



Ontario Public School
Boards' Association

Annual Report

2024-25





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Mission, Vision, and Values



MISSION

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) advocates for public education in Ontario.

VISION

OPSBA will be public education's expert voice, promoting a high-quality system, focused on improving every student's success and well-being.

VALUES

OPSBA operates by the following guiding principles:



Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion



Truth and Reconciliation



Student Voice



Quality and Innovation



Positive Labour Relations



Environmental Stewardship, Good Governance, Accountability, Collaboration, and Integrity





It has been a remarkable first year as President of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association!

I remain deeply honoured to serve our membership and to be a voice for public education at a time of both opportunity and challenge.

This year, our work was shaped by change – both within our education system and across the broader political landscape. The changes in ministerial leadership at the Ministry of Education, with four different ministers in less than a calendar year, created a uniquely dynamic environment. Through it all, OPSBA remained steady and strong, demonstrating the critical importance of a trusted, united voice for students, families, and communities.

Listening carefully to members has been at the heart of my leadership. I have spent this year engaging with trustees across the province, learning from your experiences, your successes, and your challenges. These conversations have reaffirmed the power of local governance and the indispensable role of school boards in delivering high-quality, effective education for all students.

OPSBA's work this year reflects our enduring vision: to be public education's expert voice, focused on student success and well-being. Guided by our multi-year strategic priorities – Student Success, Equity and Well-Being; Truth and Reconciliation; Local School Board Governance; and Effective Relationships and Sustainable Resourcing – we continue to champion policies and practices that put students first.

Central to this work is the leadership and advice of our Indigenous Trustees' Council and Black Trustees' Caucus, our trustee work groups, Executive Council, and Board of Directors. Their voices, wisdom, and lived experiences are embedded in everything we do. Their leadership strengthens our collective efforts to support all students, honour diversity, and advance true equity and reconciliation within Ontario's public schools.

Leading through change demands not only perseverance but vision. As the writer Joel A. Barker reminds us, "Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world." I am proud of the way OPSBA has embraced innovation, strengthened relationships, and amplified the voices of trustees, parents, students, and communities. Our advocacy, leadership in labour relations, effective and informed professional learning, and commitment to sustainable partnerships all speak to a future where every student can thrive.

As we look ahead, the strength of OPSBA lies in our collective commitment to every student's success and every community's well-being. Thank you for your trust, your leadership, and your unwavering dedication. I am energized by what we have accomplished together – and inspired by what lies ahead.

KATHLEEN WOODCOCK
President



“Our work would not be possible without the strong local democracies that exist across Ontario.”

This year, we continued to champion local school board governance, advocating for the needs of school boards in both the provincial and federal elections. School boards are Canada’s oldest form of democracy – since 1807, voters in what is now Ontario have been electing trustees. While no institution is immune to today’s rising political polarization, school boards remain essential spaces where diverse views and perspectives can come together peacefully, and respectfully.

In these times, professional learning for trustees is more critical than ever, as our system, and indeed our country and province, faces challenges from many directions. Working with the Ontario Education Services Corporation (OESC) and our education partners, we launched updated online learning modules and webinars to support trustees in understanding and delivering on their evolving responsibilities. Our training reflects the high standards our members expect – it’s practical, accessible, and rooted in our strategic priorities.

Beyond professional development, OPSBA continued to lead across all areas of operational support. We provided expert guidance on governance practices, board operations, and labour relations. We built sustainable partnerships and advocated strongly for the resourcing needed to meet student needs. At every step, we stayed focused on strengthening the vital link between good governance and strong student outcomes.

Equity, inclusion, and reconciliation remained at the core of all our work. Every decision and resource we developed this year reflected our commitment to creating welcoming, supportive, and equitable learning environments for all students.

Internally, we have also continued to modernize and strengthen our operations – ensuring that OPSBA

remains responsive, strategic, and member-driven. Our team’s professionalism, expertise, and commitment are second to none, and I am proud of what we have accomplished together.

We continue to develop strong partnerships and, as always, work to build the broadest coalition of public education champions. By bringing together diverse voices and shared purpose, we help ensure Ontario’s students are set up for success – not just today, but for generations to come.

This has been a year of challenge, but more importantly, a year of opportunity. As we move forward, OPSBA remains firmly committed to empowering trustees, promoting good governance, and creating the conditions for every student to thrive.

To our dedicated members, thank you for your ongoing local leadership, trust, and partnership. We remain strong together and the best is yet to come.

STEPHANIE DONALDSON
Executive Director

How We Serve Our Members

Effective advocacy on issues that make a difference for students, including:

School food and
nutrition programs

Indigenous education

Capital funding

Children and youth
mental health

Special
Education

Student
transportation

Skilled trades

Northern and remote
challenges

...and much more



**Practical support
for complying with
legislative and
regulatory change**



**United and credible
voice in advocacy and
action for students**



**Effective
leadership
in collective
bargaining**



**Strategic relations with
education partners across
Ontario and Canada**



**High quality professional development opportunities
for school trustees**



**Access to financial
savings stemming from
interventions on copyright
tariffs, and natural gas and
electricity rates**



**Media relations, social
media, and other
communications support
on key issues**

The Year in Review

(Data is as of May 2025, since publication of 2023-24 Annual Report)

ONTARIO'S ENGLISH PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

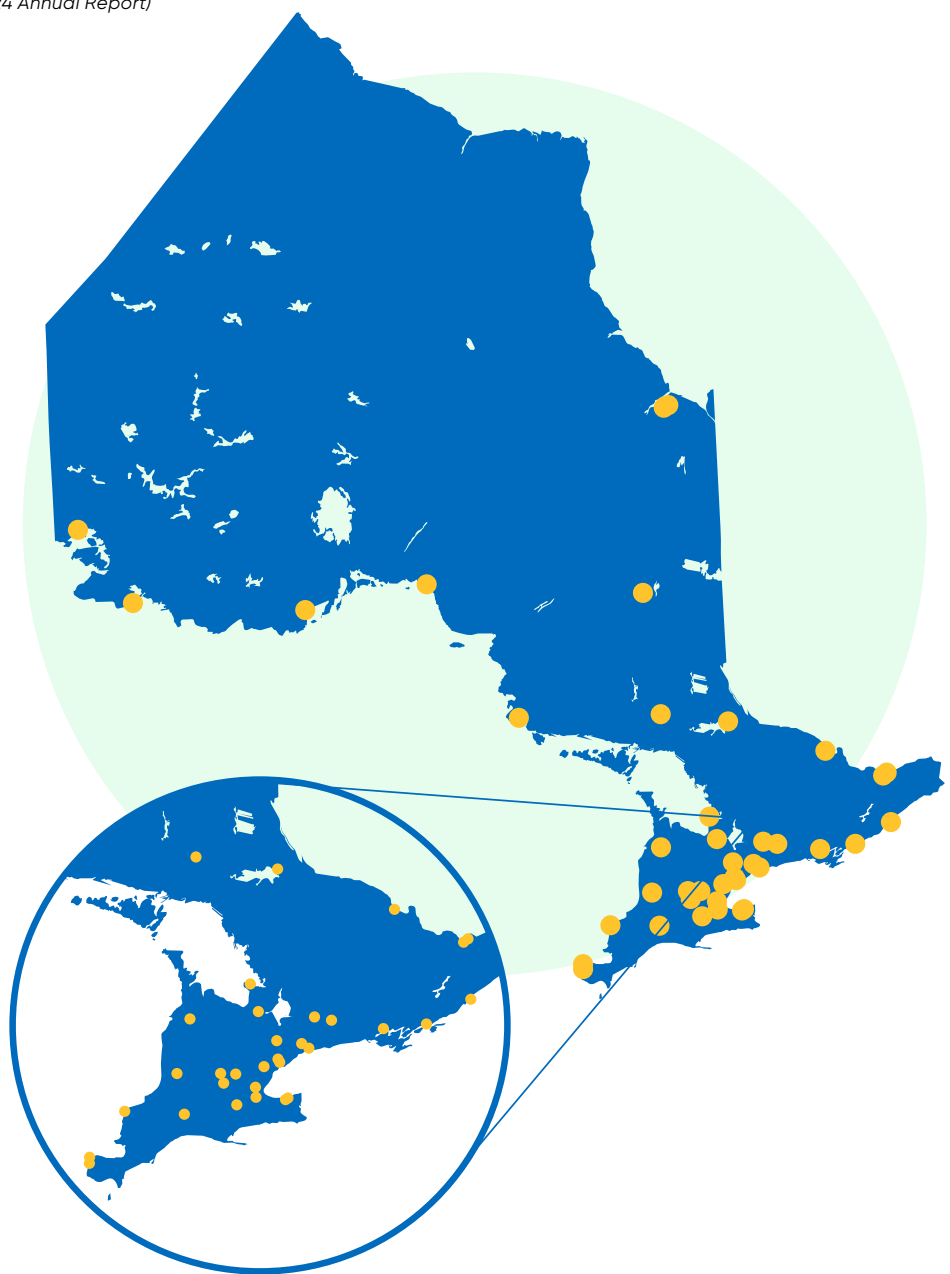
31 district
school
boards

10
school authorities and
treatment centres

317
publicly elected
trustees

37
appointed and self-
identified elected
Indigenous trustees

27
appointed school
authority and treatment
centre trustees



OPSBA

14

Executive
Council
members

49

Board of
Directors
members

14

school boards
represented
on BTC

5

Regions

25

Work Team
members

29

ITC trustee
members

OUR WORK



257

attendees at the 2024 CSBA
Congress and National Trustee
Gathering on Indigenous Education
(hosted by OPSBA)

145

attendees at the Education
Labour Relations and Human
Resources Symposium

211

attendees at the Public
Education Symposium



7

written submissions
to government

8

free webinars offered
to trustees
(4 in partnership with OESC)



13

Board of
Directors and
Executive
Council
Meetings

5

Indigenous
Trustees' Council
Meetings

5

Black Trustees'
Caucus
Meetings

15

Regional
Meetings

8

Work Group
meetings

OPSBA's

Multi-Year Strategic Priorities



Guided by the Association's Mission, Vision, and Values, OPSBA's advocacy and support for school boards focuses on the following multi-year strategic priorities:

Student Success, Equity, and Well-Being

OPSBA promotes and advances high-quality, equitable, and inclusive learning environments to support student success and well-being.

Truth and Reconciliation

OPSBA develops and strengthens relationships to facilitate access to programs, resources, and supports for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students that reflect the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

Local School Board Governance

OPSBA supports the role and leadership of local, democratically elected school boards in Ontario's English public education system.

Effective Relationships and Sustainable Resourcing

OPSBA works with members, partners, the government, and federations/unions to ensure that fiscal and human resources match school board needs and priorities.

The following pages describe the actions OPSBA has taken in the 2024-25 school year to support the multi-year strategic priorities.

Student Success, Equity, and Well-Being





OPSBA Work Groups

OPSBA's Work Groups have a significant role in advancing the Association's identified priorities by providing feedback and responding to education issues and consultations.

Several external guest speakers attended work group meetings this year, indicative of the Association's broad stakeholder connections and relationships in the sector.

