MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Running for Election as a School Board Trustee
Information for Candidates

Election Day:
Monday, October 24, 2022
Change the Future.
Become a School Board Trustee.

A strong publicly funded education system is not only a cornerstone of democracy, it is essential for a healthy, thriving economy and caring society. The innovation, skills, values, and healthy attitudes that are fostered in our schools all across the province have a direct impact on growing our economy and making our diverse and inclusive society among the very best places in the world to live.

Talk to any trustee and you will hear about the joys and the opportunities that come with working on behalf of Ontario’s children, their families and their communities. The opportunity to lead change is especially important now, as Ontario and the world look to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been one of the great social and economic disruptors of our time with widespread impact on one of society’s most traditional institutions – school. Be part of the important decisions that will allow students to continue their learning in difficult circumstances in the future.

Visit any school and prepare to be amazed by the breadth and depth of the programs and activities that Ontario school boards have developed to guide and shape the next generation of learners. These are designed to transform our world and to promote success for all students and must take into consideration students who may be marginalized (i.e. Black, Indigenous, People of Colour, those with disabilities, and newcomers to Canada). There are math Olympiads, literacy initiatives, sports programs, art exhibitions, science fairs, robotics competitions, service projects, innovative programs for children with special needs, environmental sustainability initiatives, early learning centres, adult education, choirs and bands, entrepreneurial skateboard academies, coding classes, athletics and wellness-focused schools, outdoor education/forest schools, homework clubs and a strong safety net of support services – all designed to help students succeed to the best of their abilities.

Students need the skills, attitudes, values, and knowledge to succeed in today’s complex global context. More opportunities continue to be implemented with a focus on experiential learning programs such as cooperative education, apprenticeships, dual credit programs and Specialist High Skills Majors.

Through their role on local school boards and their involvement with provincial school board associations, trustees have the opportunity to play a broad advocacy role and influence government policy.

Ontario’s school boards have demonstrated time and again that, through the collective efforts of creative and committed trustees, they are making a difference.

Interested in becoming a school trustee?
This overview provides the basic details candidates should know to run for office and outlines the roles and responsibilities of school boards and trustees.

Key Dates — 2022 School Board Elections

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**As December 31 falls on the weekend, the deadline moves to the first day that is not a holiday.

More information can be found at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing website: www.ontario.ca/municipalelections.
School Board Trustees – Who are they? Why are they Important?

School board trustees are locally elected representatives of the public and they are community advocates for publicly funded education. They come from all walks of life and backgrounds with varying experiences and skills. Trustees are individuals who are interested in strengthening publicly funded education and finding ways to support all students.

Together, they are the members of a board of trustees, which is the governing body that oversees a local district school board in Ontario. Trustees are required to carry out their responsibilities in a manner that assists the board in fulfilling its duties under the Education Act (and its regulations), the primary governing legislation concerning education in Ontario.

A trustee’s role is to maintain a focus on student achievement and well-being and to participate in making decisions that benefit the board’s entire jurisdiction while representing the interests of their constituents. Trustees must also communicate the views and decisions of the board back to their constituents.

This is not as simple as it sounds. Ontario is incredibly diverse, and so the job of school board trustee varies widely. A trustee is responsible for identifying the needs and priorities of their community and for ensuring these are considered in the decisions that result in practical educational opportunities for students. In doing so, trustees must manage conflicting interests and values. A trustee must do this in collaboration with the other members of the school board by developing policies that work for all students, and ensuring they are implemented and monitored effectively. It is the local trustee who makes sure that the community has a direct way to express its views on vital education decisions that affect our day-to-day lives. School trustees play an indispensable role in preserving our democratic heritage.

Setting the conditions for excellence in education for every student to reach their full potential in school, and in life, is the first priority of a school board. As a leader in school board governance, trustees help to ensure that Ontario’s education system continues to adapt and transform to meet the ever-changing needs and shifting challenges of our rapidly evolving world. This requires collaborative work with key education partners at all levels of the education system.

Trustees help shape the education experience, the school environment and the future of our children, communities, and province. Locally elected school trustees put the “public” in publicly funded education. They are the connectors who bring community voices to the table and make democracy meaningful. They influence children’s experiences today and expand their opportunities for the future.

The School Trustee is a Member of the Collective Board

Only the board of trustees, not an individual trustee, has the authority to make decisions, while entrusting the day-to-day management of the board to the director of education, who is hired and accountable to the board. A school board must place the best interests of students first when making any decision.

Trustees are Responsible for Establishing Policy Direction

Policies set out the expectations about what should happen or how services are to be provided within the school board. A well-written policy describes to parents, the public, and the board’s staff what they can expect. Trustees are accountable to their electorate.

