- l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario (OSTA-AECO);
- With regards to data collection, it must be understood that the vast majority of school boards do not have standalone research departments. Consideration must be given to other (small) boards with fewer senior staff who maintain several portfolios;
- We recommend the ministry work with school boards and their associations on a comprehensive review of what information has been or is currently being collected.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide our feedback and comments. We look forward to working with the Minister and his office on the next steps of implementation.

Sincerely,



Laurie French  
President

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.