Guests included:

David Arbuckle, Executive Director, AMCTO

Michelle Arbuckle, Executive Director, Ontario Library Association

Giselle Basanta, Assistant Deputy Minister, Education Equity and Governance Secretariat (EEGS) and Chief Equity Officer

Dr. Shelly Bolotin, Director of the Centre for Vaccine Preventable Diseases, University of Toronto

Vicki Cochrane, Family Partnership Program Manager, Children's Mental Health Ontario

Alana Del Greco, Manager – Policy and Government Relations, AMCTO

Sanjay Dhebar, Chair, EQAO

Nicole Dupuis, ZRH Consulting, Ontario Coalition for Child and Youth Mental Health

Gillian Gray, School Mental Health Ontario, Parent/Caregiver Engagement Area Lead

Sarah Keyes, Provincial Lead, Ontario Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food

Dan Koenig, CEO, EQAO

Lily Kwok, Research and Advocacy Officer, Ontario Library Association

Mithilen Mathipalan, Co-ordinator of Social Action, Ontario Co-ordinator, Campaign 2000, Family Service Toronto

Tia Nootchtai, Chair, OSTA-AECO's Indigenous Student Trustees' Council

Jon Proctor, Executive Director, Ontario eLearning Consortium

Devraj Ray, Executive Assistant to Giselle Basanta

Dr. Michelle Science, Infectious Disease Physician, The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids)

Paul Shipway, AMCTO President and General Manager of Strategic Initiatives & Innovation

Mishaal Surti, Director, Curriculum, Assessment and Student Success Policy Branch, Ministry of Education

Dr. Sarah Wilson, Public Health Physician, Public Health Ontario

Two valuable contributors continue to be **David Wright**, Associate Director, Corporate Services, Durham District School Board, who provides support and guidance with regular education finance updates, and **Sheila MacKinnon** of Shibley Righton LLP, who provides valuable legal counsel.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORK GROUP

The Policy Development Work Group (PDWG) was regularly engaged and involved throughout this school year with continued implementation support for regulations under Bill 98, the *Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act*. Trustees continue to represent their regions and groups with professionalism and expertise, providing high-quality, thoughtful, and authentic feedback based on their local experience.

The focus of the work and discussions supported the Association's priorities of Student Success, Equity, and Well-Being; Local School Board Governance; and Effective Relationships and Sustainable Resourcing.

Bill 98, The Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act Resources

The PDWG contributed significant input into resources supporting Bill 98 regulations. Several materials were created for all member boards, including:

- Code of Conduct Policy Template
- Code of Conduct Enforcement Procedure
- Integrity Commissioner Overview
- Electronic Meetings and Meeting Attendance Policy Template
- Electronic Meetings and Meeting Attendance Good Governance Practices



Education Funding

The work group supported the Association’s submission regarding 2025–26 Core Education Funding and the Ministry of Education Funding Engagement Guide. Our submission entitled, *Healthy Schools, Thriving Communities*, was shared with the minister’s office, critics, and other education stakeholders. This document also served as the basis for the Association’s submission to the government’s pre-budget consultations.

Local Governance

Work group members were part of the content review and updating of materials for Local Government Week 2024. Trustees were also part of the consultation for a resource for member boards regarding Indigenous Trustee and Indigenous Student Trustee Positions.

Student Nutrition Programs

Much time has been devoted to advocating for and supporting the implementation of the National School Food Program. The federal-provincial Ontario agreement was announced on November 22, 2024. OPSBA is an endorser of the Coalition for Healthy School Food and works with the provincial chapter, which is administered by Sustain Ontario. Trustees have been active in providing local information as well as taking part in a Federal Student Nutrition Survey and the Coalition’s Ontario Chapter visioning sessions.

Other topics of discussion and input included:

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)
- Artificial Intelligence
- Director of Education Performance Appraisal
- Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines

Areas for ongoing consideration

The work group will continue its support on implementation issues related to Bill 98, the *Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act*, including the use of Integrity Commissioners. Other areas of continued advocacy will include local governance and a review of resources in preparation for the 2026 Municipal and School Board Elections. OPSBA will continue to work with stakeholders including the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO), CIVIX, Equal Voice, and other groups that support local governance. Another area of focus for the year ahead will be monitoring the implementation of the provincial agreement of the National School Food Policy.

WORK GROUP MEMBERS (2024–25)

- Donna Edwards,**
Durham, Central East
- Shelley Laskin,**
Toronto, Central East (Chair)
- Kate Baggott,**
Niagara, Central West
- Karla Bailey,**
Peel, Central West
- Amanda Robertson,**
Hastings and Prince Edward, Eastern
- Michel LaBonté,**
Upper Canada, Eastern
- Jennifer Sarlo,**
Algoma, Northern (E)
- Pat Johansen,**
Lakehead, Northern (W)
- Julia Burgess,**
Greater Essex County, Western
- Robert Hunking,**
Avon Maitland, Western (Vice–Chair)
- Howard Archibald,**
Ontario North East, Indigenous Trustees’ Council Representative
- Kelly Miller,**
Durham, Black Trustees’ Caucus Representative

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL LIAISON

- Kathryn Pierroz,**
First Vice–President,
Rainy River

ALTERNATES

- Diane Lloyd,**
Kawartha Pine Ridge, Central East
- Katherine Hauser,**
Upper Grand DSB, Central West
- Shannon Binder,**
Hastings and Prince Edward, Eastern
- Judy Kosmerly,**
Rainbow, Northern (E)
- George Saarinen,**
Lakehead, Northern (W)
- Sherri Moore,**
Thames Valley, Western
- Denise Baxter,**
Indigenous Trustees’ Council Representative
- Stephen Linton,**
Durham, Black Trustees’ Caucus Representative

EDUCATION PROGRAM WORK GROUP

Program and Curriculum Consultations

OPSBA, through the Education Program Work Group (EPWG), provided responses to the Information Gathering (Kindergarten curriculum) consultation, the Growing Success consultation regarding assessment and evaluation, the Experienced Apprenticeship Pathway consultation, and the Life Skills Consultation: Equipping Students with Practical Life Skills. In addition, the group provided input in OPSBA's submission regarding Core Education Funding.

Poverty Reduction

The EPWG received a presentation from Family Services Toronto and their report, Tackling Child Poverty: A Call for Bold Solutions that highlighted the alarming poverty rates in Ontario that are higher than before COVID, demonstrating the need for change. As a follow up, a letter was submitted to the government about the urgency of making changes as the government develops the new Poverty Reduction Strategy. There remains a need to emphasize addressing the mental health service issues and food insecurity to support the success of our children and youth.

Online Learning and the Ontario e-Learning Consortium

OPSBA has continued to engage in ongoing discussions with the Ontario e-Learning Consortium (OeLC) leadership to support their role in offering online courses to 55 member boards (28 public and 27 Catholic) representing students who reside in both urban and rural areas throughout Ontario. OPSBA has participated in the Ministry of Education Online Learning Working Group that discusses the progress made, and any challenges in, implementing online courses in wait list concerns regarding meeting the mandatory two-credit graduation requirement for students.

French as a Second Language

French as a Second Language (FSL) continues to be identified as a priority area that requires a provincial focus to address issues impacting school boards'



ability to deliver high-quality and sustainable FSL programming and instruction. OPSBA, through the EPWG, has been successful in securing ongoing annual funding from both the Governments of Ontario and Canada through 2025. This funding is to support school boards in the mobilization and implementation of evidence-based strategies and practices in the recruitment, hiring, professional support, and retention of FSL teachers and education workers.

OPSBA has created a dedicated FSL microsite – fslresources.opsba.org – which is a repository for all the research reports, evidence-based resource documents and videos that have been created and distributed to school boards since 2017. This year, OPSBA added FSL experiential learning educator and student resources to support school boards in implementing FSL STEM resources for Grades 6 to 9 that connect French language to authentic and real-world STEM activities.

Specialist High Skills Major in Education

OPSBA continues to promote two Specialist High Skill Majors (SHSM) in the Non-Profit Sector in Education stream. One stream was specifically designed for Grade 11 and 12 students in FSL programs (core, extended, and immersion) and was implemented in the 2023-24 school year. OPSBA has created many supportive resources for school boards to assist in the implementation of the new SHSM, which can be found on the OPSBA microsite for FSL-related resources.

The Ontario Coalition for Children and Youth Mental Health

OPSBA was the founding member of the Ontario Coalition for Children and Youth Mental Health in 2010. Through the EPWG, the Coalition provides ongoing advice to the Ministry of Education.

The Coalition position paper [Let's put our heads together](#) was released in November 2022 and continues to be quoted and referenced in terms of influencing new ministry initiatives. It was intended to summarize the current research on children and youth mental health and addictions, and identified goals with rationale for action, along with evidence-informed recommendations. The recommendations are aligned with [Right time, Right Care: Strengthening Ontario's mental health and addictions system of care for children and young people](#) (School and Community System of Care Collaborative, 2022). The recent addition of a Collaborative Health and Education Provincial Coordination Table, which has both OPSBA and Coalition representation, was a specific recommendation from the Coalition position paper.

The Coalition engaged in a project, funded by the Ministry of Education, to gather information from parents/caregivers with the goal of supporting student mental health. Working with partners on the Coalition, focus groups and a survey were used to gather feedback about the needs and kinds of resources that would best help. The data gathered informed the work of both Children's Mental Health Ontario and the work of School Mental Health Ontario in the creation of information and numerous resources for parents/caregivers that can be found on [By Your Side](#) and [Family Care Centre](#). These resources were also evaluated by parents and caregivers and have been communicated broadly to Coalition partners including community agencies and school boards. This year long project represents a collaborative effort to produce resources for both Tier 1 and 2 (education) as well as Tier 3 and 4 (community-based services) in alignment with Right Time, Right Care, which focuses on a coordination of services across a system of care.

Committees

OPSBA staff contributed to the following provincial committees in 2024-25:

- EQAO Advisory Committee
- Teacher Supply and Demand Action Table Working Group
- Online Learning Working Group
- FSL Provincial Working Group
- Collaborative Health and Education Provincial Coordination Table
- PPM 128: Provincial Code of Conduct Implementation Task Force

WORK GROUP MEMBERS (2024-25)

Kelly Miller,
Durham, Central East

Debbie King,
Toronto, Central East
(Vice-Chair, also serves as Black Trustees' Caucus Representative)

Kathy McDonald,
Peel, Central West

Carol Ann Sloat,
Grand Erie, Central West

Lynn Scott,
Ottawa-Carleton, Eastern

Karen McGregor,
Limestone, Eastern

Marie Murphy-Foran,
Algoma, Northern (E)

Dave Cornish,
Keewatin-Patricia, Northern (W)

Patricia Smith,
Avon Maitland, Western

Jan Johnstone,
Bluewater, Western (Chair)

Lisa Corbiere-Addison,
Rainbow, Indigenous Trustees' Council Representative

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL LIAISON

Michelle Aarts,
Second Vice-President,
Toronto

ALTERNATES

Christine Thatcher,
Central East

Amanda Fehrman,
Hamilton-Wentworth,
Central West

Carole Dufort,
Upper Canada, Eastern

Rosemary Pochopsky,
Ontario North East,
Northern (E)

Leah Vanderwey,
Lakehead, Northern (W)

Jane Thomson,
Bluewater, Western

Roberta Northmore,
Lambton Kent, Indigenous Trustees' Council Representative

Alexis Dawson,
Toronto, Black Trustees' Caucus Representative

Submissions

Throughout the year, **Policy Development** and **Education Program** Work Group members provided direct and indirect input on the following matters:

June 6, 2024	OPSBA Response to Information Gathering (Kindergarten)
June 7, 2024	OPSBA Response to Ontario's Regulatory Registry posting for Bill 194, Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act, 2024
August 26, 2024	Proposed Modernization of the <i>Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act</i>
September 18, 2024	OPSBA Submission to the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development regarding the Experienced Apprenticeship Pathway Consultation Paper
September 23, 2024	OPSBA letter to Minister Michael Parsa regarding the National School Food Program
October 2, 2024	OPSBA Response to Ministry of Education's Life Skills Consultation: Equipping Students with Practical Life Skills
November 4, 2024	OPSBA Response to Growing Success: Consultation Response
November 12, 2024	OPSBA Submission Regarding the 2025-2026 Core Education Funding and the Ministry of Education Funding Engagement Guide
January 16, 2025	OPSBA Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs
May 14, 2025	OPSBA letter to Minister Michael Parsa regarding child and youth poverty

Black Trustees' Caucus

The **Black Trustees' Caucus** (BTC) provides a supportive and collaborative platform for publicly elected and appointed trustees, who identify as Black, to influence positive change within the Ontario public education system

Caucus members represent 14 different school boards across a diverse geographic region, and by sharing lived experiences, BTC members form a collective provincial voice. Supported by OPSBA staff, the bi-monthly BTC meetings are open to all trustees and Black student trustees who are interested in advocating for the needs of Black students. In 2024-25, led by Chair Kathy McDonald (Peel DSB) and Vice-Chair Dr. Elizabeth Sinclair (York Region DSB), the BTC continued its advocacy for systemic change, with a focus on the needs of Black students and the application of targeted universalism to benefit all students.