Trustees are Accountable to Their Electorate

As elected officials, trustees must balance the demands of the community with the duties required by the Ministry of Education. By law, they are required to consult with parents, students, supporters and other partners of the board on the board’s multi-year strategic plan and bring the concerns of these groups to the attention of the board.

Trustees hold Themselves Accountable for Their Conduct

In exercising their role, trustees are required to comply with the board’s Code of Conduct. This includes the expectation to act with integrity, adhere to high ethical standards and to conduct themselves in a manner that enhances public confidence in Ontario’s publicly funded education system.

Trustees play a key leadership role in setting the strategic direction for their local school board and in making sure there is local accountability for student success and well-being and use of available resources.

“The all have a role to play in reconciliation, and should all be seeking to educate ourselves about our shared history. We must learn from our past, and strive to repair relationships that have been strained for centuries, while actively seeking to improve the lives and circumstances of Indigenous people.”
Equity, Diversity, Inclusion in Education –
What’s my Role as a School Board Trustee?

Ensuring equity is a central goal of Ontario’s publicly funded education system, as set out in Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario (2014) and Ontario’s Education Equity Action Plan (2016), is a fundamental role for every elected school board trustee.

EDUCATION EQUITY

- School boards operate with a fundamental principle that every student should have equitable access and opportunity to succeed personally and academically, barrier and bias free, regardless of background, identity or personal circumstances
- While important in and of itself, equity is also necessary to realizing all other elements of our renewed vision, from achieving excellence, to promoting well-being, diverse leadership and enhancing public confidence in our education system
- Equity is a critical component of our shared commitment to the success of every student and child in Ontario.

Within the distinct mission of each of their school systems, school board trustees play a fundamental role in ensuring local Board commitments to Ontario’s Education Equity Action Plan and implementing the the Ministry of Education’s Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation and Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy aligned with The Journey Together: Ontario’s Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples (2016).

In particular, trustees must be committed to:

- Ensuring the ministry’s Indigenous Education Strategy supports learning and achievement for Indigenous students and promotes awareness about First Nation, Métis and Inuit cultures, histories, perspectives, and contributions in schools
- Working collaboratively with the ministry’s programs that support Black youth in the future, such as those outlined in Ontario’s 3-Year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan, the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan
- Building on commitments of the Anti-Racism Act (2017) and Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism, also known as Ontario’s Anti-Racism Data Standards (Standards) to ensure all 72 school boards have race-based demographic data systems in place by 2023
- Partnering with the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility on developing an education accessibility standard under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and OHRC’s Policy On Accessible Education For Students With Disabilities and issues relating to employment for people with disabilities through Ontario’s Accessibility Action Plan (2016).

What are the Time Commitments for a School Board Trustee?

Attending Board Meetings and Committee Meetings

Trustees are expected to prepare for, and participate in, all board meetings and all meetings of board committees of which they are members. A board’s meeting schedule is posted on its website and candidates should take some time to visit and view the various meetings to see when and how often they take place.

A trustee must be physically present in the meeting room of the board for at least three regular meetings of the board in each 12-month period beginning November 15. Furthermore, a trustee cannot miss three consecutive meetings unless approval is granted by the board. All boards have policies in place to allow for electronic participation in meetings if a trustee is unable to attend in person and trustees are also permitted to take parental and pregnancy leaves. As a result of the pandemic, the allowance of virtual meetings has been permitted to support public health concerns.

Board meetings are not, however, the only time commitment for trustees. To get a full picture of board-related requirements, candidates should check with their local school board.

Other Duties at the School Board

There are other obligations for school board trustees to undertake in their role as a school board member. Some of these are statutory (meaning mandated by the province) and some are not. Statutory duties include the appointment of trustees to various committees such as the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), to board-based quasi-judicial committees such as those responsible for conducting proceedings dealing with the suspension or expulsion of students, to the Audit Committee, the Supervised Alternative Learning Committee (SAL) and the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC). The board may also establish non-statutory committees or working groups as needed and these will also have trustee membership.

Attending Community Meetings as a Representative of the School Board

One of a trustee’s responsibilities is to facilitate communication between the board and community groups. Trustees may be asked to attend meetings such as school council meetings, community groups, municipal councils and municipal committees, meetings with MPPs and MPs, and other community agencies such as district health councils, library boards, parent groups, and other organizations. Trustees not only have the responsibility to attend these meetings, they must also bring back information from meetings and share it with the board.
Can Anyone be a School Board Trustee?

