

CONCERNS REGARDING BILL 33 AND SUPPORT FOR OHRC SUBMISSION

September 5, 2025

To: Minister of Education Paul Calandra

Dear Minister Calandra,

On behalf of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association's Black Trustees' Caucus (BTC), I am writing to express our strong support for the Ontario Human Rights Commission's (OHRC) submission regarding Bill 33 and its implications for Ontario's publicly funded schools.

As trustees, we hold a governance responsibility to safeguard the dignity, safety, and well-being of all students under the Ontario Human Rights Code. We are deeply concerned that Bill 33, in mandating School Resource Officer (SRO) programs, removes the ability of school boards to respond to the needs of their students and communities. Instead, it centralizes authority in law enforcement, contrary to the Ministry of Education's stated commitments to equity, student well-being, student achievement and inclusive education. The OHRC's [*Under Suspicion* report](#) (2017) raised similar concerns, finding that police presence in schools can lead to racial profiling, over-scrutiny of students, and inappropriate questioning. It warned that such practices have long-term negative impacts, including disengagement from school, poorer academic outcomes, and increased risk of criminalization. No matter if they were formal SRO programs or a similar program called by a different name, the impact has been documented.

Evidence from multiple jurisdictions, including Peel, Toronto and Ottawa, demonstrates that SRO programs have caused harm to Black, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQ+ and students with disabilities. Reviews consistently highlight fear, intimidation, and disengagement associated with routine police presence in schools. These harms are well-documented and cannot be ignored.

Additionally, the OHRC submission makes it clear that there is no empirical evidence to support the claim that SROs increase student safety. In fact, mandatory police presence undermines the creation of safe and inclusive learning environments. Alternatively, the OHRC and community stakeholders have consistently called for increased investment in social supports such as guidance counsellors, social workers, educational assistants and mental health professionals.

We also share the OHRC's concern that Bill 33 undermines locally developed police-school protocols that were carefully crafted in consultation with communities and informed by human rights and trauma-informed approaches. For example, Peel District School Board's decision to end its SRO program reflected the voices of Black and Indigenous families who repeatedly stated that police presence in schools caused harm and eroded their children's sense of belonging.

The BTC joins the OHRC in urging your Ministry to:

1. Pause Bill 33 and commit to an evidence-based provincial review of SRO programs, centering the lived experiences of marginalized and historically underserved students.

2. Protect school board autonomy to develop community-specific safety protocols.
3. Redirect funding to student mental health and well-being supports that directly address the root causes of disengagement and safety concerns in schools and communities.

Ontario must not move backwards by reinstating programs that research and lived experience show to be harmful. Instead, we must commit to solutions that foster inclusive, safe, and supportive school environments that uphold human rights for all students.

We respectfully request that the Ministry of Education work in partnership with Black education stakeholders, school boards, and the OHRC to ensure that Ontario's education system fulfills its obligation to provide every student with a learning environment free from discrimination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Debbie King'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large 'D' and a long, sweeping underline.

Debbie King
Chair, Black Trustees' Caucus (BTC)
Ontario Public School Boards' Association

CC: Denise Cole, Deputy Minister
Giselle Basanta, Assistant Deputy Minister
Madison Lee, Director of Stakeholder Relations and Tour, Minister's Office
Kathleen Woodcock, OPSBA President
Stephanie Donaldson, OPSBA Executive Director
Michelle Rodney-Bartalos, OPSBA Director of Education Equity