



Remarks of Kathleen Woodcock

President, Ontario Public School Boards' Association

**Standing Committee on Social Policy re: Bill 101, Putting
Student Achievement First Act, 2026**

April 27, 2026

Good afternoon.

I'm Kathleen Woodcock, the President of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association – also known as OPSBA.

I am also as a trustee with the Waterloo Region District School Board and am proud to say that I've been in that role for the last 20 years.

I'm joined today by OPSBA's Vice President, Jan Johnstone, a trustee who has been with the Bluewater District School Board since 2001.

We want to thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of our member school boards, which represent nearly 1.4 million students—almost 70% of Ontario's Kindergarten-to-Grade 12 student population.

Our membership includes all 31 English public school boards and 10 school authorities.

Collectively, this makes our organization the biggest stakeholder voice for public education in Ontario. Our advocacy is grounded in the practical experience of locally elected trustees who are directly accountable to parents, communities, and students across the province.

We support boards, parents, and communities by promoting good governance, labour stability, and fiscal responsibility, and by delivering shared services that improve efficiency and reduce costs.

We have long approached our work as constructive, non-partisan, student-focused partners to the government.

And that is why I'm here today to provide brief remarks about Bill 101, Putting Student Achievement First Act.

We have been hearing about this proposed legislation for many months and now that it's been introduced, we are pleased to see that the position of democratically and locally elected trustees has been preserved.

Saving this important role was accomplished through the hard work, strong advocacy, and deep community engagement of our members.

This is an important win for local community representation and voice.

However, I will say that it was extremely disappointing and concerning to learn that many responsibilities that trustees have held, which ensure that decisions about public education remain close to local school communities, and the families and students they serve, were weakened or removed.

As understood, this model would remove trustees' authority over budgets, collective agreements, and core governance responsibilities, reducing their role and eliminating meaningful democratic accountability. This represents a substantial elimination of local decision-making and community oversight.

We anticipate that much of the implementation details will be addressed in future regulations, policies and guidelines and we look forward to sharing our collective knowledge and experience with those more specifically.

And I would say that trustees want to have a better understanding of how things will function – what the changes to their role will look like, how board meetings will operate, how decisions are to be approved, and how the community they are elected to serve will be heard through their motions, their votes, and their community presence.

I do want this Committee to know that OPSBA has always been a long-standing non-partisan partner in Ontario's education system.

We have regularly collaborated with the Ministry of Education in delivering the requirements included in past legislation, regulations, policies and guidelines for nearly 40 years.

This joint work has been done to ensure successful implementation of government priorities, while ensuring students, staff and their families are well-supported.

We provide school boards with a suite of shared services that enhance system efficiency and support responsible use of public resources. Through centralized labour expertise, governance training, and policy and communications guidance, our Association enables boards to access high-quality supports that would be significantly more costly and duplicative to develop individually.

School boards actively rely on OPSBA's professional staff to navigate complex labour negotiations, comply with evolving legislative and regulatory requirements, and strengthen trustee effectiveness.

These services help prevent disputes, reduce legal and consulting costs, and promote consistent, informed decision-making across the publicly funded education system.

Pooling expertise and coordinating efforts across boards allows us to deliver economies of scale that benefit not only our members but the province as a whole.

From a purely financial perspective, which the government says is a primary concern, I can say that we return more than \$4 of savings for every \$1 we receive in membership fees.

That amounts to 1 million dollars in direct savings to a board like Peel for example. If the government does seek to cut our membership fees, I think it would be reasonable to question their motives, given the savings that we provide to school boards, and have for decades.

We have always worked with the Ministry to co-develop much of the Professional Development for not only trustees, but system leaders in our boards.

In fact, just last week, we hosted our annual Education Labour Relations and Human Resources Symposium that brought together trustees, directors of education, superintendents, human resources and labour relations professionals for PD and important networking. It was a tremendous success.



OPSBA has always said that we welcome modernization, efficiency, and strengthened accountability. We support greater consistency across the province when it clearly delivers better outcomes.

Our key priority is to ensure there is a strong, stable, and accountable public education system that reflects the communities it serves.

As President of OPSBA and a local trustee, I am proud to be the elected representative and bridge between my community and our public education system. I believe these local voices matter and contribute to incredible system we have in this province.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to address this committee today and we would be glad to answer any questions you may have.