A person who wishes to become a school board trustee and run for election must be a resident of the school board district’s jurisdiction and meet the following requirements:

- a supporter* of the board;
- a Canadian citizen;
- at least 18 years old;
- Roman Catholic (if running for a Catholic school board);
- not legally prohibited from voting; and
- not disqualified by any legislation from holding school board office.

(**“Supporter” refers to the individual’s support for one of the four publicly funded school systems. A list of supporters for each system is kept by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation.)

Note: A candidate, if nominated, must remain qualified throughout the election and, if elected, throughout the term of office. The term of office is four years. School board candidates should confirm that they have the qualifications described here and in section 219 of the Education Act. It is the responsibility of the candidate to determine whether they are qualified to be elected to and hold office.

Note: An employee of a school board who wishes to run for trustee must take an unpaid leave of absence prior to being nominated. If elected, the employee must resign. A person may not be employed by one school board and hold office on a different school board. A clerk, treasurer, deputy clerk, or deputy treasurer of a municipality wishing to run for office on a school board must also take unpaid leave prior to being nominated and resign if elected. An employer is required to grant a leave of absence.

Helpful Experience and Knowledge

Trustee candidates do not need to have a background in education or children currently attending school. However, the following skills and experience would be assets for potential trustee candidates.

Basic Understanding of Official Meeting Procedures

Candidates should review a copy of their board’s bylaws, policies, and procedures. They could also observe board meetings to get an understanding of the meeting process or watch archived meeting recordings or read minutes posted on a board’s website.

Basic Understanding of a Trustee’s Role as Member of a Board

Under the Education Act, trustee power lies solely in membership on the corporate school board. The corporate board of trustees is legally accountable to the electorate and to the Minister of Education for the collective decisions of the board and for the delivery and quality of educational services. This means that once the board of trustees has voted, it is a trustee’s responsibility to act in a manner that upholds the board’s decision.

Acceptance to serve on a school board assumes an awareness of the legislated expectations and responsibilities conferred through legislation, provincial policy, contractual agreements or any other mechanism. Trustees must act within these parameters, and be aware of the consequences of decisions that do not respect these commitments. Anyone considering candidacy for school board membership should carefully consider these accountability relationships and responsibilities when making the important decisions to serve, or continuing to serve, on a district school board.

Orientation for School Board Trustees

At the start of the term of office, each school board provides an orientation session for trustees to acquaint them with roles, relationships and responsibilities within the board and to provide an overview of the specific environment of the school board.

Running for Election as a School Board Trustee

A newly elected school trustee will likely have a fairly steep learning curve, and must be willing to spend time becoming familiar with existing board policies and relevant legislation. Trustees should also be mindful to enter their new role with an attitude that is fair, open-minded and understanding of the distinctiveness of the school system and the importance of equity and inclusion.
“We must continue to ensure that as we move forward, we continue to support the high levels of academic performance that make Ontario students stand out. We have a remarkable record of successful outcomes for all students. On international achievement measures of literacy and science, Ontario’s students rank in the top 10 in the world.”

varies from board to board and is guided by Ontario Regulation 357/06 (Honoraria for Board Members). The honorarium is made up of an annual base amount, an amount related to the school board’s enrolment, an amount payable to the trustee for attendance at meetings, and a distance amount in the case of boards covering large areas. The chair and vice-chair of a board are entitled to additional amounts for the responsibility of their office. The honorarium amount across Ontario ranges from approximately $7,500 to $29,500.

School Boards and School Board Trustees

What is a School Board?

A district school board is a body that operates the province’s publicly funded schools. The school board is governed by its publicly elected board members (the board of trustees). Collectively, boards of trustees set the vision for the school board, develop and monitor policies, allocate resources and set the goals that lay the foundation and drive programs and operations in the school board’s jurisdiction.

Trustees can be elected to one of four different school board systems: English public, English Catholic, French public and French Catholic.

The responsibilities of school boards are set out in Ontario’s Education Act which states that every school board shall:

- Promote student achievement and well-being
- Promote the prevention of bullying
- Promote a positive school climate
- Ensure effective stewardship of the board’s resources
- Deliver effective and appropriate education programs to its pupils
- Develop and maintain policies and organizational structures that promote the board's goals and encourage pupils to pursue their educational goals
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of policies developed by the board in achieving the board’s goals and the efficiency of the implementation of those policies
- Develop a multi-year plan aimed at achieving the board’s goals
- Annually review the multi-year plan with the board’s director of education or the supervisory officer acting as the board’s director of education; and
- Monitor and evaluate the performance of the board’s director of education, or the supervisory officer acting as the board’s director of education, in meeting their duties under this Act or any policy, guideline or regulation made under this Act, including duties under the multi-year plan, and any other duties assigned by the board.