Strategic Alignment & Advocacy

The BTC's work is aligned with OPSBA's Multi-Year Strategic Priorities, particularly those related to equity, student success and well-being. Highlights of the BTC's efforts include:

- **Policy and Program Influence:** Representation on OPSBA's Policy and Program Work Groups and Awards Committee, contributing a more diverse lens to system-wide initiatives.
- **Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) Advocacy:** BTC's submission and collaborative meetings helped inform recommendations in the OHRC's [Dreams Delayed: Addressing Systemic Anti-Black Racism and Discrimination in Ontario's Public Education System](#) report. The Caucus supported the report's call for accountability mechanisms, data collection, expansion of the Black Graduation Coach program, and curriculum reform.

- **Ministry Engagement:** BTC held a discussion with Assistant Deputy Minister Giselle (Gigi) Basanta, Chief Equity Officer, Assistant Deputy Minister and Education Equity and Governance Secretariat, offering input on governance issues and trustee conduct processes.

Supporting Students and Communities

BTC members worked across their boards and communities to advance culturally relevant programs and student success initiatives, including:

- **Graduation Coach Program Advocacy:** Supporting the expansion of the program to more regions, as recommended in both BTC's and OHRC's advocacy.
- **Mentorship and Youth Voice:** Strengthened mentorship connections between Black trustees and Black student trustees to enhance leadership and ensure Black youth perspectives inform governance.
- **Black History Curriculum:** Promoted the inclusion of Canadian Black history in curriculum through resource sharing and engagement with the Ministry of Education.
- **Professional Development and Networking:** Participated in sessions at OPSBA's January 2025 Public Education Symposium and co-hosted networking events with key partners.

Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing

- Coordination of a joint Black Trustees' Caucus / Indigenous Trustees' Council social at the 2025 Public Education Symposium
- Contributed to consultations on OPSBA's strategic priorities and professional learning plan.

Access to Resources

Members facilitated awareness of local community supports as well as the Student and Family Advocate (SFA) program. The Caucus continues to advocate for the expansion of this vital initiative to address barriers experienced by Black families in navigating school systems.

Looking Ahead

In 2025-26, BTC will continue to align its efforts with OPSBA's priorities while advancing recommendations from the Dreams Delayed report. Emphasis will remain on accountability, culturally responsive education, and system-wide collaboration to support Black student achievement and well-being.



Advancing Accessibility

OPSBA continues to prioritize accessibility as an essential element of student success, equity, inclusion, and well-being.

In 2024-25, efforts focused on strengthening partnerships with accessibility advocates and stakeholders, fostering dialogue across work groups and aligning practices with Ontario's human rights and AODA commitments.

Key actions and insights include:

- **Stakeholder Engagement and Feedback:** Ongoing consultations with trustees, board staff, and community partners have underscored the interconnected nature of accessibility, equity, and inclusion. These engagements build on OPSBA's 2023 AODA review and guide future advocacy and planning.
- **Consultations on AODA Compliance:** A survey of school boards revealed strong commitment to improving accessibility through structured policy reviews, stakeholder engagement and professional development. Boards are leveraging existing structures like Special Education Advisory Committees, Parent Involvement Committees, and Accessibility Committees to support ongoing consultation and input.
- **Best Practices and Challenges:**
 - Boards are increasingly incorporating accessibility into broader equity frameworks.
 - Leading practices include targeted professional learning.
 - Transition supports for students with disabilities are expanding, including fairs and dedicated services.
 - Gaps persist in direct consultation with students and families as well as in consistency and responsiveness across regions.
- **Data and Monitoring:** Boards are using tools such as surveys, student service portals, and Multi-Year Accessibility Plans to track progress and identify needs.
- **Identified Needs:** Boards continue to call for enhanced support from the Ministry of Education, dedicated funding, and system-wide standards to address persistent accessibility gaps and ensure sustainable improvements.

Current data will help support the development of a future position paper, further anchoring accessibility within the Association's strategic priorities and advocacy.

2SLGBTQIA+ Affinity Space: Advancing Inclusion and Allyship

In 2024-25 OPSBA launched its first 2SLGBTQIA+ Affinity Space for attendees of the Public Education Symposium and the Annual Meeting, creating a dedicated, affirming environment for identity-based dialogue, collaboration, and advocacy.

The initiative received strong engagement and focused on fostering inclusive and supportive environments across OPSBA.

Key highlights included:

- **Allyship Training:** Delivered in partnership with OPSBA's Executive Council, the training emphasized the importance of intentional structures to support equity, safety, and belonging for 2SLGBTQIA+ trustees and staff.
- **Advocacy and Curriculum:** Participants advocated for integrating 2SLGBTQIA+ history into curriculum, recognizing its intersectionality with broader historical narratives and equity frameworks.
- **Evidence-Informed Practice:** Discussions highlighted EGale Canada's research on Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs), reinforcing the broader well-being benefits of inclusive school environments for all students.
- **Organizational Role:** There was strong support for OPSBA's continued leadership in facilitating knowledge exchange and good practices among member boards.

To inform ongoing development, a 2SLGBTQIA+ Affinity Space Survey was distributed. The survey explored experiences of inclusion, psychological safety and valued elements such as community-building and facilitation. Insights will inform future affinity space design and OPSBA's broader strategies to support equity and well-being for stakeholders.



Truth and Reconciliation



Indigenous Trustees' Council

The Indigenous Trustees' Council (ITC) of OPSBA is composed of First Nations trustees appointed to school boards, and other trustees who are Indigenous but elected through the Municipal and School Board electoral process.

The ITC engages in a range of discussions and initiatives to support and advocate for the education of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students, and to ensure that all students are educated about the histories, cultures, and languages of Indigenous peoples.

The ITC meets regularly to guide OPSBA in advancing its strategic priority of Truth and Reconciliation and regularly supports operational activities of the organization. The ITC brings emerging issues and priorities from local boards to the Board of Directors to ensure that Indigenous education advocacy is prioritized. Council meetings are supported by OPSBA staff and are open to all trustees and Indigenous student trustees who are interested in advocating for Indigenous education.

Throughout 2024-2025, the ITC continued to be led by the strong leadership of Algoma DSB Indigenous Trustee Elaine Johnston in the role of ITC Chair. The ITC Chair serves as a member of the OPSBA Executive Council. Claudine Van Every-Albert, Grand Erie DSB Indigenous Trustee, continued in the role of ITC Vice-Chair.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2024-2025 INCLUDE:

1 Canadian School Boards Association Congress / National Trustees' Gathering on Indigenous Education

The ITC was a strong voice in the planning and delivery of this July 2024 event. Dr. Marie Battiste delivered a powerful keynote address as well as a special session where participants were able to continue the conversation through deeper discussion and learning. The program included the Haudenosaunee words of Thanksgiving in the opening and closing of the event, as well as morning smudges, Indigenous content focused workshops, an Indigenous marketplace and evening entertainment provided by Turtle Concepts.

2 Advancing Indigenous Languages

Indigenous language advocacy, particularly related to curriculum revision, continued to be a significant priority of the ITC. The ITC is currently exploring opportunities to further strengthen and action this work.

3 Indigenous Education Funding

Changes to how Indigenous education is funded were introduced in 2023-2024. The ITC has continued to engage with members to monitor the impacts of the funding changes. The Council also contributed significantly to OPSBA's Core Education Funding Submission.

4 Meeting with the Black Trustees' Caucus (BTC)

The ITC and BTC came together in a sharing circle at the 2025 Public Education Symposium. Attendees had the opportunity to introduce themselves to each other while also sharing stories that contributed to how each person came to be involved in the work that they currently engage in. Several shared or similar priorities and experiences came to light as a result of the engagement.

5 Indigenous Curriculum Revision

Council members endeavor to support curriculum revision processes through engagement with Ministry of Education meetings regarding ongoing and upcoming Indigenous curriculum revision updates, as well as through sharing curriculum revision call-out opportunities with their networks. Ministry of Education communications related to opportunities to participate in curriculum revision processes are regularly shared with ITC members. The Indigenous Curriculum Revision process continues to be a significant area of discussion and concern.

6 Traditional Territorial Acknowledgement

The OPSBA Traditional Territorial Acknowledgement was updated through engagement with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

7 Jordan's Principle

The ITC supported Professional Development opportunities for trustees regarding Jordan's Principle. The Chiefs of Ontario were instrumental partners in facilitating this learning by joining the Indigenous trustees at their August planning meeting, and then delivering workshops at the Public Education Symposium.

8 Development of Resource Materials

A plan for the development of resource materials for school boards to support the creation of Indigenous Trustee and Indigenous Student Trustee positions was updated and reviewed by the ITC, as well as the Policy Development Work Group.



Local School Board Governance



OPSBA conferences provide trustees and school board staff with dynamic, in-person platforms for professional learning and networking.

2024 CANADIAN SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION (CSBA) CONGRESS AND NATIONAL TRUSTEE GATHERING ON INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

OPSBA was honoured to welcome school board trustees from across Canada to the 2024 Canadian School Boards Association Congress and National Trustee Gathering on Indigenous Education. Each year, a CSBA member association hosts the event in their home province, and in 2024, it was Ontario's turn. OPSBA also held its Annual General Meeting concurrent to the conference.

The Congress and Gathering took place from July 3 to 5 at the Westin Harbour Castle in Toronto. Attendees gathered under the theme *Our Shared Tomorrow* to explore key issues in education, including Indigenous student well-being, Indigenous language revitalization, artificial intelligence, and governance. The event featured powerful keynote addresses by Dr. Marie Battiste, Dwayne Matthews, Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe, and Randell Adjei and remarks by the Honourable Edith Dumont, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario.

A wide range of workshops and a national cross-country check-in provided attendees with new knowledge, inspiring connections and fresh ideas to take back to their school boards. This event continues to be a vital opportunity for school board leaders to collaborate and shape the future of Canadian public education.



**Engaging and relevant;
the presenters chosen
were so perfect for the
times we're in.**

**Effective and
knowledgeable speakers
that enhanced my
overall learning as a
school trustee.**



2024 NORTHERN MEETING AND PROGRAM

OPSBA was pleased to welcome Northern Ontario trustees and directors in Thunder Bay on October 26 and 27 for the 2024 Northern Region Meeting and Program. Hosted at the Valhalla Hotel, the event brought together northern school boards for a weekend of professional learning, regional networking, and discussion of key northern education priorities. Keynote speaker Bryan Wilson of Côté Gold Mine opened the program with insights into modern mining in Ontario and opportunities for students in the sector. Attendees also explored innovative practices through sessions such as Lakehead DSB's strengths-focused paediatric assessment clinic and Superior-Greenstone DSB's partnerships with local First Nations. Other highlights included presentations on education funding, student transportation and experiential learning. Dr. Paul Cormier of Lakehead University closed the event with a powerful session examining the role of trustees in supporting Indigenous language immersion and revitalization.



