
October 1, 2025

Dear Progressive Conservative Caucus Member,

As the Ontario Legislature prepares to resume sitting, I am writing to you today as the President of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA).

We are Ontario's expert voice on English public education, representing English public district school boards and public school authorities that together serve nearly 1.4 million public elementary and secondary students. Our work is centered on student achievement and well-being, and we strive to **work constructively with government to strengthen local decision-making and accountability.**

I want to share a concern that has recently drawn the attention of the education sector, the public, the media, and your colleagues at Queen's Park. You may also have already heard from your local trustee(s). **Minister of Education Paul Calandra's recent comments about potentially eliminating elected trustees** raise significant concerns about the future of local democratic representation in Ontario.

We believe there are ways to make school boards more efficient and responsive but eliminating trustees would weaken accountability and reduce the local decision-making Ontarians expect. **In fact, multiple recent public opinion polls have shown that Ontarians prefer to have elected school board trustees over any other model of governance.** These same polls show that other models such as appointed trustees, centralized control in the Ministry of Education, or the replacement of trustees with parent council representatives are not preferred.

As part of the public debate on this issue, some have questioned how many people actually call their trustee. The [Ontario Autism Coalition's](#) (OAC) 2025 special education survey found that nearly 30% of respondents had contacted their trustee for help at least once. As the OAC concluded: "If that's true for all special needs students, that's more than 100,000 calls. Trustees are needed." This demonstrates the practical and ongoing role trustees play in responding directly to the concerns of parents, and particularly those with very complex needs.

Local democracy has long been a cornerstone of Ontario's public education system. Trustees are the bridge between parents, students, and their school boards. If trustees were removed, parents across Ontario—especially in **rural and remote communities**—would lose their direct democratic voice in education. Decisions could be made far away from local communities, **without local input and fewer opportunities for families to shape the system their children rely on.**

The minister has referred to the current school board governance model as “outdated.” Respectfully, I could not disagree more; Democracy is not outdated. It can at times be messy, but it is a Canadian value that has, for generations, proven to be the best way to ensure that our public institutions remain directly accountable to the people they serve. In fact, voter turnout for the 2022 municipal and school board elections was around 36%, only slightly below the last provincial elections at 45% (2025) and 42% (2022).

In recent years, many Progressive Conservative MPPs have taken part in *Take Your MPP to School Week*, during which they have had the opportunity to visit local schools with an elected school board trustee and hardworking school board staff. Many others have longstanding productive and respectful relationships with their local trustees. In considering your position on the important issue of school board governance I hope that you recall the knowledge, experience, and perspectives that you have gained in your interactions with trustees.

In the weeks ahead, as the government considers the future of trustee governance, we welcome the opportunity to engage with you, the Minister, and your staff.

Finally, we are fast approaching the next round of collective bargaining. Strong and stable governance is key to ensuring negotiations run smoothly and remain focused on student success and well-being.

We respectfully ask that you raise these concerns with the Minister of Education and the Premier. OPSBA stands ready to work together on solutions that improve efficiency and strengthen accountability while preserving the vital role of local democratic representation.

We look forward to continuing this important conversation and to working with you to protect and strengthen public education in Ontario.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Kathleen Woodcock', is positioned below the 'Sincerely,' text.

Kathleen Woodcock
President, Ontario Public School Boards' Association and Trustee, Waterloo Region District School Board

CC: School Board Chairs and OPSBA Board of Directors
Richard Hastie, Deputy Director of Social Policy, Office of the Premier
Madison Lee, Director of Stakeholder Relations, Minister of Education's Office
Darby Wheeler, Director of Policy, Minister of Education's Office