Beyond these broad areas of accountability, the Education Act also spells out duties for school board trustees that include such obligations as overseeing the effective operation of schools, setting the board’s budget, overseeing implementation of the Ministry of Education’s curriculum policies, and ensuring that appropriate staff are hired as required by schools.

Boards will also make policy decisions about such matters as pupil transportation, school libraries, continuing education, and childcare facilities on school sites.

A school board is not:

- A parliament with party divisions. A school board is a single body made up of members, i.e., trustees. A school board should uphold decisions it has collectively made.
- Interested only in the opinions of families with children. A school board must recognize that all of society has a stake in publicly funded education.
- A sub-committee of the municipality. In fact, school boards govern budgets substantially greater than those of most municipalities.
- A closed or private body. All school boards are publicly elected institutions and their meetings are open to the public subject to certain exceptions.

Board Administration

The chief executive officer of the district school board is the director of education. The director is the only employee who reports directly to the board of trustees. One of the most important leadership relationships in the school system is the one that exists between the board of trustees and the director of education. While their roles are distinct and different, they must also be complementary for the system to operate effectively. Both parties need to be cognizant of their inter-dependence, and willing to work cooperatively for the successes of the system and the students in the schools.

Organizational structures differ among boards. However, the school board’s administration, under the leadership of the director of education, manages the day-to-day functions of operating the school board. Trustees must hold the director accountable for running the school board and for making progress against goals.

School Councils

School councils comprise parents and guardians of children and other partners within each school. School councils are provincially-mandated advisory groups that provide advice to the school principal and, where appropriate, to the school board.

Effective trustees establish regular and consistent communication with the school councils in the area they represent. Through the use of email, e-newsletters, social media, websites, meetings and other public forums, trustees and school councils can remain in communication. Increasingly, trustees are using online tools to help them communicate with their constituents. Trustees who have open communication with school councils within their jurisdiction are better able to speak on their councils’ behalf at the board table.

“Our priority, which is at the heart of everything we do, is to ensure that our students in the public school system receive a rich educational experience with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values they need to succeed in life.”
As December 31 falls on the weekend, the deadline moves to the first day that is not a holiday.

As May 1 is a Sunday, May 2 might be the first date that the clerk's office is open.

For more information, visit the following links:

- the location of your municipal clerk’s office.
- 2022. Visit your municipality’s website to find
- 2 p.m. on nomination day, Friday, August 19, 2022, until
- Nomination papers may be filed in the office
- Nomination and Campaign Period Begins
- Nomination Day (Last Day to be Nominated)
- Final Day for Withdrawal of Candidacy
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Nomination

Nomination papers may be filed in the office of the municipal clerk from May 2, 2022, until 2 p.m. on nomination day, Friday, August 19, 2022. Visit your municipality’s website to find the location of your municipal clerk’s office.

For more information, visit the following links:

1. Association of Municipalities Ontario – www.amo.on.ca
2. City of Toronto (if you are in Toronto) – www.toronto.ca

Nomination Process

Candidates should contact their municipal clerk to find out if nominations can be filed electronically or in person, and for any other information about how to file their nomination papers. This could include if an agent can file nomination papers on a candidate’s behalf and which signatures are to be included, and any proof of identity and qualifications.

Candidates should also inquire about rules for campaign signage.

The nomination filing fee for the office of school trustee is $100. This fee must be paid at the time of filing the nomination. Payment to the municipality must be made by cash, certified cheque, money order or an electronic payment method specified by the clerk.

Withdrawal of Candidacy

If a candidate decides to withdraw from the election, they must notify the clerk in writing no later than 2 p.m. on nomination day (Friday, August 19, 2022), otherwise their name will remain on the ballot.

A candidate who withdraws is still required to submit a completed financial disclosure covering all financial transactions made up to the date the nomination was withdrawn. A candidate who withdraws is entitled to have their nomination fee refunded if they file their financial statement by the filing deadline.

Election Finances

All candidates are responsible for acting in accordance with the financial provisions set out in the Municipal Elections Act, 1996. This includes information about campaign contributions, spending limits, and fundraising. Candidates should become familiar with these provisions.

Detailed information can be found in the 2022 Candidates’ Guide for Ontario Municipal and School Board Elections available at www.ontario.ca/municipalelections.

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Leadership in education continues to be as critical as ever. We must always be aware of scrutiny and attention to our role as we continue to lead by example, demonstrating strength in public education governance and inspiring our students, those future leaders, to get involved in their communities and make a difference.”

