



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

Ontario Public School Boards' Association
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Laurie French
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October 11, 2016

The Honourable Marie-France Lalonde
Minister of Government and Consumer Services
Re: Consultation - gender and sex information on government IDs and forms
information.met@ontario.ca

Dear Minister,

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) would like to take this opportunity to provide comments regarding the recent consultation on possible changes to the collection of gender and sex information on government identification and forms. This consultation was brought to our attention through the Ministry of Education as any province-wide change will have implications for our sector.

OPSBA has a long and successful history for advocating on behalf of Ontario students and families to ensure that our schools are welcoming and safe learning and work environments. We believe that the role of public education is to provide universally accessible education opportunities for all regardless of their ethnic, racial or cultural backgrounds, social or economic status, individual exceptionality, or religious preference. All students should feel valued, included and respected.

School boards are accountable for student achievement and well-being which are embedded in the work of our Association. We take this responsibility very seriously as we are committed to developing policies and sharing best practices that allow our students to follow their own path for success. Public school boards have long been champions for equity and inclusiveness. This can be seen, for example, in the creation and support for Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) and the construction of gender neutral washrooms in our schools. Many boards have their own gender inclusive policies and programs that reflect their local student and community requests and needs.

Schools, school boards and the Ministry of Education each have internal challenges that will need to be considered if any province-wide policies come into effect. From an education sector standpoint, much of the data collection for all students is assembled in the Ontario School Information System (OnSIS) which is part of the Managing Information for Student Achievement (MISA) initiative. Any change to data collection would involve information technology modifications as the collection is all web-based and collects gender information using only male/female options. School boards also collect data and this too is moving to more electronic formats. Many forms are standardized at the board level and then altered at the local school level (emergency contact, field trip, health etc.).

Beyond this, schools will have their own information-gathering mechanisms that may need to be addressed. Other sector-wide forms that will need to be reviewed include the Ontario Student Record and the Ontario Student Transcript.

OPSBA is supportive of any change that allows all students to succeed. The consultation timing came at a busy time for school boards and we would therefore request more time for further consultation within our sector in order to provide a clear picture as to what might need to be adjusted and what funding would be required. A further consultation would allow more discussion about the concept of using an “X” as a third gender identifier, the current purposes for collecting gender information as well as how any new information will be used for future policy decisions.

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

cc.

The Honorable Mitzie Hunter, Minister of Education
Nancy Matthews, Deputy Minister of Education

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.