2025 PUBLIC EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM

OPSBA's 2025 Public Education Symposium (PES) brought together school board trustees and senior staff for professional development and networking with the theme *The Time is Now*. The symposium focused on strengthening governance and leadership in Ontario's public education system.

The event began with a keynote address, "Universal Education, First Nations Sovereignty, and Life in Occupied Homelands," delivered by Ovide Mercredi, Indigenous leader and former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. Attendees then participated in a series of 16 impactful workshops on topics such as the Ontario Human Rights Commission's Action Plan to tackle anti-Black racism in education and the growing threat of ransomware attacks on school boards.

Day two highlights included discussions on unconscious bias, the implementation of Jordan's Principle in Ontario school boards, and the new Director's Performance Appraisal process. A significant addition to PES 2025 was the 2SLGBTQIA+ Affinity Space, the first of its kind at the symposium, providing a safe and supportive environment for trustees and allies to connect and share experiences. The symposium closed with a gala dinner, where OPSBA recognized outstanding contributions to public education with an awards ceremony and a performance by students from the Toronto DSB's Runnymede Jr. and Sr. Public School.

This year's symposium provided trustees with valuable insights, tools, and opportunities to enhance their leadership and governance skills, while reinforcing OPSBA's commitment to strengthening public education and fostering inclusive communities.



I always look forward to PES and it never disappoints.

2025 EDUCATION LABOUR RELATIONS AND HUMAN RESOURCES SYMPOSIUM

On May 1 and 2, 2025, trustees, directors of education, supervisory officers and Human Resources and Labour Relations practitioners gathered to share, strategize, and learn about next and best practices and explore practical solutions to the challenges faced by Ontario school boards.

This year's theme was *Positive Workplaces: HR and Labour Relations Practices That Support Employee Wellness and Success*.

The symposium featured a keynote address by Hicks Morley's Njeri Damali Sojourner-Campbell and Scott T. Williams who spoke about the risks of artificial intelligence from a human rights perspective. The symposium also featured 15 workshops on topics such as Equity Audits, Trauma-Informed Workplace Investigations, Attendance Management, Employee Equity Data Collection and Policy, Implementing AI Safely, and Psychologically Healthy Workplaces. The symposium concluded with a chairs and directors panel discussion on the role of staff in supporting trustees in shaping the multi-year strategic plan.

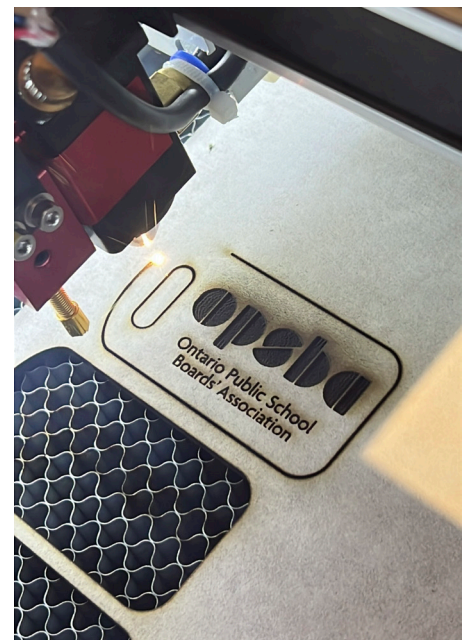




CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

REGIONAL MEETINGS

OPSBA's five regional councils – Northern, Western, Eastern, Central East, and Central West – share information related to issues and matters affecting their school boards with the Executive Council and Board of Directors. In the 2024-25 school year, the member boards of each region held virtual and in-person meetings throughout the year, including in November and April. The Northern Region continued to meet virtually.



Professional Development

Empowering Trustees through Innovative Professional Development

OPSBA is at the forefront of developing innovative professional learning opportunities that support trustees and board staff. Whether through symposia, workshops or online opportunities, our programs deliver relevant insights on emerging educational issues, helping trustees build the knowledge and skills needed for effective decision-making.

OPSBA champions excellence in governance. Our initiatives enable trustees to lead critical conversations, advocate for creative solutions, and drive improved student outcomes across Ontario.

Essential Governance 2025 – Championing Good Governance through Sector-Led Professional Development

Following the introduction of the *Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act*, OPSBA has taken a leadership role in advocating that any statutory professional development for trustees mandated by the Ministry of Education be delivered in partnership with trustee associations. Our message has been clear: professional learning for trustees must reflect the unique governance role they hold in Ontario's education system.

In early 2025, the Ontario Education Services Corporation (OESC), OPSBA's sector partner, was selected by the Ministry of Education to develop and deliver a mandatory professional development program for school board trustees and directors of education across all four systems – **Essential Governance 2025**. OPSBA's contributions to the development and delivery of this program have been extensive, ensuring it reflects the real-world responsibilities and challenges of trusteeship today.

The Essential Governance 2025 program included six self-directed online modules:

MODULE 5	Director of Education: Hiring and Performance Appraisal
MODULE 8	Understanding Conflict and Managing it Effectively
MODULE 9	Effective Community Engagement to Support Student Achievement
MODULE 13	Education Finance
MODULE 17	Trustee Code of Conduct
MODULE 19	Audit and the Role of Audit Committees

The program also included a series of four webinars on key governance priority areas:

- Effective Community Engagement to Promote Student Achievement
- Mediation and Conflict Resolution
- Financial Management and Governance
- Director of Education Performance Appraisal

OPSBA is demonstrating the impact of this ministry-funded initiative through strong participation and meaningful engagement—further reinforcing the value of trustee-led governance in Ontario's publicly funded education system.

Legislative Advocacy

OPSBA is a non-partisan association that advocates for public education regardless of which political party is in power at Queen's Park. The Association works with key decision makers and stakeholders on many advocacy initiatives to support its priorities.

OPSBA monitors legislation, regulations, and policy directions that could affect students and member boards. With the support of our Work Groups, Indigenous Trustees' Council, Black Trustees' Caucus, Executive Council, Board of Directors, senior staff provide submissions and feedback to many government consultations.

Provincial Updates – our internal sector email newsletters – are shared with all member boards on a regular basis and our advocacy efforts can be seen at all levels of government.

Municipal

OPSBA continued its strong working relationship with AMO. This is supported by the Association's Executive Director Stephanie Donaldson being a member of the Healthy Democracy Project Advisory Group and AMO's support for our [Healthy Democracy Student Leadership Award](#). This partnership between the two associations recognizes students with leadership skills and potential, who care deeply about their communities and furthering their own learning.

For Local Government Week (LGW), OPSBA worked with partners on this annual advocacy initiative that is an opportunity to raise awareness of the important civic contributions of school boards and municipalities to their communities across the province.

OPSBA coordinated the following actions:

- Fully updated its package of resources for trustees and school board communications staff, providing a new video, customizable backgrounder and a template PowerPoint presentation to be used when meeting (or meeting virtually) with grade 5 and 10 social studies and civics classes. These resources were posted on the OPSBA website and in the Members' Area. Trustees were also encouraged to share the resources with their municipal counterparts.
- Social media posts with facts about trustees and links to OPSBA resources were posted on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.
- Senior OPSBA staff visited Question Period at Queen's Park on October 21 and were introduced by the Minister of Education and welcomed by the opposition critics.
- Connected and shared resources with partners, including AMO, AMCTO, CIVIX, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Ministry of Education and the Minister of Education's Office, as well as with the opposition parties.

Trustees have also begun discussions at regional meetings regarding supports and resources for the 2026 Municipal and School Board Elections.

Provincial

The past year saw many changes in the provincial government, including a cabinet shuffle, ministerial re-assignments, and a provincial election. Last June, the Premier announced cabinet changes that saw Stephen Lecce (MPP King-Vaughan) move from education to become the Minister of Energy and Electrification. Todd Smith, the MPP for Bay of Quinte, became the new Education Minister and held that portfolio until he resigned in August 2024. Shortly thereafter, Jill Dunlop (MPP Simcoe North) was appointed and OPSBA representatives met with her just days after at the annual AMO conference. She also attended the Indigenous Trustees' Council's August strategic planning meeting. Following the February 2025 provincial election, Premier Doug Ford announced another change, with Paul Calandra, MPP Markham-Stouffville, becoming the next Minister of Education, moving over from Municipal Affairs and Housing.

The ministry also saw changes in senior leadership. Denise Cole became the new Deputy Minister of Education and Giselle Basanta became the new Assistant Deputy Minister for the Education Equity and Governance Secretariat, also holding the title of Chief Equity Officer.

The Association maintained regular contact with the other political parties and their education critics. This included Chandra Pasma (New Democratic Party Education Critic), Karen McCrimmon* (Liberal Party Education Critic) and Aislinn Clancy (Green Party Education Critic). All three critics attended OPSBA's Public Education Symposium to share their party's education platforms ahead of the provincial election.

OPSBA once again promoted its government relations advocacy initiative, Take Your MPP to School Week. In 2024, there were nearly 50 MPP visits that covered all four major parties and several independent members. Our objective continues to be raising awareness among MPPs of the role of trustees and building upon the relationships following our past Advocacy Days at Queen's Park. The 2025 Take Your MPP to School Week took place May 20 to 23 – a constituency week for Members of Provincial Parliament.

Throughout the year, OPSBA leadership and senior staff also attended several speeches, events, and conferences including (but not limited to):

- AMO Annual General Meeting
- AMO Healthy Democracy Project meetings
- DemocracyXChange 2025 Summit
- The National School Boards Association Annual Conference
- Enterprise Canada's Goodspeak Live event
- The Canadian Association of Communicators in Education's Ontario Regional Conference and National Conference
- OPSBA member board communications staff professional development day
- Throne Speech at the Ontario Legislature
- The Dais' Screenbreak Roundtable
- A meeting with the Public Health Agency of Canada, along with the Canadian School Boards Association Executive Director and President, regarding guidance for Canadians on the health impacts of social media use
- Canadian Vote Summit 2025

Federal

As a member of the Canadian School Boards Association (CSBA), OPSBA examines provincial and federal legislation and advocates for federal policy and funding that supports Canadian students. President Kathleen Woodcock and Executive Director Stephanie Donaldson represent OPSBA on the CSBA Board of Directors and participated in CSBA's October 2024 Advocacy Day in Ottawa, meeting with key Members of Parliament, Senators, and decision makers.

A focus of shared OPSBA-CSBA advocacy this year was the work to support the implementation of the National School Food Policy, Indigenous Education, and the development of resources for the April 2025 Federal Election.

**After the provincial election, John Fraser became the Liberal education critic.*

OPSBA-OSTA LIAISON COMMITTEE

The OPSBA-OSTA Liaison Committee continued its commitment to supporting student trustees and student voice. Alexandra Gauthier (DSB Ontario North East) and Shivani Vimal (Thames Valley DSB) were the lead contacts in joining OPSBA's work groups and participating in other Association advocacy initiatives. President Kathleen Woodcock delivered remarks at the OSTA-AECO Fall Conference at which she stressed the importance of student voice. OPSBA also participated in the OSTA-AECO Annual General Meeting held in May.

The Ontario Public Student Trustee Leadership Scholarship recognizes an outstanding initiative accomplished by a student trustee and its positive impact on the students in their board. The 2024-25 recipients were Dora Chen from the Near North DSB and Julianna Marcel from the DSB of Niagara.

Committee representation included trustees from across OPSBA's membership and governance levels.

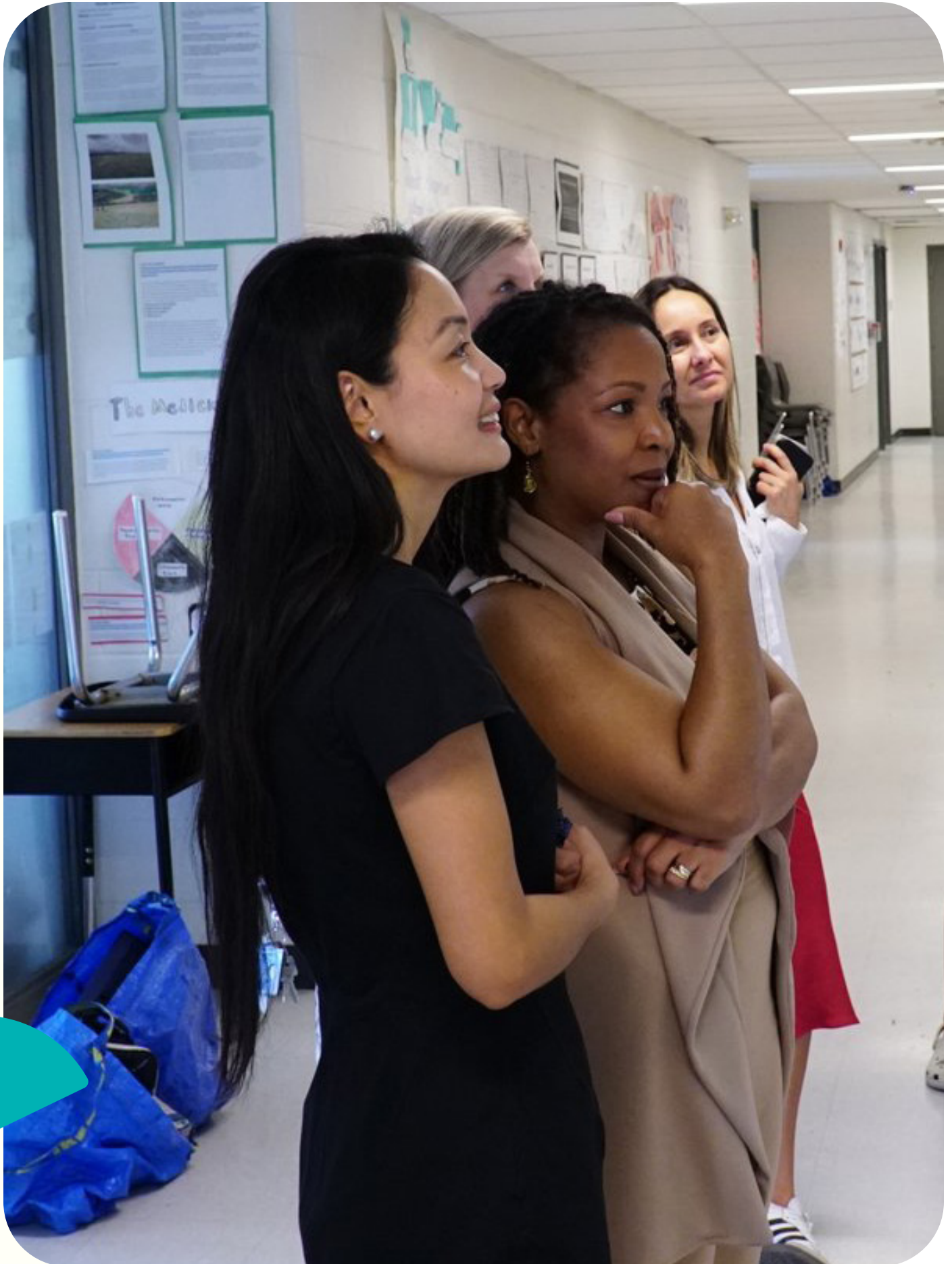
Members

- **Kathleen Woodcock**, Waterloo Region DSB, OPSBA President
- **Cathy Abraham**, Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB, Central East, OPSBA Past President
- **Howard Archibald**, DSB Ontario North East, Indigenous Trustees' Council
- **Malek Mekawi**, Greater Essex County DSB, Western*
- **Crystal Hewey**, District School Board Ontario North East, Northern
- **Margo Shuttleworth**, Halton DSB, Central West
- **Tiffany Lloyd**, Limestone DSB, Eastern
- **Deborah Williams**, Toronto DSB, Black Trustees' Caucus

*Trustee Mekawi replaced former Trustee Sarah Cipkar, Greater Essex County DSB, who resigned from her position in November 2024.



Effective Relationships and Sustainable Resourcing



Effective Relationships and Sustainable Resourcing

OPSBA works with members, partners, the government, and federations/unions to ensure that fiscal and human resources match school board needs and priorities.

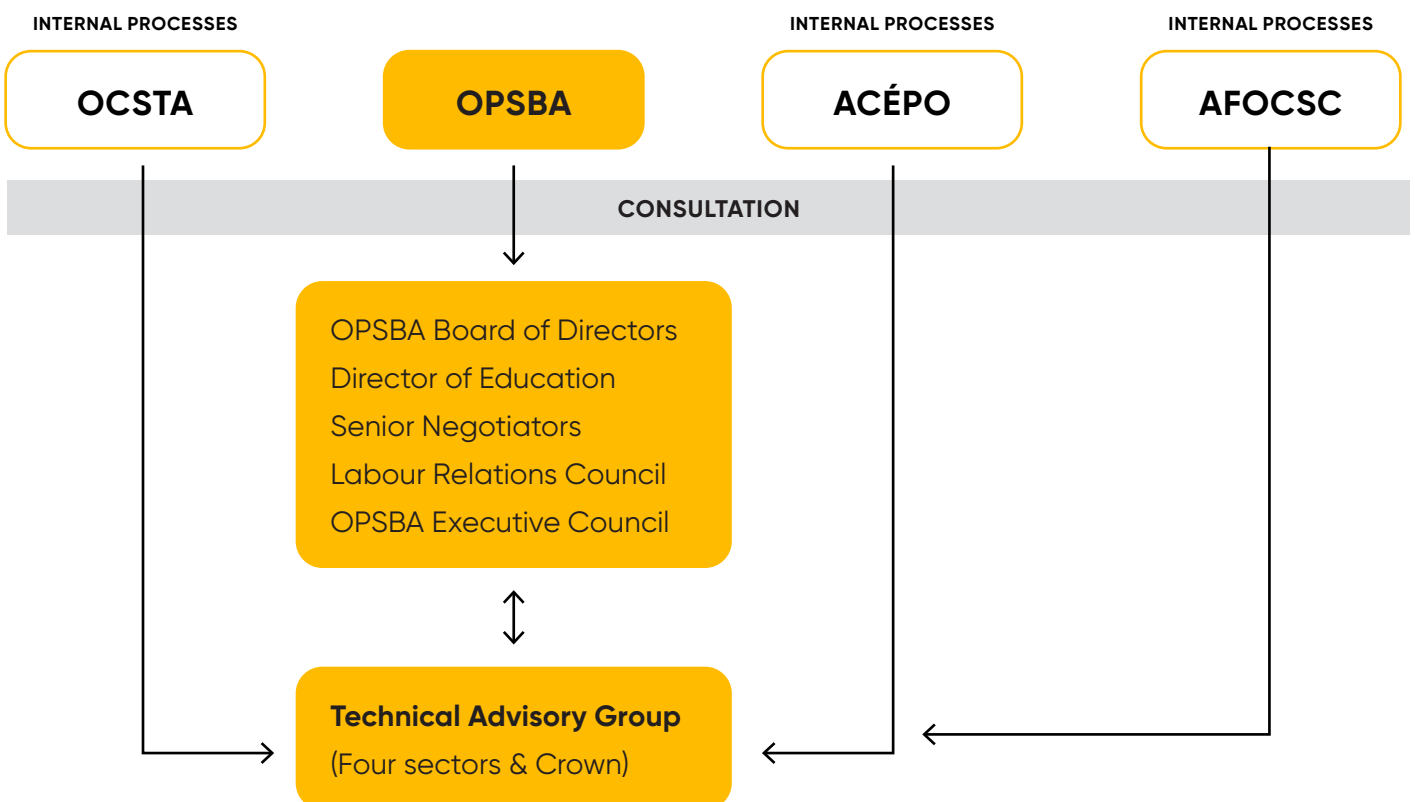
LABOUR RELATIONS

OPSBA believes that teachers and education workers deeply influence a productive learning environment for students and are supported in this role through the positive relations engendered by successfully negotiated collective agreements.

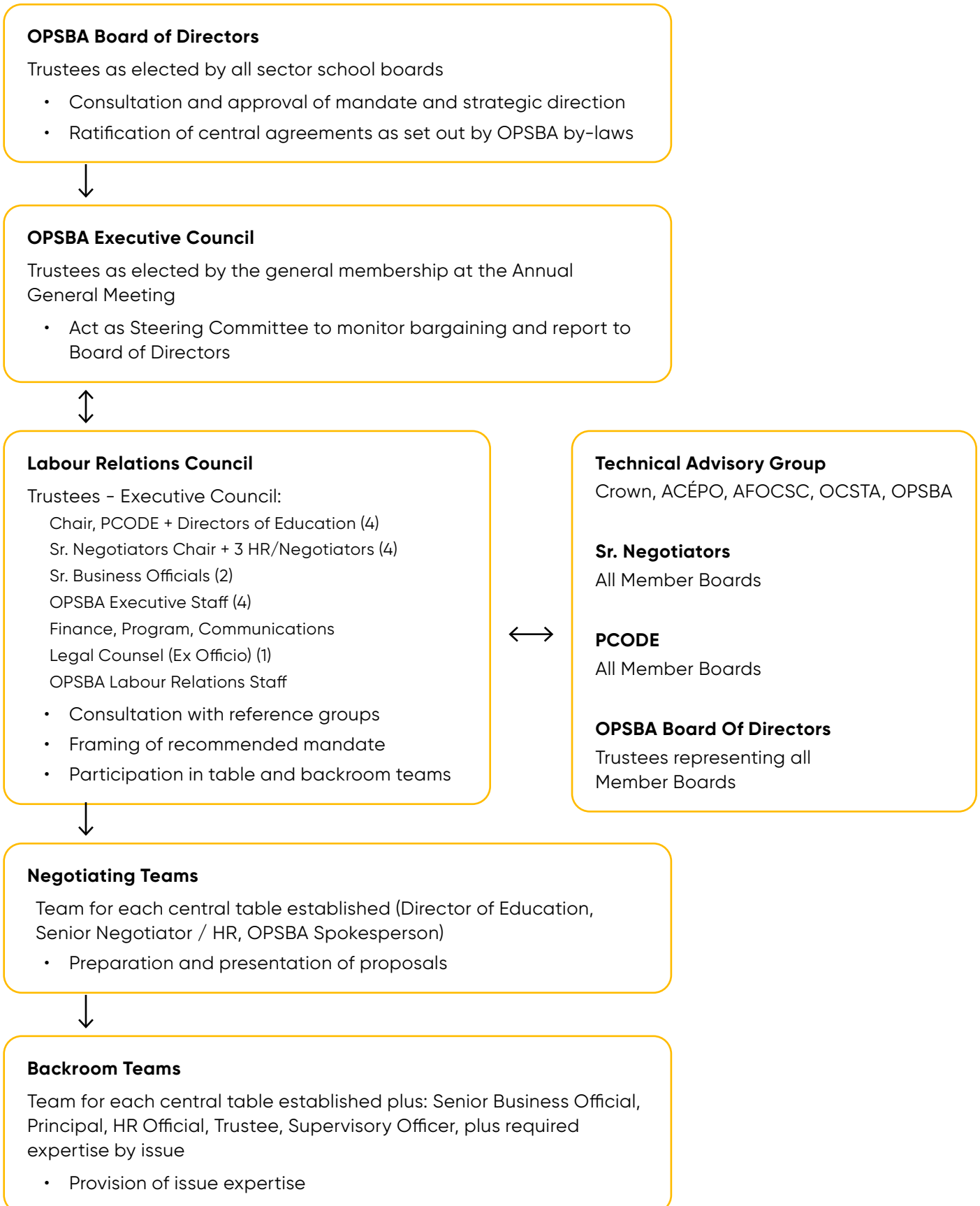
Central Bargaining

Under the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Act* (SBCBA), the OPSBA Board of Directors established the following collective bargaining and consultation models. These models were designed to create mandates and local mechanisms to ensure all voices are heard.

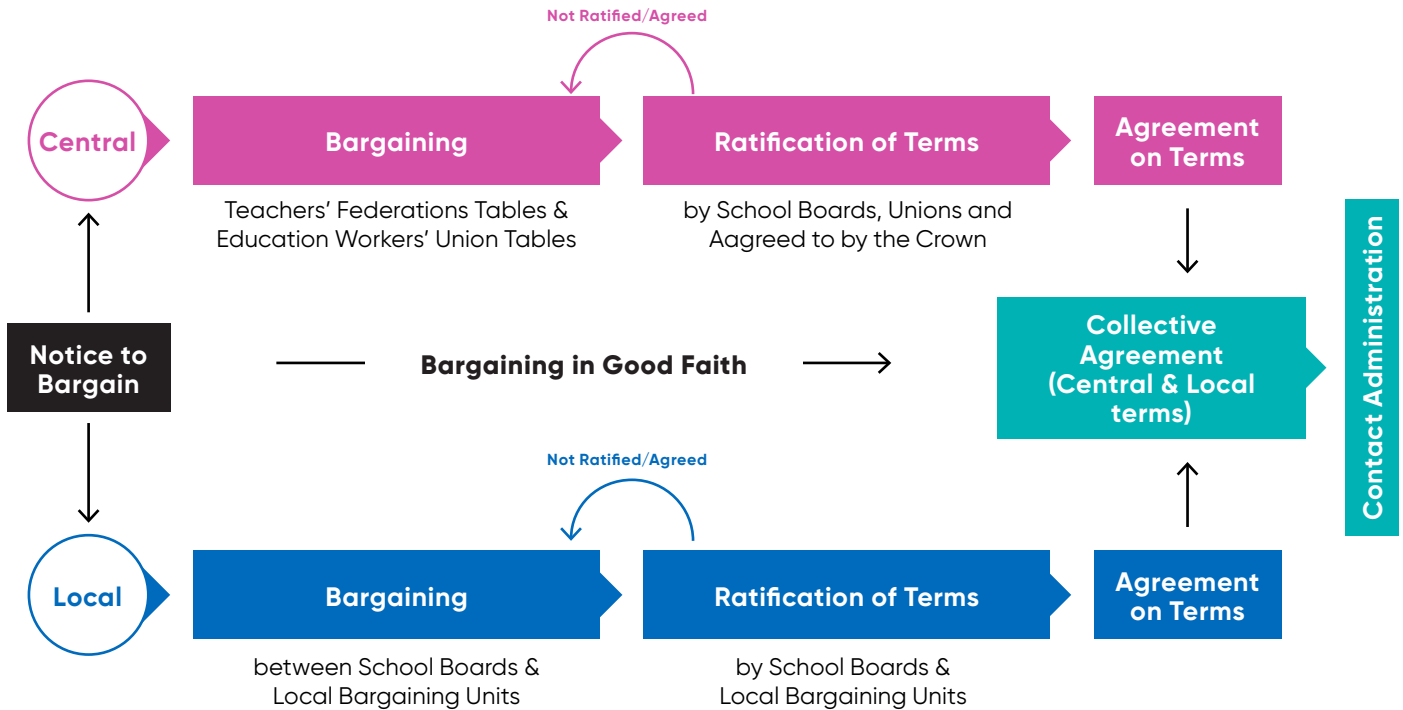
OPSBA Consultation Model



OPSBA Bargaining Model



School Boards Collective Bargaining Act: Process Map



*Local bargaining may occur at the same time as, or after, central bargaining.

**A collective agreement is only completed once both central and local agreements are ratified.

Actions Taken in 2024-25

- Participated in central interest arbitration to resolve collective bargaining with EWAO
- Supported local collective bargaining and local interest arbitration for 2022-26 when requested
- Provided support for the implementation of the 2022-26 central terms
- Provided support for the implementation of the 2023-2027 Principals' and Vice Principals' provincial terms and conditions of employment
- Heard grievances and disputes through the central grievance/arbitration process included in the central terms
- Maintained and improved the OESC/OPSBA Portal
- Facilitated learning and networking among school board Human Resources leaders on various elements of the Principals' and Vice Principals' provincial terms, as well as ministry Policy/Program Memoranda
- Provided presentations regarding labour matters at Labour Relations Council (LRC), Senior Negotiators and the Public Council of Ontario Directors of Education
- Participated at: Technical Advisory Group (TAG), LRC, and CTA

Bargaining Model

OPSBA is the designated bargaining agent for 31 English public school boards and 10 public school authorities and negotiates with seven bargaining groups/federations. There are a total of 263 local bargaining units. These bargaining units join one of the following central tables: Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) Teachers and Education Workers, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) Teachers and Education Workers, Educational Workers Alliance of Ontario (EWAO) and Ontario Council of Educational Workers (OCEW).

In the last round of bargaining, four-year agreements running from September 1, 2022, to August 31, 2026, were reached at each of the central tables.

- Co-chaired meetings of Central Labour Relations Committees (CLRC) to problem-solve and build relationships
- Organized and delivered OPSBA's annual Education Labour Relations and Human Resources Symposium on May 1 and 2, 2025
- Participated and presented at the inaugural conference of the Canadian Network of Education Human Resources Professionals
- Met with the Crown, ETFO-Teachers/Occasional Teachers and OSSTF-Teachers/Occasional Teachers to review and provide recommendations to revise PPM 128: The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct
- Worked with OSSTF to jointly develop a streamlined arbitration model for use by school boards and local teacher bargaining units
- Participated and acted as a liaison to the employee life and health trusts (ELHTs) on benefits matters in all benefits committee meetings

Committees and Workgroups Arising from Collective Bargaining or Provincial Discussions (Principal and Vice-Principal)

Coming out of collective bargaining of the central terms for the English public school boards, the following committees were established among the Crown, the unions/federations and OPSBA/Council of Trustees' Associations (CTA). OPSBA is part of the CTA along with the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA), the Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario (ACÉPO), and the Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC).

Committees:	Mandate:
Provincial Working Group Health and Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none">CTACrownOSSTFETFOCUPEEWAOOCEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To consider areas related to health and safety in order to continue to build and strengthen a culture of health and safety mindedness in the education sector.Areas of discussion may include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Caring and Safe SchoolsWorkplace violence prevention trainingNotification of potential risk of physical injuryccupational health and safety training
One Benefit Plan Committee for each central table (OPSBA and the Crown attend all tables) <ul style="list-style-type: none">OSSTFETFOCUPEEWAOOCEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Benefits meetings continued throughout the 2024-2025 school year.
Education Worker Diverse and Inclusive Workforce Committee (EWDIWC) <ul style="list-style-type: none">CTA/school board representativesCrownRepresentatives from each of the education worker employee bargaining agents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The EWDIWC was established in the 2014-2017 CUPE central terms and has been extended in every round since.The committee was extended to include representatives from other education worker employee bargaining agents.The mandate of the committee is to jointly explore and identify best practices that support diversity, equity, and inclusion, and to foster diverse and inclusive workforces reflective of Ontario's diverse communities.The committee will identify existing recruitment, retention, and promotion strategies that aim to eliminate barriers for individuals who identify as members of historically underrepresented groups. In addition, the committee will review training and education programs that support the creation of positive, equitable and inclusive workplaces, and foster diverse and inclusive workforces.Once jointly identified, materials and resources may be shared with school boards and locals.

Committees:**Mandate:****Ministry/School Board
Initiatives Committees**

(OPSBA and the Crown
attend all tables)

- OSSTF
- ETFO
- CUPE
- EWAO
- OCEW

- The Ministry of Education resumed meetings to discuss new or existing initiatives. The committee met twice in the 2024-2025 school year.

**Learning and Services
Continuity and
Absenteeism Task
Force/Task Force on the
Utilization of Sick Leave –
Education Workers**

- ACÉPO
- AFOCSC
- OCSTA
- OPSBA
- Crown
- CUPE
- ETFO-EW
- OCEW
- OSSTF-EW

- These Provincial Task Forces were established during the 2022-2026 round of bargaining.
- The Task Force will review and explore leading practices related to learning and service continuity and absenteeism. In addition, the task force will gather data and review information regarding the utilization of sick leave and short-term disability plans (STDP), and a jurisdictional scan on sick leave and STDP from the Canadian Education sector and other broader public sector employers.
- The Task Force met in the 2024-25 school year and is expected to complete its work by August 31, 2025.
- The Task Force will report its findings to school boards and local unions.

**Learning and Services
Continuity and
Absenteeism Task
Force/Task Force on the
Utilization of Sick Leave –
Teachers**

- OPSBA
- Crown
- ETFO-T/OT
- OSSTF-T/OT

**Supports for Students
Committee**

- OPSBA
- Crown
- ETFO-T/OT

- This Committee was established during the 2022-2026 round of bargaining.
- The Central Parties agreed to recirculate the Final Report of the Support for Students Committee established through Letter of Agreement #9 of ETFO-T/OT's 2019-22 collective agreement.
- Using the three areas of focus in the report, the committee met to gather and identify examples of best practices across school boards.
- The committee anticipates completing its work by the end of the 2024-25 school year.

Committees:

EW LTD Sub-Committee OSSTF-EW

- ACÉPO
- AFOCSC
- OCSTA
- OPSBA
- Crown
- OSSTF

Mandate:

- The Central Parties agreed to establish a sub-committee group of the Central Labour Relations Committee (CLRC), to examine the feasibility of a provincial EW Long Term Disability plan, with the goal of establishing efficiencies for premium payors, as compared to the current individual plans. The subcommittee will also consider the impacts of any changes to existing plans.
- The sub-committee began meeting in the 2024-2025 school year and conducted a survey to collect information about OSSTF-EW LTD plans.
- The EW LTD Sub-Committee will make a recommendation back to the CLRC no later than August 31, 2026.

P/VP Provincial Liaison Committee

- ACÉPO
- AFOCSC
- OCSTA
- OPSBA
- Principals/Vice-
Principals Associations

- This Committee meets regularly to discuss the implementation of the P/VP Provincial Agreement.
- Two sub-committees have been established:
 - Benefits
 - Workload
 - Implementation of Compensation in Local Terms

P/VP Work Year Working Group

- OPSBA
- OPC

- A joint working group comprising representatives from OPSBA, English public board staff and OPC was established to explore the impacts and options of changing the dates of the work year for the Principals and Vice-Principals in these boards.
- The joint working group will share their findings with their respective school boards and local associations by November 30, 2025. The Parties agree that local boards and local associations may discuss the findings of their respective work group and potential outcomes.



Central Labour Relations Committees (CUPE, ETFO, EWAO, OCEW, OSSTF)

The purpose of these committees is to facilitate communication between rounds of bargaining on issues of joint interest.

Central Dispute Resolution Committees (CUPE, ETFO, EWAO, OCEW, OSSTF)

All collective agreements established a process by which disputes over the interpretation of collective agreement language are addressed in an orderly fashion and removed from the workplace through either informal or formal resolution. Central parties may file disputes as a grievance and engage in settlement discussions. It is the responsibility of each party to inform their respective local parties of each step in the dispute resolution process, and to direct them accordingly.

Provincial Labour Relations

In the role of designated employer bargaining agent, to systematize both the implementation of the current collective agreements and prepare for the next round of bargaining, OPSBA delivers professional learning throughout the year and at the annual Education Labour Relations and Human Resources Conference. This year, the conference was held on May 1 and 2, 2025.

To facilitate consultation and communication, OPSBA has established or maintains participation in:

Labour Relations Steering Committee

OPSBA's Executive Council serves as the steering committee to consider and vet Labour Relations strategies.

Council of Trustees' Association (CTA)

The CTA involves Labour Relations Teams from ACÉPO, AFOCSC, OCSTA, and OPSBA. Consultation among the parties occurs regularly to ensure consistency of practice related to collective agreement implementation across all four publicly funded education systems.

Labour Reference Groups

Expert groups have been gathered from across the teaching and bargaining portfolios to offer advice to labour relations. These teams meet on an ad hoc basis.

Labour Relations Council (LRC)

The LRC is a cross section of OPSBA Executive Council, Directors of Education, HR Officials, Senior Business Officials, and OPSBA staff. The LRC meets regularly to give advice and guidance to the bargaining process.

Principal and Vice-Principal Associations

The Ontario Principals' Council is composed of Principals and Vice-Principals in public school boards across Ontario and information is obtained and shared as needed.

Public Council of Ontario Directors of Education (PCODE)

PCODE comprises Directors of Education in public school boards across Ontario. Consultation occurs through the Labour Relations Council by Director members and updates are provided directly to PCODE by OPSBA staff.

Senior Negotiators

The labour negotiators from the 31 OPSBA member boards and 10 school authorities meet to share issues, ideas, and solutions from their respective education settings as well as through teleconferences to deal with specific issues.

Technical Advisory Group (TAG)

TAG is composed of Labour Relations teams from the Crown, ACÉPO, AFOCSC, OCSTA, and OPSBA. The purpose is to ensure communication and understanding of implementation issues across provincial educational sectors.

National and International Labour Relations

Canadian Education Negotiators (CEN)

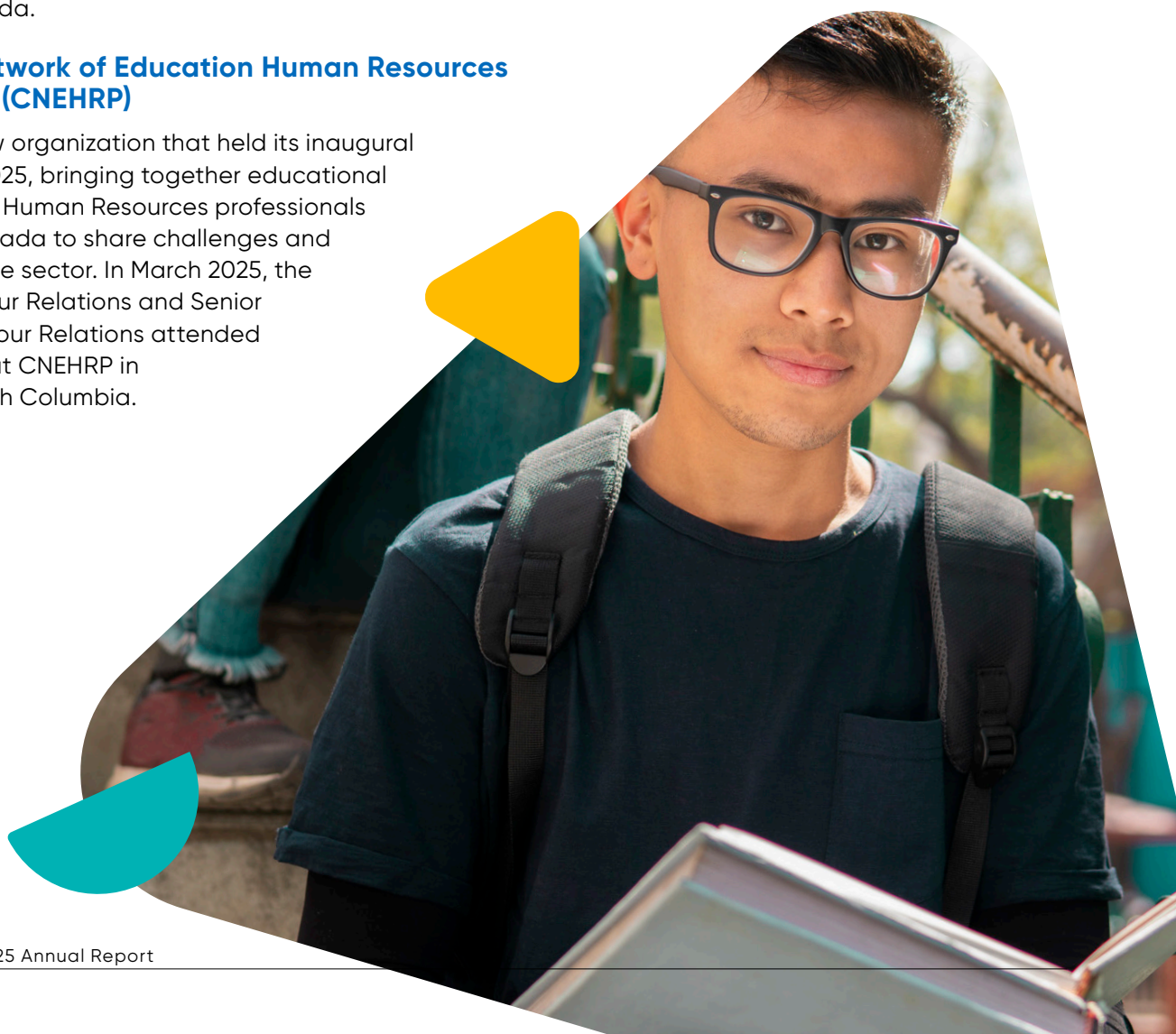
CEN is an organization with representation from the provinces and territories who are bargaining on behalf of the employer in education settings. Membership comes from the school board associations and/or governments as applicable. OPSBA participates in these meetings to understand issues facing provincial jurisdictions including collective bargaining issues, and changes in legislative frameworks. In July 2024, the Director of Labour Relations attended the CEN conference in Calgary.

North American Association of Educational Negotiators (NAEN)

NAEN is an annual conference that brings together educational negotiators and Human Resources professionals from across Canada and the United States to share challenges and solutions from the sector. In March 2024, the Director of Labour Relations attended and presented at NAEN in Clearwater, Florida.

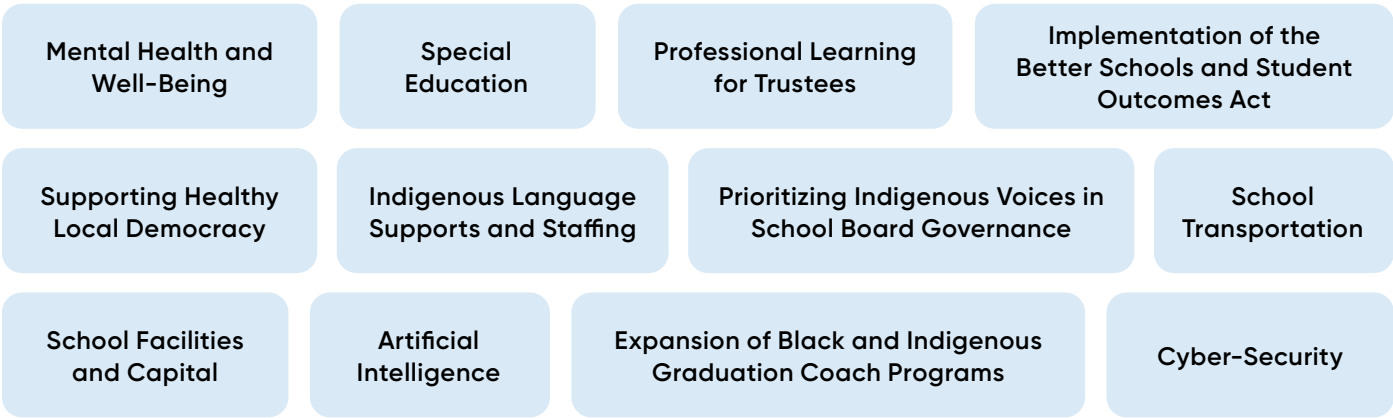
Canadian Network of Education Human Resources Professionals (CNEHRP)

CNEHRP is a new organization that held its inaugural conference in 2025, bringing together educational negotiators and Human Resources professionals from across Canada to share challenges and solutions from the sector. In March 2025, the Director of Labour Relations and Senior Manager of Labour Relations attended and presented at CNEHRP in Vancouver, British Columbia.



EDUCATION FUNDING

In November, OPSBA provided a response to the Ministry of Education's request for input regarding 2025-26 Education Funding and Core Education Funding. The submission reflected feedback from students, trustees, the Black Trustees' Caucus, the Indigenous Trustees' Council, senior OPSBA staff, as well as the Council of Senior Business Officials (COSBO). In addition to responding to the specific input questions, OPSBA provided recommendations regarding the following areas of funding that support the Association's multi-year strategic priorities:



There are other issues that are impacting boards, and the Association continues to advocate for funding to address:

- The growing inflationary gap between government funding and rising costs for school boards.
- The operational and financial pressures created by inadequately funded short-term sick leave.
- The employer portion of federal increases to Canada Pension Plan and Employment Insurance contributions.

These funding recommendations and requests were also shared with the Members of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs as part of their 2025 Pre-Budget Consultations. OPSBA was fortunate to have President Kathleen Woodcock address the Committee in person in Stratford.

OPSBA continued its advocacy for the ministry to lift the moratorium on school closures and to release revised Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines (PARG). In addition, OPSBA has been advocating for the Education Development Charges regulation (EDC) to be updated to allow for rates that accurately match actual land purchase costs, and that allow the flexibility for non-eligible boards to collect EDCs.

OPSBA will continue to work with members, partners, the government, and federations/unions to ensure that education funding matches school board needs and supports priorities.

Communications and Government Relations

OPSBA's advocacy, communications, and media and government relations strategies are designed to increase public confidence in the quality and effectiveness of our public school system and support OPSBA's four multi-year strategic priorities. OPSBA stands out as the expert voice of public education in Ontario.

The Association saw sustained media coverage on a variety of issues, with media appearances in stories regarding education funding, school board governance, Special Education funding, school infrastructure needs, school food and nutrition programs, combating anti-Black racism in schools, the impacts of social media on youth, labour relations, Indigenous Education, and more. OPSBA is consistently a primary point of contact for journalists when they are looking for a provincial perspective on education issues.

Our ongoing commitment to keeping the membership of OPSBA informed on critical issues means frequent development of up-to-date analysis of breaking news and reports.

In 2024-2025, OPSBA staff provided comprehensive communication support and leadership to member boards on key issues impacting education across the province to ensure positive and consistent messaging and positioning to highlight the strength of public education, including the release of the 2025 Ontario Budget and 2025-26 Core Education Funding. OPSBA's highly read daily "Media Report" service, now in its 13th year, provides breaking and feature news updates to hundreds of trustees and board staff.

Since the last OPSBA Annual Report was published in June 2024, eight media statements and news releases were developed and distributed to media and all trustees, directors of education, senior human resources and finance officials, and communication officers, with dozens of responses crafted to journalist inquiries as well.

SUPPORTS FOR SCHOOL BOARD COMMUNICATIONS STAFF

Communications officers from all 31 OPSBA member boards participated in monthly video conference calls with OPSBA staff to discuss items of mutual interest and share best practices and key messages on the pressing issues of the day. In early April, in coordination with the Canadian Association of Communicators in Education's Ontario region, OPSBA hosted a meeting of communications staff in North York. Staff from more than half of OPSBA's member boards attended. This year's meeting included a presentation and workshop from School Mental Health Ontario on new resources for parents and caregivers called By Your Side and an interactive workshop from CIVIX on their new PoliTalks initiative.

Member Board Communications Inquiries

OPSBA staff host a secure Google Sheet accessible to nearly 100 member board communications staff in which anyone can ask all 31 OPSBA member boards for feedback on a particular issue affecting their district. This ranges from questions about acute issues such as travel to the USA, to intranet software choices, media monitoring strategies, and flag raising/lowering. Since the last OPSBA Annual Report, nearly three dozen inquiries have been made.

School Board Days of Significance and Events Calendar

OPSBA's communications staff annually update a School Board Days of Significance and Events Calendar, a crowdsourced document, created with the input of Ontario's public school board communications staff and the Ministry of Education. The document's purpose is to be used as a planning tool for communications staff in creating editorial calendars. It does not usurp any local board-approved Days of Significance Calendars and is not meant to be used a teaching or learning resource.

OPSBA Brand Refresh

In summer 2023, OPSBA began work with Toronto-based design firm Creative Currency to undergo a full-scale strategic brand refresh of all design, information, and website properties. The brand identity was launched at the 2024 Public Education Symposium, with the new website being fully launched in November 2024, following an additional update of OPSBA's internal members' hub. From launch date in mid-November to mid-May, the new OPSBA website received more than 15,000 active users.



Canadian Association of Communicators in Education (CACE)

In October 2024, OPSBA's government relations and communications leads traveled to Calgary to accept a Coup de Coeur Award for successful communications planning for the 2024 Take Your MPP to School Week.

As well, OPSBA's Manager of Strategic Communications, T.J. Goertz, joined the board of CACE, giving OPSBA a seat at the governance table of a national association of 500+ professionals committed to encouraging and enhancing excellence in communications in education. As a bilingual organization, CACE offers a national conference, webinars, virtual training, regional workshops, and networking opportunities for members across Canada. Members are communications professionals working in school boards, school board associations, universities, colleges, teacher organizations, and provincial education ministries. CACE is directed by a volunteer board of directors, elected annually from within its membership, as well as an Executive Director. For the 2024-25 year, T.J.'s portfolio included management of the Bravo! Awards, the only Canada-wide awards program specifically designed to recognize excellence in school board communications.

Social Media

OPSBA uses social media to disseminate items of urgent interest, media releases and statements, and policy statements and submissions, while also sharing relevant content from its member boards related provincial advocacy priorities. In fall 2024, the Association made the decision to allow its X/Twitter account to go dormant, following a shift on the platform that resulted in far less user engagement, a drop in followers, and an increase in hate speech and misinformation. As of May 2025, OPSBA retains significant followings of 1,171 followers on Instagram, 502 likes and 719 followers on Facebook, and 743 followers on LinkedIn.



@OPSBA_Official



OPSBA



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OPSBA AWARDS

Each year, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association honours individuals who have made significant contributions in the field of education. While it is impossible to honour all those special people who make a difference, the recipients of these awards represent the many who contribute to the creativity and hard work that make our schools and education system leaders in the world.

Jack A. MacDonald Award of Merit and Certificate of Recognition

The winners of these student awards are selected based on a sound academic record throughout their career, accompanied by outstanding community service and leadership. This year's Jack A. MacDonald Award of Merit was presented to Aiesha Hindle, Indigenous Student Trustee, DSB Ontario North East (DSB ONE). Aiesha is a resilient and passionate leader who has championed Indigenous student voice, culture, and leadership. Her advocacy, initiatives, and inclusive vision have created lasting impact at DSB ONE and her dedication to reconciliation, equity, and student empowerment make her a deserving nominee for the Jack A. MacDonald Award.

Fred L. Bartlett Memorial Award

The Fred L. Bartlett Memorial Award is given to an active or retired member of the teaching profession for outstanding contribution to education in Ontario. This year's recipient was Laura Gonzalez, Volunteer Teacher, Thames Valley DSB. Laura stands out as an exceptional volunteer whose unwavering dedication to education, students, and community engagement has left an indelible mark on schools and communities within Thames Valley. Her exemplary leadership and tireless advocacy for students and education have been evident in her various volunteer roles within the Thames Valley district and beyond. Arriving in London from Mexico 16 years ago, Laura immediately immersed herself in the School Council at Jeanne Sauvé Public School.

Dr. Harry Paikin Memorial Award

This award is given to an active or retired public school trustee for outstanding service. This year's recipients were:

Cathy Abraham, Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB

Cathy Abraham has dedicated over two decades to the betterment of Ontario's public education system. As a long-serving trustee, the longest-serving OPSBA president (2018-2024), Canadian School Boards Association board member, and community leader, she has continuously advocated for student success, inclusive policies, and educational excellence.

Shelley Laskin, Toronto DSB

Shelley Laskin, a six-term Toronto DSB Trustee, has influenced education policy through decades of advocacy, leadership, and public service. Her work spans equity, reconciliation, governance, community engagement, and inclusive education.

Dr. Elizabeth Sinclair, York Region DSB

Dr. Sinclair brings over 30 years of educational leadership rooted in equity, excellence, and student success. A lifelong advocate for inclusive learning and community engagement, her impact spans three OPSBA member boards, from her time teaching in the Toronto DSB, through to her work as a Superintendent of Education at the Peel DSB, and currently as a long-serving York Region DSB trustee.

OPSBA AWARDS CONT'D

OPSBA Award of Excellence and Achievement Award

The OPSBA Award of Excellence is presented by an OPSBA member board to volunteers for outstanding, exemplary and/or unique contributions to the overall well-being of the school or community through in-school, board-wide, extra-curricular and/or volunteer activity. This year's recipient is Mehrdad Safizadeh, Simcoe County DSB. Mehrdad is a passionate advocate for equity and inclusive education in the Simcoe County DSB. As Vice-Chair of the Parent Involvement Committee and Chair of the Equity Advisory Committee, he has strengthened parent engagement, championed inclusive policies, and supported newcomer families – making a lasting impact on student success and school community well-being.

The Healthy Democracy Student Leadership Award

The Healthy Democracy Student Leadership Award is a partnership—begun in 2024—between the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and OPSBA and is awarded in the amount of \$1,000 to one graduating English public school student in each of OPSBA's five regions. Scholarship recipients are students with leadership skills and potential, who care deeply about their communities and furthering their own learning.

The 2024 recipients were:

- **Central East:** Aidan Fitzmaurice, Trillium Lakelands DSB
- **Central West:** Julia Elmslie, Upper Grand DSB
- **Northern:** Caylee Gaunther-Schwartz, Superior-Greenstone DSB
- **Western:** Abbey Taylor, Avon Maitland DSB

The Eastern Region had zero applications. The 2025 recipients will be announced after the publication of this Annual Report and will be included in the 2025–26 OPSBA Annual Report.

The Ontario Public Student Trustee Scholarship

The Ontario Public Student Trustee Leadership Scholarship is an award jointly provided by OPSBA and the Public Board Council of OSTA-AECO. The intent is to recognize outstanding achievement in a leadership role and provide financial support to a graduating public board student trustee to assist with their post-secondary education plans (University, College, or Apprenticeship).

The 2025 winners are:



Maheen Riaz
Upper Canada DSB



Kayla Hoare
Durham DSB

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2024-25

(as of May 2025)

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Second Vice-President
Toronto District School Board

Cathy Abraham

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Kawartha Pine Ridge
District School Board

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Central West
District School Board of Niagara

Karla Bailey

Central West
Peel District School Board

Michael Barrett

Treatment School Authorities
Grandview School Authority

Shannon Binder

Eastern
Hastings and Prince Edward
District School Board

Greg Bowman

Northern (East)
Algoma District School Board

Becky Buck

Central West
Hamilton-Wentworth
District School Board

Julia Burgess

Western
Greater Essex County DSB

Esther Childs

Central East
Trillium Lakelands
District School Board

David Cornish

Northern (West)
Keewatin-Patricia
District School Board

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Regional Chair, Central West
Halton District School Board

Donna Edwards

Central East
Durham District School Board

Jeanne Gray

Central West
Halton District School Board

David Green

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Renfrew County
District School Board

Jennifer Jennekens

Eastern
Ottawa-Carleton
District School Board

Elaine Johnston

*Chair, Indigenous
Trustees' Council*
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Jan Johnstone

Western
Bluewater District School Board

Jaine Klassen Jeninga

Regional Chair, Central East
Kawartha Pine Ridge
District School Board

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Northern (East)
Rainbow District School Board

Jeff Lehman

Northern (West)
Rainy River District School Board

Diane Lloyd

Central East
Kawartha Pine Ridge
District School Board

Jodi Lloyd

Central East
Simcoe County
District School Board

Martha MacNeil

Central West
Upper Grand
District School Board

Nadeem Mahmood

Central East
York Region District School Board

David McDonald

Eastern
Upper Canada
District School Board

Kathy McDonald

Chair, Black Trustees' Caucus
Peel District School Board

Karen McGregor

Eastern
Limestone District School Board

Kelly Miller

Central East
Durham District School Board

Sherri Moore

Western
Thames Valley District
School Board

Arlene Morell

Regional Chair, Western
Thames Valley District
School Board

Jason Nesbitt

Northern (West)
Superior-Greenstone
District School Board

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2024-25 CONT'D

(as of May 2025)

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Central East
Toronto District School Board

Scott Piatkowski

Central West
Waterloo Region
District School Board

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First Vice-President
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Lori-Ann Pizzolato

Western
Thames Valley
District School Board

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District School Board
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Renfrew County
District School Board

Kelley Robertson

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Lambton Kent
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Neethan Shan

Central East
Toronto District School Board

Lynn Scott

Eastern
Ottawa-Carleton
District School Board

Elizabeth Sinclair

Central East
York Region District School Board

Ryan Sitch

Northern (West)
Lakehead District School Board

Patricia Smith

Western
Avon Maitland
District School Board

Bill Steer

Regional Chair, Northern
Near North District School Board

Claudine VanEvery-Albert

Central West
Grand Erie District School Board

Deborah Williams

Enrolment Representative
Toronto District School Board

Kathleen Woodcock

President
Waterloo Region
District School Board



MEMBER BOARDS SCHOOL AUTHORITIES, AND TREATMENT CENTRES



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Executive Staff and Advisors

Shane Gonsalves

Managing Director of
Government and Public Affairs

Lisa Reinhardt

Managing Director of
Corporate Affairs

Andrew Gold

Director of Labour Relations

Erin Kelly

Director of Program Policy

Jennifer McIntyre

Director of Policy

Michelle Rodney Bartalos

Director of Education Equity

T.J. Goertz

Manager of Strategic
Communications

Alicia Cameron

Indigenous Trustees' Council
Liaison

David Wright

Finance Advisor

Vanessa Trinh

Director of Corporate Finance

Labour Relations

Alison Warrian

Senior Manager of
Labour Relations

Maheen Arshad

Coordinator of Labour Relations

Professional Development and Events

Kendra Tedford Devine

Director of Professional
Development and Events

Jennifer Moir

Manager of Conferences
and Events

Administrative Staff

Mary Adams

Administrative Assistant

Vivian Fragale

Executive Coordinator

Carla Garbas

Administrative Officer

Diana Hong

Financial Coordinator

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