The Ontario Public School Boards’ Association

The Ontario Public School Boards’ Association (OPSBA) represents 31 English public district school boards and 10 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 is seen as the credible voice of public education in Ontario and is routinely called upon by the provincial government for input and advice on legislation and the impact of government policy decisions.

Our Multi-Year Strategic Priorities

- Advocating for the Whole Child and Student Well-Being
- Advancing Reconciliation: First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education
- Supporting Trustees as Leaders in Public Education
- Advocating for Sustainable and Equitable Education Funding
- Strengthening Positive Labour Relations

More information about OPSBA is available at www.opsba.org.

You can also follow OPSBA on Twitter @OPSBA, on Instagram @OPSBA_Official and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/OPSBAOfficial.

I want to Make a Difference and run for School Board Trustee. What do I have to do?

It is important to note that a trustee’s responsibility is to advocate for decisions that will better serve the diverse needs of the board’s entire jurisdiction. School councils often naturally advocate for students in their own schools. Trustees need to balance this with the needs of all students of the board.

For more information, visit the following links:

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Keywords: Municipal Elections Act, 1996, School Board Trustee, Nomination, Campaign, Election, Finance, Leadership, Education.
The Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association

The Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA) is the provincial voice for publicly funded Catholic education representing the interests of Ontario's 29 English Catholic school boards. Collectively, Catholic school boards educate approximately 550,000 elementary and secondary students across Ontario.

An integral part of OCSTA’s mission is the management of initiatives that enhance the Catholic dimension of the school system, and they include:

- Regional meetings that provide opportunities for Catholic trustees to participate in faith formation sessions, and examine local and provincial issues in education;
- Support of pre-service and in-service religious education programs for teachers, including the OECTA/OCSTA Religious Education courses;
- As a provincial advocacy group, OCSTA monitors government activity, contributes to the decision-making process, liaises with all provincial political parties, and responds to issues affecting Catholic education at the local, provincial and even national level.

More information about OCSTA is available at www.ocsta.on.ca.

You can also follow OCSTA on Twitter @CatholicEdu, on Instagram @CatholicEdu and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/CatholicEducationInOntario.

The Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario

The Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l’Ontario (ACÉPO) represents the 4 French-language public school boards of Ontario and their 48 trustees. We are a strong voice for the advancement of French-language public education in Ontario. Our vision is for students across the province to have equitable and inclusive access to a quality French-language public education.

Ontario’s 142 French-speaking public schools offer high-quality, inclusive education. With an impressive growth rate of 81% since its creation 20 years ago, the French-language public education system has had, by far, the largest enrollment growth in the province. Last year our student population increased by 4.2%.

Our system perfectly meets the needs of a multicultural population living in a modern and democratic society, as demonstrated by the enviable academic results of our students. The success of French-language public education is all the more remarkable since only four school boards cover the whole of Ontario, with an average size of 55,000 km².

ACÉPO’s priorities are as follows:
- Recruitment and retention of qualified French-language teachers
- Remote Learning
- Growth of the French-Language Public School Network
- Democracy at the Local Level
- Skilled trade education

More information is available at www.acepo.org

The Association Franco-Ontarienne des Conseils Scolaires Catholiques

AFOCSC is the voice of Ontario’s eight French-language Catholic school boards and the Consortium Center Jules-Léger, serving the education needs and well-being of more than 78,200 Franco-Ontarian French-speaking students.

AFOCSC sees to the promotion and development of French-language Catholic education throughout Ontario. We do this through our influence with political and administrative authorities and through the presence of our trustees in all our communities. Through the analysis of issues, advocating to political leaders, publication of information, and training of our members, we support their role as leaders of the Catholic and Community Education in Ontario.

Our major challenges:
- Implement the solutions identified to reduce the shortage of French-speaking teaching and support staff.
- Re-engage students and our families following the impacts of the pandemic
- Enhancement of the Franco-Ontarian model for Online Learning
- Catch-up on maintenance and receive our fair share of capital investments

More information about AFOCSC is available at www.afocsc.org.

You can also follow AFOCSC on Twitter @afocsc, Instagram @afocsc, Facebook at www.facebook.com/afocscOntario and on our AFOCSC YouTube channel.

“School board trustees are of the community, by the community, and for the community. They bring the concerns and issues from their local communities to the board table. No other elected official deals exclusively with the education of our children and youth.”
This resource was developed by

[Logos of various organizations]

The Ontario Education Services Corporation represents:

- Ontario Public School Boards’ Association (OPSBA)
- Ontario Catholic School Trustees’ Association (OCSTA)
- Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l’Ontario (ACEPO)
- Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC)