



Ontario Public School  
Boards' Association

# Annual Report

2025-26



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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

# Message To Members



**OPSBA is strongest when we stand together.**

This has been one of the most challenging years in OPSBA's history.

Over the past year, we have found ourselves in a sustained and, at times, difficult struggle to defend the role of locally elected school board trustees in Ontario. The pace and scope of legislative and policy change created an environment of uncertainty – not only for OPSBA, but for every trustee, every board, and every community we serve.

At the heart of this work has been a simple but vital principle: that local democracy in public education matters. Trustees are the most direct and accessible voice for students, families, and communities. That belief guided every conversation, every submission, and every meeting we undertook this year.

We did not do this work lightly. Nor did we do it alone.

Across the province, trustees stepped forward with clarity, courage, and commitment. Together, we made the case, again and again, for the value of governance that is rooted in community, accountability, and public trust. At times, it felt as though we were a small but determined group working to shift the course of something much larger than ourselves. And while we did not achieve everything we set out to do, our efforts mattered.

The position of trustee remains. Local governance remains. That is not a small outcome.

This year demanded resilience, adaptability, and an unwavering focus on what matters most: students. It also reinforced something equally important – OPSBA is strongest when we stand together. The dedication of our members, the leadership within our organization, and the strength of our collective voice carried us through a period that, at times, felt uncertain.

As you read this report, you will see the depth and breadth of that work. You will see an organization that continued to advocate, to support, and to lead, even in the face of significant challenge.

The road ahead is not fully clear. There are still important questions about our sustainability as an Association, the future of the governance role of trustees, and the structure of our education system. But if this year has demonstrated anything, it is that we are prepared to meet those challenges.

We will continue to stand firmly in support of public education and the communities it serves.

Thank you for your leadership, your perseverance, and your commitment during an extraordinary year.

**KATHLEEN WOODCOCK**  
President

# How We Serve Our Members

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

School board governance

Children and youth mental health

Indigenous education

Anti-racism initiatives and supports

Student transportation

Capital funding

Special Education

Skilled trades

National food and nutrition policies

Northern, rural, 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 and senior board staff**



**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 2026, since publication of 2024-25 Annual Report)

## ONTARIO'S ENGLISH PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

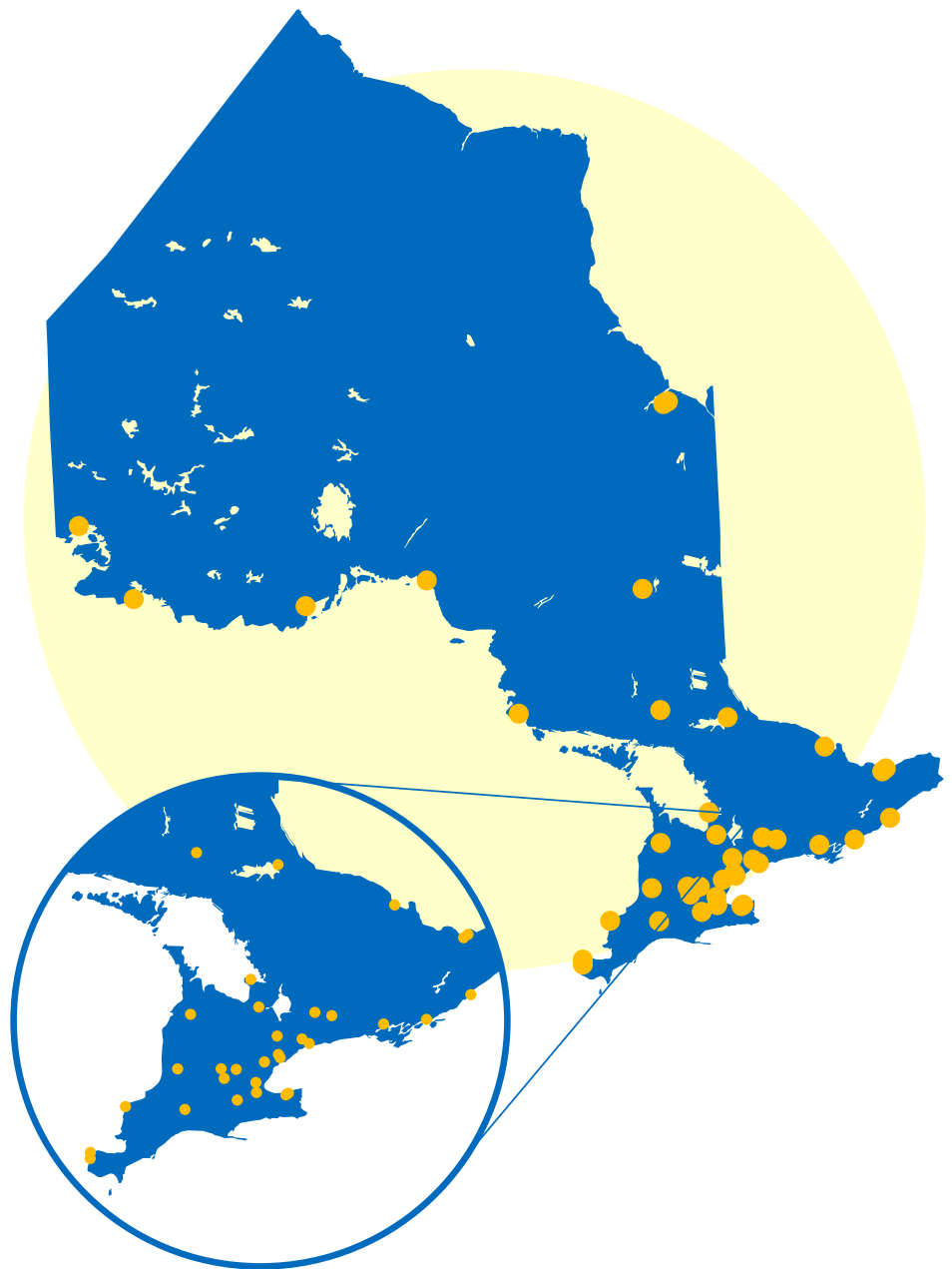
**31** district school boards

**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



**17**  
Board of Directors members

**6**  
Regions

**25**  
Work Team members

OUR WORK



**133**

attendees at the 2025 Annual Meeting

**128**

attendees at the 2026 Education Labour Relations and Human Resources Symposium

**213**

attendees at the 2026 Public Education Symposium

**2**

Special Meetings of the Membership

**1**

Annual Meeting



**13**

Board of Directors and Executive Council Meetings

**5**

First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Trustees' Council Meetings

**6**

Black Trustees' Caucus Meetings

**16**

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 2025-26 school year to support the multi-year strategic priorities.

# Governance Refresh

In 2025-2026, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) advanced a comprehensive governance refresh to ensure the Association continues to support effective advocacy, responsive decision making, and strong member engagement in a rapidly evolving public education landscape. This work reflects OPSBA's commitment to good governance and positions the Association to respond thoughtfully and nimbly to both current priorities and future uncertainty within the sector.

The governance refresh focused on modernizing OPSBA's General By-Law and governance structure to clarify roles, strengthen decision making processes, and support organizational agility. Throughout this work, careful attention was paid to maintaining meaningful opportunities for trustees to engage, learn, and contribute within a refreshed model designed to better align governance with OPSBA's strategic objectives.

Trustee engagement was a defining feature of the process in which there were numerous opportunities for trustees to contribute to discussions at Board of Directors and Executive Council meetings, Regional Council discussions, online information sessions, and two Special meetings of the Membership. A wide range of supporting materials such as presentations, reports, frequently asked questions, and draft governance documents were shared to support informed dialogue. Feedback from these engagements played an important role in shaping refinements to both the proposed by law changes and the evolving governance framework.

Recognizing the importance of regional perspectives, OPSBA also undertook focused work to clarify the role of Regional Councils within the refreshed structure. This included gathering trustee input and developing a Terms of Reference that support collaboration, leadership development, and effective communication, while enabling the Association to operate efficiently.

On March 12, 2026, OPSBA's membership approved changes to [OPSBA's General By-Law](#) that revises OPSBA's governance structure by changing the size of the Board of Directors to 17-18 (from 53) Directors and adjusting Regional Council structures. OPSBA's voting delegates for each member board remain unchanged.

The new [Board of Directors \(BOD\)](#) held its first meeting on March 26, 2026. At this meeting, membership on the Board of Directors for the remainder of the Term of Office ending upon conclusion of the 2026 Annual Meeting was confirmed.

Together, this deliberate and inclusive approach has positioned OPSBA with a governance framework that supports sustained trustee engagement, responsive leadership, and organizational resilience and strengthening the Association's capacity to serve member boards and advocate for publicly funded education in an uncertain and changing environment.



# Student Success, Equity, and Well-Being

# OPSBA Work Groups

OPSBA's Work Groups were important consultative bodies this year with much focus on governance-related legislation and regulations, including *Bill 33, Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025*.

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The Association continued to include many external guest speakers in their meetings, including staff from the Ministry of Education, and other important partners and stakeholders.

Guests included:

**Christine Riedel**, Manager, Private Schools and International Education Unit, and Provincial School Attendance Counsellor

**Ellakiya Sivapalan**, Senior Policy Advisor, Private Schools and International Education Unit

**Andrew Locker**, Director, Field Services Branch

**Wayne Joudrie**, Executive Consultant/Advisor to OESC

**Scott Yake**, Executive Consultant/Advisor to OESC

**Giselle Basanta**, Assistant Deputy Minister, Education Equity and Governance Secretariat

**David Wright**, Associate Director of Corporate Services, Durham DSB

**Stewart McDonough**, Advisor, Municipal Engagement, AMO

**Brian Jeffs**, Executive Director, COSBO

**Dan Koenig**, CEO, EQAO

**Kathy Short**, Executive Director, SMHO-SMCO

**Peter Symmonds**, Implementation Support Coach and System Collaboration & Partnerships Area Lead Consultant, SMHO

**Christopher Bourke**, Youth Wellness Hubs

**Matteo Schwartzentruber**, Youth Wellness Hubs

**André Côté**, Interim Executive Director, The Dais

**Ashna Ali**, Leadership Development Facilitator

**Bill Torrens**, Director, Digital and Online Learning Branch, Student Achievement Division, Ministry of Education

**Sarah Keyes**, Ontario Lead, Coalition for Healthy School Food

**Paul Cox**, Executive Director, CESBA, Adult and Continuing Education in Ontario School Boards

**Jon Proctor**, Executive Director, Ontario e-Learning Consortium

OPSBA would like to acknowledge the financial and educational advice, counsel, and contributions made by **David Wright**, who left the school board sector mid-year. OPSBA continues its strong connection with the Council of Senior Business Officials (COSBO) and Executive Director **Brian Jeffs**.

# Policy Development Work Group

Members of the Policy Development Work Group (PDWG) were extremely active and responsive to the legislation and regulations that were part of *Bill 33, Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025*, as well as other government proposals that had an education impact to students and their families. Trustees continue to represent their regions and groups with professionalism and expertise, providing high-quality, thoughtful, and authentic feedback based on their local experience.

*Bill 33, Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025*

This legislation was introduced on May 29, 2025, concluded Second Reading on November 17 and was also ordered for Third Reading that same day, skipping the Committee stage. The changes to the *Education Act* came into force on November 20, 2025, the day the bill received Royal Assent.

Since its introduction, Bill 33 generated significant concern from stakeholders across the province. The changes to the *Education Act* significantly expanded ministerial oversight, further centralized decision making, and shifted control over school boards away from the communities they serve. It effectively lessened the democratically elected role of public school board trustees across the province.

[OPSBA's submission](#) highlighted the three key changes impacting the K-12 education sector:

1. It provides the Minister of Education the authority to supervise any school board for any matter in the public interest.
2. It provides authority for the minister to have the final approval for the naming or renaming of any school.
3. It directs school boards to work with police services who wish to have a school resource officer program\* in place in schools.

Related submissions included:

- [Regulation Posting re: Proposed Regulatory Amendments to O. Reg 521/01: Collection of Personal Information](#)
- [Proposed Ontario Regulation re: Working with Local Police Services](#)
- [Proposal for amending Regulations under the Education Act to support children and students for future success](#) (School Day Operations and Celebrating Ontario Day)

OPSBA also [provided a brief submission](#) regarding Bill 56, *Building a More Competitive Economy Act*, which was time allocated and included amendments in the legislation's Schedule 5 *Highway Traffic Act* and the dismantlement of established automated speed enforcement (ASE) cameras.

In addition, the PDWG contributed to a submission regarding cyber-security as boards will now be required to implement cyber-security programs and provide notice when students' personal information is disclosed to third party owners or operators of software applications.

## Education Funding

Work group members participated in an online survey to help gather local knowledge as to the key funding priorities that should be addressed by the Association as part of its advocacy.

This year, the Ministry of Education paused its annual Core Education Funding Consultation with the sector. Because of this, OPSBA shared priority funding pressures with MPPs at Queen's Park as part of its Advocacy Day and prepared a [comprehensive submission](#) for the government's province-wide 2026 pre-budget consultations.

## Local Governance

Work group members were part of the content review and updating of materials for [Local Government Week](#) (LGW) 2025, which took place October 20 to 24. The updated resources and materials were shared with the full membership and partners. Work group members were presented with a slide deck summary that highlighted the central work of the Association promoting LGW and some of the local trustee visits and actions, including student trustee representatives.

The Association also conducted a Professional Development session for school board chairs focusing on the implementation of the new requirements for Code of Conduct, Enforcement of Code of Conduct, Electronic Meetings and Meeting Attendance.

## Student Nutrition Programs (SNP)

OPSBA continues to support SNPs and school food with its designation as an Endorser with the Coalition for Healthy School Food. The Coalition had a presence at PES in which guest speaker Heather Thoma presented on *Strengthening Ontario's school food programs to benefit students, families, and communities*.

OPBSA also worked with the Ontario chapter on an *Understanding School Food Programs in Ontario* survey that was distributed to school leaders across the province in order to gather clear, up-to-date information about how food programs operate in Ontario's publicly funded schools. Its goal was to learn what types of programs exist, how they are delivered, and what supports schools need. The findings will help inform planning, guide future investment, and strengthen collaboration among education and community partners working to improve student nutrition. Survey results will also help all school food stakeholders understand the complete provincial picture and current landscape.

Other topics of discussion and input included:

- School Attendance Issues and Implications, Best Practices for Student Retention
- Board Self-Assessment resource by OESC
- Proposed Ontario Regulation re: Cyber-Security
- Student and Family Support Offices

- Vulnerable Sector Reference Checks
- Capital Projects
- Student Transportation
- Proposed Ontario Regulation re: Health and Safety in Child Care Programs

**Note:** On April 13, 2026, Minister of Education Paul Calandra introduced Bill 101, Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026. This wide-sweeping legislation involves significant changes to the Education Act and School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. OPSBA President Kathleen Woodcock and Vice President Jan Johnstone presented at public hearings and the Association also responded to an initial companion regulatory posting. The legislation received Royal Assent on May 7, 2026, and additional regulations stemming from it are expected on specific implementation pieces.

## Areas for ongoing consideration

The work group will continue its support on implementation issues related to Bill 33. Other areas of continued advocacy will include local governance 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.

### WORK GROUP MEMBERS (2025-26)

**Donna Edwards,**  
Durham, Central East  
(Vice-Chair)

**Shelley Laskin,**  
Toronto, Central East

**Karla Bailey,**  
Peel, Central West

**Amanda Robertson,**  
Hastings and Prince Edward,  
Eastern

**Michel LaBonté,**  
Upper Canada, Eastern

**Sara McCleary,**  
Algoma, Northern (E)

**Pat Johansen,**  
Lakehead, Northern (W)

**Sherri Moore,**  
Thames Valley, Western

**Robert Hunking,**  
Avon Maitland, Western  
(Chair)

**Howard Archibald,**  
Ontario North East,  
Indigenous Trustees' Council  
Representative

**Donna Dickson,**  
Ottawa-Carleton,  
Black Trustees' Caucus  
Representative

### EXECUTIVE COUNCIL LIAISON

**Jan Johnstone,**  
First Vice-President,  
Bluewater

### ALTERNATES

**Sara Ehrhardt,**  
Toronto, Central East

**Elizabeth Wong,**  
Hamilton-Wentworth,  
Central West

**Jennifer Jennekens,**  
Rainbow, Northern (E)

**Judy Kosmerly,**  
Rainbow, Northern (E)

**Ellen Chambers,**  
Lakehead, Northern (W)

**Julia Burgess,**  
Greater Essex County,  
Western

**Anne Harrigan,**  
Simcoe County, Indigenous  
Trustees' Council  
Representative

**Kathy McDonald,**  
Black Trustees' Caucus  
Representative

# Education Program Work Group

## Program and Curriculum Consultations

The Education Program Work Group (EPWG) continued to provide valuable feedback and important insights this year, particularly those related to Bill 33 and Bill 101. OPSBA, through the EPWG, provided responses to the Ontario Regulation: Police Access to School Premises and School Resource Officer Programs consultation, Regulation Posting re: Proposed Regulatory Amendments to O. Reg 521/01: Collection of Personal Information. In addition, they engaged in discussion about the on-the-ground challenges of implementing Regulation 521/01 that came into effect February 1, 2026.

The EPWG also engaged in reflection with respect to School Cell Phone Policies through a presentation by The Dias policy think tank, School Attendance – Implementation and Challenges, EQAO results and directions, and they learned about the important work of School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO). The SMHO initiatives focused on presentation and literacy programs for students, parents and caregivers as well as on Balanced Device Use and updated information sheets regarding topics such as vaping. SMHO also shared their cross-sector partnership work. Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario provided a comprehensive overview of their services and resources regarding substance use education and reduction support. A Ministry of Education update was also provided on Cyber-learning Resources.

In addition, the group provided input to OPSBA's submission regarding Core Education Funding and participated in an online survey to identify local priorities and issues.

## Online Learning and the Ontario e-Learning Consortium

OPSBA continues to participate 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, as well as the challenges of implementing online courses given the present funding concerns. Wait list concerns given the mandatory two-credit graduation requirement for students is also a top area of discussion given the near-doubling of uptake for online courses over the last few years.

## French as a Second Language

In 2025–26, OPSBA reached the third year of its five-year implementation plan to address the critical shortage of French as a Second Language (FSL) teachers across Ontario. Supported by Ministry of Education funding, the Association continues to lead the province in mobilizing evidence-based strategies centred on recruitment, retention, and professional growth. Through a high-impact coaching model and a dedicated FSL microsite, OPSBA provides school boards with essential resources—including the *FSL Teacher Recruitment Guide* and the *Compendium of Evidence-Informed Strategies*—to ensure administrators and educators are equipped to build sustainable, high-quality French-language programs that support student success and well-being.

The reach of this year's initiatives was extensive, involving 36 public and Catholic school boards, three faculties of education, and four major education organizations across diverse urban

and rural communities. A standout success has been the expansion of the *eSTIM de soi* initiative, which integrates French-language learning with authentic STEM and coding opportunities; this program is now active in 48 boards, with educators reporting significant improvements in student engagement and oral communication. By refining French-language proficiency assessments and fostering a culture that visibly values FSL educators, OPSBA remains at the forefront of building a robust pipeline of bilingual talent to meet the evolving needs of Ontario's classrooms.

## 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). Unfortunately, while the Collaborative Health and Education Provincial Coordination Table began the previous year, which had both OPSBA and Coalition representation, the ministries have not continued this practice for the 2025-26 school year.

In 2024-25, 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. This project informed the work of both Children's Mental Health Ontario and the work of SMHO in the creation of information and numerous resources for parents/caregivers that can be found on [By Your Side](#) and [Family Care Centre](#).

During the 2025-26 year, the creation and sharing of resources built on this project has continued. In addition, work of the Coalition continued to explore the implementation of *Right Time, Right Care*, which focuses on a co-ordination of services across a system of care and the Coalition meetings emphasized the effective collaboration and sharing of the many resources, programs, and the expertise of this group with and across sectors in the name of mutual interests and concerns.

## Committees

OPSBA staff contributed to the following provincial committees in 2025-26:

- EQAO Advisory Committee
- Online Learning Working Group
- FSL Provincial Working Group
- Provincial Committee on Ministry Initiatives
- PPM 128: Provincial Code of Conduct Implementation Task Force
- High School Too Working Group

### WORK GROUP MEMBERS (2025-26)

**Jodi Lloyd**,  
Simcoe County,  
Central East

**Angela Lloyd**,  
Kawartha Pine Ridge,  
Central East

**Nancy Beamer**,  
Niagara, Central West

**Carol Ann Sloat**,  
Hastings and Prince  
Edward, Eastern  
(Vice-Chair)

**John McAllister**,  
Upper Canada, Eastern  
(Chair)

**Greg Bowman**,  
Algoma, Northern (E)

**Leah Vanderwey**,  
Lakehead, Northern (W)

**Patricia Smith**,  
Avon Maitland, Western

**Lori-Ann Pizzolato**,  
Thames Valley, Western

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

**Kathy McDonald**,  
Peel DSB, Black Trustees'  
Caucus Representative

### EXECUTIVE COUNCIL LIAISON

**Michelle Aarts**,  
Second Vice-President,  
Toronto

### ALTERNATES

**Louise Clodd**,  
Trillium Lakelands,  
Central East

**Jeanne Gray**,  
Halton, Central West

**Karen McGregor**,  
Limestone, Eastern

**Heather Whitley**,  
Algoma, Northern (E)

**Donica LeBlanc**,  
Lakehead, Northern (W)

**Malek Mekawi**,  
Greater Essex County,  
Western

**Roberta Northmore**,  
Lambton Kent, Indigenous  
Trustees' Council  
Representative

**Maedith Radlein**,  
Waterloo Region,  
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:

May 30, 2025	<a href="#">OPSBA submission</a> to the Ontario Regulatory Registry proposal re: Proposed new regulation to enable the Minister of Education to direct school boards to dispose of property in specific circumstances
June 6, 2025	<a href="#">OPSBA submission</a> regarding the regulatory proposal Proposed Planning Act and <i>City of Toronto Act, 2006 Changes (Schedules 3 and 7 of Bill 17 - Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act, 2025)</i>
June 30, 2025	<a href="#">OPSBA submission</a> regarding Bill 33, <i>Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025</i> , regulatory posting
July 15, 2025	<a href="#">OPSBA response</a> to the government's Proposal to amend Regulations under the <i>Education Act</i> to support child and students for future success (School Day Operations and Celebrating Ontario Day)
September 24, 2025	<a href="#">OPSBA submission</a> re: Proposed Regulatory Amendments to Ontario Regulation 521/01 Collection of Personal Information
October 30, 2025	<a href="#">OPSBA submission</a> re: Bill 56, <i>Building a More Competitive Economy Act, 2025</i> and Schedule 5 <i>Highway Traffic Act (re: Automated Speed Enforcement Cameras)</i>
November 7, 2025	<a href="#">OPSBA submission</a> and recommended amendments for Bill 33, <i>Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025</i>
January 26, 2026	<a href="#">OPSBA submission</a> to the 2026-27 Pre-Budget Consultation
February 9, 2026	<a href="#">OPSBA submission</a> re: Proposed Regulatory Requirements under the <i>Enhancing Digital Security and Trust Act – Cyber Security</i>
April 27, 2026	OPSBA submission to the Standing Committee on Social Policy re: Bill 101, <i>Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026</i>
April 29, 2026	OPSBA submission re: Enhancing Health and Safety in Child Care Programs Regulatory Proposal
May 13, 2026	OPSBA submission for the Regulatory Proposal for Bill 101, <i>Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026</i>

\*Submissions noted above are new since the previous OPSBA Annual Report was published.



# Black Trustees' Caucus

The 2025–2026 school year was one of both challenge and impact for the Black Trustees' Caucus (BTC). While the Caucus entered the year with a clear plan following its summer planning sessions, shifting provincial dynamics, particularly credible concerns regarding encroachment on democratic school board governance, required a strategic pivot. Like other areas of OPSBA, the BTC intentionally set aside elements of its annual operating plan to respond to urgent governance issues affecting trustees, communities, and student outcomes across Ontario.

Despite these disruptions, and with a significant number of BTC members serving in boards under provincial supervision, the Caucus maintained a strong, coordinated, and visible advocacy presence at the provincial level. This year demonstrated the resilience, leadership, and collective strength of the BTC in advancing equity, human rights, and student well-being under complex and evolving conditions.

Grounded in lived experience and governance responsibility, the Caucus worked to influence systemic change that improves outcomes for Black students while strengthening public education for all learners.

Through six formal meetings, ongoing cross-board collaboration, and active participation in OPSBA governance structures, BTC members sustained a strong provincial voice, even as local governance structures were challenged in several jurisdictions.

## Responding to Governance Disruption

A defining feature of the year was the impact of provincial supervision in multiple school boards,

where elected trustees, including at least 10 BTC members, were removed or limited in their governance roles. These changes affected trustee oversight of discipline, equity monitoring, and community engagement processes, with implications for some of Ontario's most marginalized students.

The BTC responded through coordinated advocacy, including:

- Issuing a [formal open letter](#) to the Premier and Minister of Education highlighting governance and equity concerns, which received significant media coverage, though no formal response to date
- [Submitting to the Ombudsman](#) regarding concerns about the removal of trustees from suspension and expulsion appeal processes
- Engaging with stakeholders and the public to reinforce the importance of local democratic governance in upholding human rights obligations

Across all advocacy efforts, the BTC consistently emphasized that governance structures are not merely procedural, they are essential mechanisms for identifying and addressing systemic inequities.

## Advancing the Ontario Human Rights Commission's Dreams Delayed Priorities

The Caucus maintained a strong and consistent focus on advancing the recommendations of the Ontario Human Rights Commission report [Dreams Delayed: Addressing Systemic Anti-Black Racism and Discrimination in Ontario's Public Education System](#). Key priorities included:

- Expansion of the Black Graduation Coach Program
- Strengthening Student and Family Advocate supports
- Establishing standardized provincial race-based data collection and reporting
- Advocating for a ministry-led accountability and monitoring framework

Caucus members engaged directly with ministry officials, including the [Minister of Education](#) and Equity Secretariat, and advanced these priorities through meetings with elected officials across political parties during Advocacy Day and within their local municipalities.

At the same time, the absence of a formal provincial implementation plan, dedicated funding, and clear timelines remained a significant concern. The BTC worked to keep this issue visible through coordinated messaging, coalition-building, and community engagement.

## Policy Influence and System Advocacy

BTC members contributed actively to OPSBA's Policy Development and Education Program Work Groups, ensuring that an equity and human rights lens was embedded across provincial advocacy.

Notable contributions included:

- Input into OPSBA's [submission on regulations](#) related to police access in schools ([Bill 33](#)), emphasizing human rights, student well-being, and the importance of local governance
- Advocacy aligned with the Ontario Human Rights Commission's position on the impacts of police presence in schools
- Contributions to curriculum discussions, including the integration of Black Canadian history
- Participation in OPSBA's governance review process, with a focus on representation, voice, and system coherence

The BTC also reinforced the importance of evidence-based decision-making, particularly through advocacy for improved and standardized equity data practices across the province.

## Strengthening Partnerships and Coalition Building

Recognizing that system change requires collective effort, the BTC strengthened relationships with key partners, including Parents of Black Children and the Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators.

These partnerships reflected strong alignment in priorities, including:

- Advancing *Dreams Delayed* recommendations
- Expanding student and family supports
- Improving race-based data collection and transparency
- Addressing the intersection of anti-Black racism and special education
- Protecting governance structures and community voice

The BTC also participated in broader coalition efforts, including [a provincial press conference](#) and community advocacy events, reinforcing the interconnected nature of equity, governance, and student well-being.

## Student Voice, Mentorship, and Community Impact

Throughout the year, BTC members:

- Mentored Black student trustees, strengthening leadership pathways and youth voice
- Supported culturally responsive programming and initiatives within their boards
- Promoted awareness of community supports, including Student and Family Advocate programs
- Advocated for inclusive and affirming curriculum and learning environments

This work reflects the Caucus' commitment to targeted universalism; centering Black student experiences while improving outcomes for all students.

## Intersection of Equity and Accessibility

An important theme this year was the growing recognition of the intersection between anti-Black racism and disability. Through engagement with accessibility advocates and participation in community events, the BTC highlighted how systemic inequities are often compounded for Black students with disabilities.

This reinforced the need for integrated, human rights-based approaches across equity and accessibility work, supported by improved data, dedicated resources, and coordinated system action.

## Looking Ahead

As the BTC moves into the 2026–2027 school year, key priorities include:

- Continued advocacy for provincial implementation of *Dreams Delayed*
- Strengthening governance voice and trustee roles, particularly in the context of supervision
- Advancing standardized equity data collection and accountability
- Expanding partnerships and coalition-based advocacy
- Supporting OPSBA's evolving governance structure while ensuring strong BTC representation and influence

This year underscored that even in the face of governance disruption, the collective voice of BTC remains essential, impactful, and unwavering. The BTC will continue to lead with clarity, collaboration, and a steadfast commitment to ensuring that Ontario's education system delivers equitable, inclusive, and affirming outcomes for every student.



# Truth and Reconciliation

# First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Trustees' Council

The First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Trustees' Council (FNIMTC) of OPSBA is a group of trustees who bring expertise and experience to the Association's advocacy and action. It is composed of First Nations trustees appointed to school boards, and other Indigenous trustees – including trustees who identify as Indigenous – elected through the municipal electoral process. The members come from diverse professional backgrounds, and have included teachers and former teachers, education directors, post-secondary education academics and professionals, health care professionals, counsellors, staff from various Indigenous organizations, First Nation Chiefs and councillors, private sector management, and non-profit executive administration, among others.

Formerly known as the Indigenous Trustees' Council (ITC), member trustees, with the support and input of Indigenous student trustees, voted in 2025 to change the name of the group to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Trustees' Council. The name was changed to move beyond the limitations of the term "Indigenous" and to better acknowledge the distinct identities, rights, and experiences of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Additionally, First Nations trustees are specifically noted in [Ontario Regulation 462/97 First Nations Representation on Boards](#), which sets out the rules regarding appointment of First Nation trustees to school boards. These trustees represent the interests of First Nation students, where the First Nation band(s) are paying tuition dollars for their students to attend school within the publicly funded education system. The umbrella term "Indigenous" often does not capture these distinctions.

The FNIMTC meets regularly to guide OPSBA in its strategic priorities and operational activities, discuss emerging issues and concerns occurring in Indigenous education, determine advocacy efforts, and mobilize specific activities for the benefit of all students in Ontario. OPSBA staff support FNIMTC meetings, which are open to all trustees and Indigenous student trustees who are interested in advocating for Indigenous education.

This year, the Council was led by Algoma DSB First Nation Trustee Elaine Johnston, who served as FNIMTC Chair. Keewatin-Patricia DSB First Nation Trustee Denise Baxter served as Vice-Chair. Accomplishments of the past year include:

- Annual August Planning Session for First Nation trustees
- An in-person meeting with Minister of Education Paul Calandra
- Meetings with Ontario Regional Chief Abram Benedict and relationship building with the Chiefs of Ontario
- Supporting the inclusion of meaningful Indigenous content and activities at OPSBA events such as the Annual Meeting and Program and Public Education Symposium
- Providing advice regarding actions, and supporting continued growth, related to Truth and Reconciliation activities and deliverables

- Providing input on submissions such as *Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025*, OPSBA's pre-budget submission, and the OPSBA submission on police access to school premises and School Resource Officer programs
- Presentation by Chair Elaine Johnston at the 2026 Ontario pre-budget consultations
- Development of information resources regarding the role of Indigenous trustees, Indigenous student trustees, and First Nation trustees.

Much of the FNIMTC's focus over the past year has been on increasing the knowledge and awareness of school boards, trustees, government officials, Indigenous education partners and others, about the realities of Indigenous trustees, First Nations trustees specifically, and First Nations education in general, as it pertains to Ontario circumstances.



# Local School Board Governance

# Professional Development

## Supporting Trustees through Strategic Learning Opportunities

OPSBA is committed to supporting trustees and board staff through high-quality professional learning that strengthens effective governance. This year, our professional development efforts were delivered through our conferences and symposia, providing timely opportunities to engage with emerging issues in education.

Through our flagship events, trustees gained valuable insights, shared leading practices, and built the knowledge and skills needed to support informed decision-making in a complex and evolving education landscape.

OPSBA continues to champion excellence in governance by creating spaces for meaningful dialogue, fostering collaboration and supporting trustees in their role to advance student success and well-being across Ontario.

## 2025 Annual Meeting and Program

At OPSBA's Annual Meeting and Program, members determine priorities and directions for the coming year, elect officers and plan for the future. The event also offers a comprehensive professional development program for trustees and senior leaders.

The 2025 event took place in Niagara-on-the-Lake from June 12 to 14. Participants from across Ontario gathered for learning, dialogue, and connection under the theme *Maximizing Impact: Leading with Purpose, Achieving Meaningful Change*.

The program featured a series of keynote sessions that inspired reflection and action. Karl Subban, Toronto DSB principal and author, delivered an energizing address focused on leadership, perseverance, and

unlocking potential. Jordan Simmons, of NOMINEE, explored the transformative role of mentorship in building stronger, more connected communities. Ken Boyd of CIVIX introduced practical strategies for fostering more constructive and respectful discussions on complex issues through PoliTalks.

Complementing the keynote sessions, participants engaged in practical workshops and discussions. Sessions on risk management and board self-assessment provided trustees with tools to enhance effective governance. A panel featuring representatives from the DSB of Niagara highlighted how a sustained focus on governance practices can support improved student achievement and well-being, offering valuable insights grounded in local experience.

The meeting was capped off with the *Landscape of Nations Memorial Tour*, which provided participants with an opportunity to reflect on and honour the contributions of Indigenous allies during the War of 1812, further reinforcing OPSBA's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation.

**This was a great conference with a collaborative and encouraging group. It was a very positive experience!**

- AM Attendee

## 2025 Northern Meeting and Program

*Navigating the unique educational challenges and opportunities in Northern Ontario*

The 2025 Northern Meeting and Program, held in Sault Ste. Marie on October 17 and 18, brought together trustees and education leaders from across Northern Ontario for a focused learning experience centered on the region's distinct context. OPSBA designed the program to reflect the priorities, realities and strengths of northern boards, creating space for meaningful dialogue and shared learning.

The program opened with a guided visit to the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre, offering participants an opportunity for reflection and learning. The evening continued with remarks from Indigenous leaders and a keynote address from former Batchewana First Nation Chief Dean Sayers, who spoke to the historical and ongoing significance of the Robinson Huron Treaty.

On day two, participants engaged in experiential learning through a site visit to White Pines Collegiate and Vocational School, where they explored innovative, hands-on programming that supports student pathways in the skilled trades and entrepreneurship. Participants enjoyed Algoma District School Board's chocolate factory "Sweetened" – a Specialist High Skills Major program that integrates the culinary arts, business, and arts.

The program continued into the afternoon with a workshop on Labour Relations and the upcoming 2026 round of bargaining, with a focus on issues specific to northern boards.

**It invigorated and motivated me to take action rather than sitting back and letting things happen to trustees. Excellent job OPSBA!**

- PES Attendee

## 2026 Public Education Symposium

The 2026 Public Education Symposium (PES), held on January 23 and 24 in Toronto, brought together trustees, education leaders and sector partners from across Ontario for two days of plenary sessions, networking and professional development under the theme *What Matters Most: Supporting Students*.

The symposium opened with an energizing keynote from Catherine McKenna, who emphasized resilience, leadership, and empowerment. This was followed by a keynote address from Ontario Regional Chief, Abram Benedict, who outlined First Nations education priorities and the structures supporting Indigenous student success.

A panel discussion, *Where Are We Now? Where Are We Headed?*, explored key trends, policy developments and the future of public education in Ontario. A plenary session by Leger addressed the NextGen Study, which provided insights into Gen Z and Gen Alpha learners. The second day featured a keynote from Ontario Ombudsman Paul Dubé, highlighting a decade of collaboration between school boards and the Ombudsman's office to strengthen fairness and governance.

Fifteen workshops were also offered around key themes such as best practices in special education, practicing reconciliation in Ontario schools and legal insights for boards. Other workshops covered timely topics such as youth vaping, literacy screening, ableism, school food programs, and library censorship.

The symposium concluded with a gala dinner and awards ceremony, celebrating the achievements of trustees and school boards who have made exemplary contributions to public education in Ontario.

## 2026 Education Labour Relations and Human Resources Symposium

The 2026 Education Labour Relations and Human Resources Symposium took place on April 23 and 24 in Toronto. The symposium brought together trustees, directors of education, superintendents, labour relations professionals, and board staff from across Ontario to explore the evolving labour relations and human resources landscape in public education. As OPSBA's flagship event in this area, the symposium provided a forum for participants to examine emerging trends and risks, share leading practices and strengthen both governance and operational decision-making in support of Ontario's school boards and students.

The symposium featured a keynote address by Innovation and Change Navigation Strategist, Jay Kiew entitled "How to Flourish in the Complexities of an Uncertain World," which encouraged participants to consider how to lead with confidence and purpose in a time of significant uncertainty.

The program also included 15 workshops on topics such as "Navigating Labour Disputes and Keeping Learning on Track"; "Updates on Statute, Case Law, Human Rights and the Labour Landscape"; "Risk, Safety & Conflict Management"; "Managing Mental Health Absences and Accommodation in School Boards"; and "Working Together to Address Anti-Black Racism: Unpacking the OHRC Dreams Delayed Report."

## Regional Meetings

In 2025–2026, OPSBA's five regional councils – Northern, Western, Eastern, Central East, and Central West – played an important role in elevating local perspectives, sharing insights on issues affecting their school boards with the Executive Council and Board of Directors. Throughout the school year, member boards within each region connected quarterly through a mix of virtual and in-person meetings.

## OPSBA-OSTA Liaison Committee

The OPSBA-OSTA Liaison Committee continued its commitment to supporting student trustees and student voice. Dev Bassi (Near North DSB) and Ruby Rivington (Greater Essex County 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, where she stressed the importance of student voice.

Student voice was also well represented at AMO's second annual Healthy Democracy Forum. Thank you to Ahnaaf Hassan from the Toronto DSB and Daunte Hillen from the Hamilton-Wentworth DSB.

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, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Trustees' Council
- **Malek Mekawi**, Greater Essex County DSB, Western
- **Crystal Hewey**, DSB Ontario North East, Northern
- **Margo Shuttleworth**, Halton DSB, Central West
- **Tiffany Lloyd**, Limestone DSB, Eastern
- **Deborah Williams**, Toronto DSB, Black Trustees' Caucus

# 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.

*Note: While Bill 101, Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026, introduced on April 13, imposes many significant changes to the school board bargaining structure. The impacts of the legislation on OPSBA were not fully clear at the time of publication.*

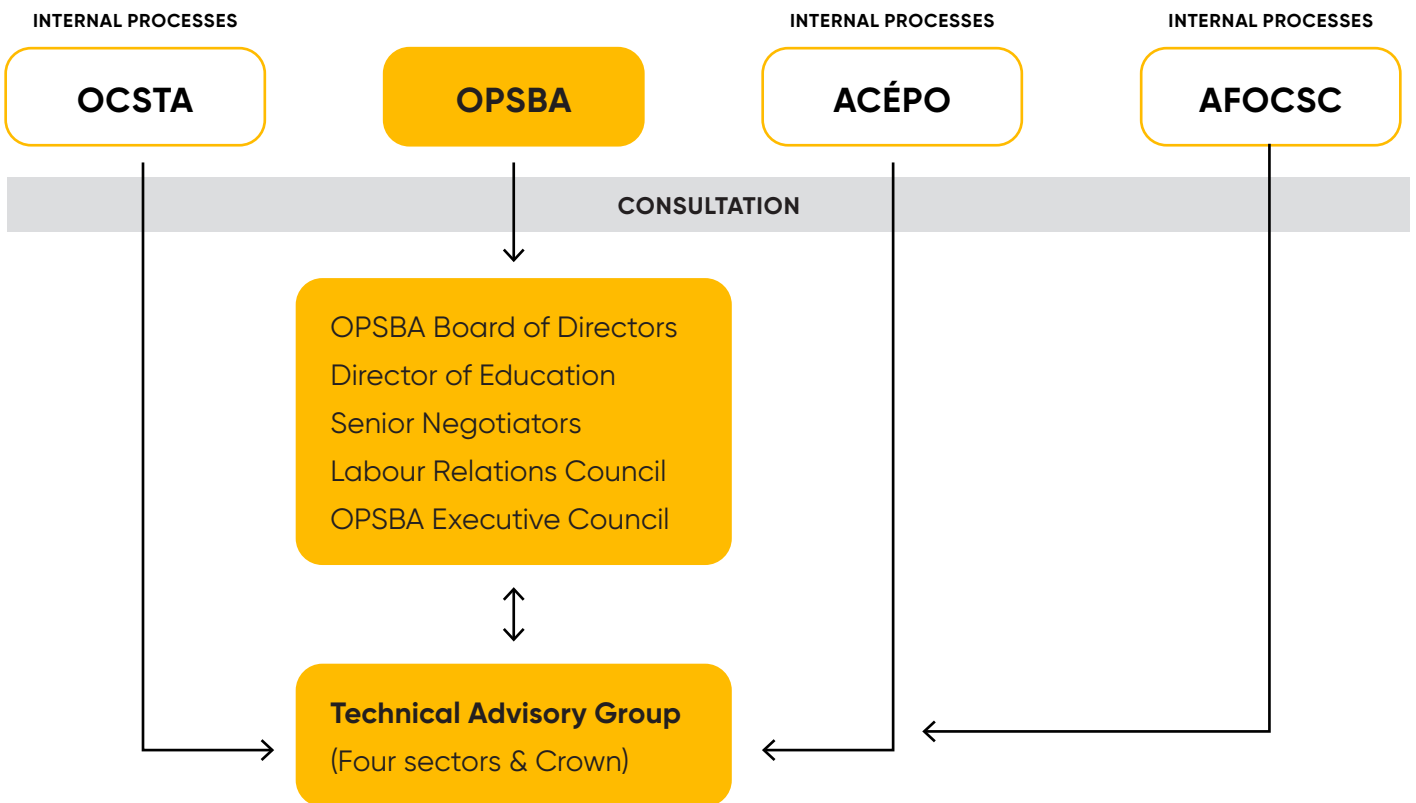
## LABOUR RELATIONS

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.

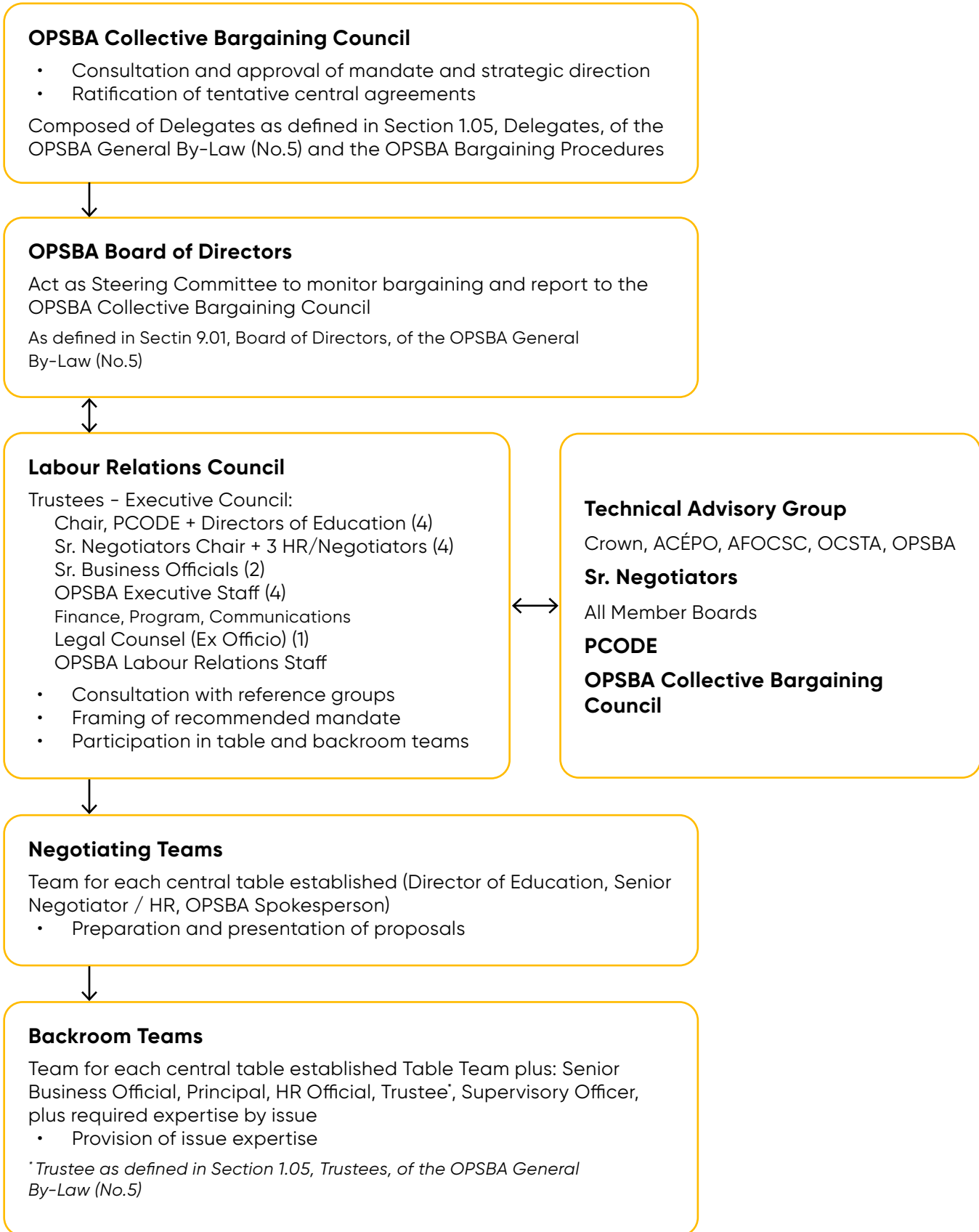
### Central Bargaining

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.

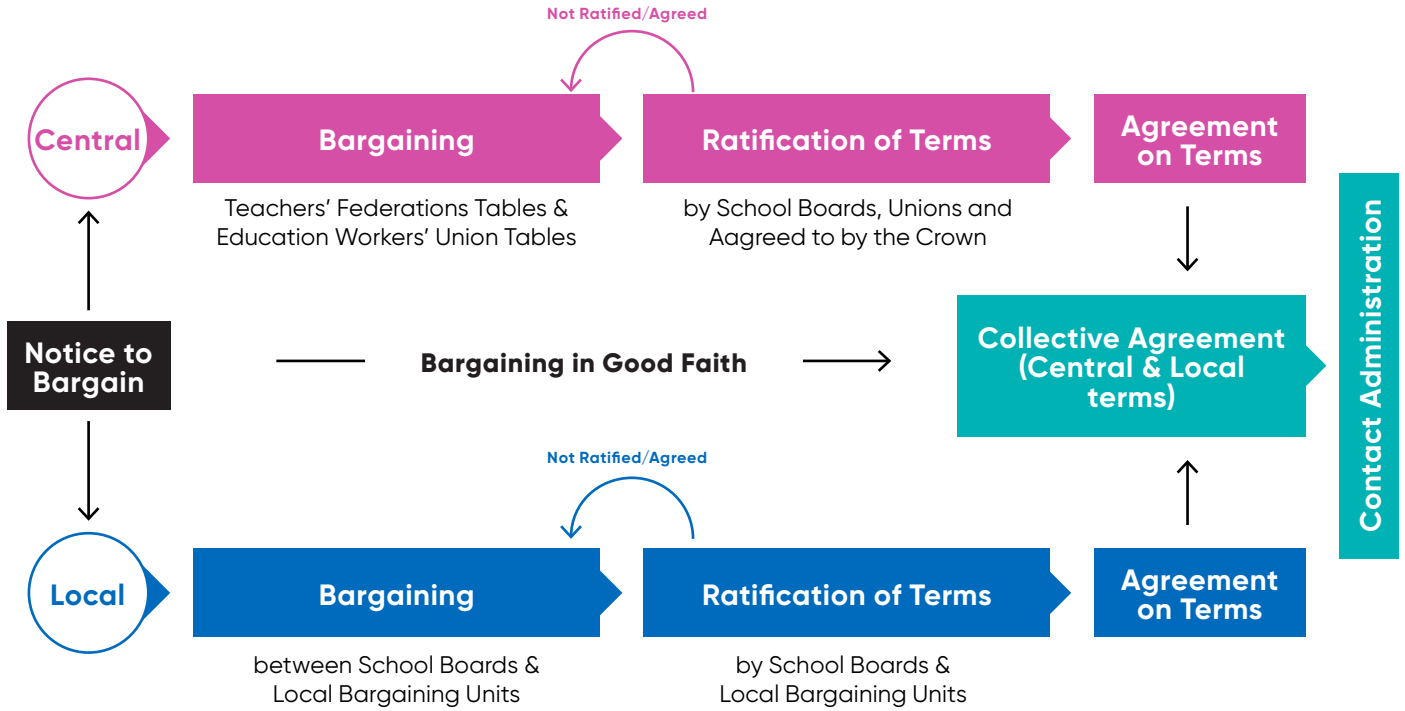
### OPSBA Consultation Model



# 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.

## 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.

## Actions Taken in 2025-26

- Supported local collective bargaining 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 a variety of topics including Early Reading Screening, Attendance Support, Job Security, Protected Complement, Principal and Vice-Principal Terms and Conditions, and Vulnerable Sector Checks
- Provided presentations regarding labour matters at Labour Relations Council (LRC), Senior Negotiators, and the Public Council of Ontario Directors of Education (PCODE)
- Participated at Technical Advisory Group (TAG), LRC, and Council of Trustees' Associations (CTA)
- 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 April 23 and 24, 2026
- Participated and presented at; the second annual conference of the Canadian Network of Education Human Resources Professionals, Ontario Public Supervisory Officers' Association's (OPSOA) Annual Conference and OPSOA Supervisory Officers' Qualification Program (SOQP), Ontario Principals' Council SOQP, Lancaster House's 2025 Public Sector Bargaining Conference, Osgoode Certificate in Education Law
- 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
- Commenced preparation for the upcoming 2026 bargaining cycle including consultations with key stakeholders, data collection from school boards, partnered with external stakeholders on data collection, re-envisioned and established bargaining reference groups for the 2026 round of central bargaining
- Pursued dispute resolution of provincial matters on behalf of school boards

## 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/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

- CTA
- Crown
- OSSTF
- ETFO
- CUPE
- EWAO
- OCEW

- 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:
  - Caring and Safe Schools
  - Workplace violence prevention training
  - Notification of potential risk of physical injury
  - Occupational health and safety training

#### One Benefit Plan Committee for each central table

(OPSBA and the Crown attend all tables)

- OSSTF
- ETFO
- CUPE
- EWAO
- OCEW

- Benefits meetings continued throughout the 2025-2026 school year.

#### Education Worker Diverse and Inclusive Workforce Committee (EWDIWC)

- CTA/school board representatives
- Crown
- Representatives from each of the education worker employee bargaining agents

- 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:**

**Ministry/School Board Initiatives Committees**

(OPSBA and the Crown attend all tables)

- OSSTF
- ETFO
- CUPE
- EWAO
- OCEW

**Mandate:**

- The Ministry of Education resumed meetings to discuss new or existing initiatives. The committee met twice in the 2025-2026 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 Forces reviewed and explored leading practices related to learning and service continuity and absenteeism. In addition, the task forces 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.

**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 2025-26 school year.



## Committees:

### Supports for Students Committee

- OPSBA
- Crown
- ETFO-T/OT

### EW LTD Sub-Committee OSSTF-EW

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

### P/VP Provincial Liaison Committee

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

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

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

## Mandate:

- 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 2019-2022 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 completed its work and shared its findings with school boards in October 2025.
- 
- 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.
- 
- This Committee meets regularly to discuss the implementation of the P/VP Provincial Agreement.
  - Three sub-committees have been established:
    - Benefits
    - Workload
    - Implementation of Compensation in Local Terms
- 
- The purpose of these committees is to facilitate communication between rounds of bargaining on issues of joint interest.
- 
- 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 April 23 and 24, 2026.

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

### Labour Relations Steering Committee

OPSBA's Board of Directors serves as the steering committee to consider and vet Labour Relations strategies.

### Council of Trustees' Associations (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 Board of Directors, Directors of Education, HR Officials, Senior Business Officials, and OPSBA staff. The LRC meets regularly to give advice and guidance to the bargaining process.

### 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 member school authorities meet to share issues, ideas, and solutions from their respective education settings as well as through virtual meetings 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 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 2025, the Director of Labour Relations attended the CEN conference in Prince Edward Island.

### Canadian Network of Education Human Resources Professionals (CNEHRP)

CNEHRP held its annual conference in March 2026, bringing together educational negotiators and Human Resources professionals from across Canada to share challenges and solutions from the sector. The Director of Labour Relations and Senior Manager of Labour Relations attended and presented at CNEHRP in Montreal, Quebec.

## Education Funding

OPSBA's two work groups continue to ensure that the priorities of the Association and member boards are addressed in its education funding advocacy. This year, the Ministry of Education paused its annual Core Education Funding Consultation with the sector. This was disappointing as it has always been an opportunity for education experts, and those connected to the sector, to provide evidence-based data and lived experience as to how education funding can be improved.

In lieu of this consultation, OPSBA shared priority funding pressures with MPPs at Queen's Park as part of a November Advocacy Day and prepared a [comprehensive submission](#) for the government's province-wide 2026 pre-budget consultations.

In addition to the written submission, OPSBA was fortunate to have trustee leaders address the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs in person at different locations across the province. This included OPSBA President Kathleen Woodcock in Waterloo, Past President Cathy Abraham in

Peterborough, Renfrew County DSB Chair Leo Boland in Pembroke, and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Trustees' Council Chair Elaine Johnston in Sudbury.

OPSBA's funding submission identified specific actions that could be taken by the Ministry of Education to address funding challenges and allow school boards to be even more fiscally responsible and support public education. These included:

- Providing compensatory funding to match current and future federally mandated Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Employment Insurance (EI) contribution rates.
- Providing funding to address the full cost of running classrooms in schools, including supply staff. School boards are increasingly finding challenges in covering the actual cost of replacing absent staff.
- Addressing the special education funding formula to ensure funding is meeting the needs of students and families.

The submission provided specific funding recommendations for these main areas in education:



On March 26, 2026, the government released the 2026-27 Ontario Budget: A Plan to Protect Ontario. Education sector expenses for 2025-26 are projected to be \$462 million lower than previously projected in the 2025 Budget, mainly due to lower-than-projected student enrolment and school board expenditures.

As of publication time, the Association continues to await the release of 2026-27 Core Education Funding.

# 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.

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As a non-partisan association, OPSBA 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, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Trustees' Council, Black Trustees' Caucus, Board of Directors, senior staff provide submissions and feedback to many government consultations.

Our advocacy efforts can be seen at all levels of government.

## Municipal

OPSBA continued its strong working relationship with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), with Executive Director Stephanie Donaldson participating directly as a member of the Healthy Democracy Project Advisory Group.

The [Healthy Democracy Student Leadership Award](#) is in its third year. 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](#), OPSBA worked with partners on this annual advocacy initiative, which is an opportunity to raise awareness of the important civic contributions of school boards and municipalities to their communities across the province.

## Provincial

As Minister of Education, Progressive Conservative MPP Paul Calandra was focused on school board governance, mainly *Bill 33, Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025*, and the powers that came with it.

The Association maintained regular contact with the other political parties and their education critics. This included Chandra Pasma (New Democratic Party), John Fraser (Liberal Party) and Aislinn Clancy (Green Party).

OPSBA's Executive Council and senior staff organized and participated in an Advocacy Day at Queen's Park in November 2025. It was a tremendous success with trustees and staff meetings from all parties (PC, NDP, Liberal, Green Party and one of the Independent members.) Supportive resources and materials included an [OPSBA Advocacy Day Brief](#) and [What People Are Saying About Trustees](#).

OPSBA once again promoted the initiative, *Take Your MPP to School Week*. The objective has been to raise awareness among all MPPs of the role of trustees and to provide MPPs with a first hand understand of the state of Ontario's schools – both the challenges and the achievements. The 2026 Take Your MPP to School Week took place May 19 to 22 – a constituency week for Members of Provincial Parliament. For the first time, the Ontario Principals' Council partnered with OPSBA in promoting and supporting this initiative.

## 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. This past year, President Kathleen Woodcock and Executive Director Stephanie Donaldson represented OPSBA on the CSBA Board of Directors. They participated in CSBA's October 2025 Advocacy Days in Ottawa, meeting with key Members of Parliament and decision makers. This included MP Mike Kelloway, Senator Kim Pate, MP Pauline Rochefort, and Senator Karen Sorensen to discuss shared education priorities and federal advocacy.

The Association also monitors important federal and other provincial legislation including Bill C-15 (Budget 2025 Implementation Act, No. 1), which includes the *National School Food Program Act* receiving Royal Assent, and the recently introduced legislation in Alberta, Bill 25: An Act to Remove Politics and Ideology from Classrooms and Amend the Education Act, 2026.

OPSBA, in conjunction with the CSBA, continues to advocate for important elements of Canada's Bill C-63 (the Online Harms Act) to be refreshed and reintroduced to address new challenges since it officially died on the Order Paper in January 2025.

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

- AMO Annual General Meeting
- AMO Healthy Democracy Project meetings and Healthy Democracy Forum panel discussion
- DemocracyXChange 2026 Summit
- The Canadian Association of Communicators in Education's Ontario Regional Conference and National Conference
- Throne Speech at the Ontario Legislature
- The Dais' Screenbreak Roundtable
- OSTA-AECO Annual General Meeting
- Addressing Vaping in Schools Conference
- Edwin S.H. Leong Centre For Healthy Children Symposium: Connecting Health and Education to Improve Child Well-being
- First Work Amplify Summit
- Signal 49: Bold Ideas for Canada – Senior Leaders
- 2025 CSBA Congress workshop on harnessing leadership for Black students
- High School Too Project Advisory Panel (For Possibility Seeds)
- Ontario Library Association Conference: panel entitled, *From Library Values to Elected Voices: Encouraging Library Professionals to Step into Democracy*

- Canadian Club luncheon with the Minister of Finance with People for Education
- Hosted all members of the CSBA board in August
- Meeting with the Public Health Agency of Canada meeting, along with the CSBA, regarding guidance for Canadians on the health impacts of social media use

The Association saw sustained media coverage on a variety of issues, with media appearances in stories regarding school board governance proposals, education funding, school infrastructure needs, combating anti-Black racism in schools, the impacts of social media on youth, supporting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis 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 2025-2026, 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 2026 Ontario Budget and 2026-27 Core Education Funding. OPSBA's much-read daily "Media Report" service, now in its 14<sup>th</sup> year, provides breaking and feature news updates to hundreds of trustees and board staff.

Since the last OPSBA Annual Report was published in June 2025, at least nine 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.

## Advocacy for the Role of School Board Trustee

School board trustees – Ontario's oldest form of elected representation, dating back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century – continue to play a critical role in ensuring that public education

reflected the needs of local communities while meeting provincial standards. Representing English public district school boards and school authorities serving nearly 1.4 million students, OPSBA focused its government relations and communications efforts on protecting and promoting the role of locally elected trustees during a period of significant provincial policy change.

Throughout the year, the Minister of Education introduced a series of measures aimed at increasing oversight and accountability within the K-12 system. These included multiple instances of direct provincial intervention in school boards, the appointment of supervisors at five OPSBA member boards, and the introduction of new mechanisms related to student achievement and family engagement. Collectively, these actions signalled a clear shift toward greater centralization in education governance.

A key development was the passage of Bill 33, *Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025*, which amended the *Education Act* and came into force in November 2025. The legislation expanded ministerial authority, including the ability to place school boards under supervision for matters deemed to be "in the public interest," assume final approval over school naming decisions, and direct boards to work with police services on school resource officer programs.

These changes raised significant concerns across the sector, as they reduced local decision-making authority and diminished the role of democratically elected trustees. OPSBA responded with a coordinated and strategic advocacy effort regarding these changes and reinforce the importance of local governance. The Association advanced clear, consistent messaging directly to all trustees and school boards that emphasized the value of community-based decision-making and the essential role trustees play in representing students, families, and local priorities – including the voices of First Nations, Black, and student trustees.

This work included direct engagement with government through pre-budget consultations, legislative submissions, and Advocacy Day at

Queen's Park. OPSBA also mobilized member board trustees by providing practical tools to support local advocacy, including template letters, motions, and outreach materials for engagement with MPPs, municipal leaders, and community stakeholders.

Communications efforts played a central role in amplifying this advocacy. OPSBA led proactive and responsive media engagement, including interviews, op-eds, and letters to the editor, while advancing a coordinated digital campaign—*DemocracyIsNotOutdated.ca*—to raise public awareness about the importance of locally elected trustees. The Association also strengthened relationships with education partners, parent groups, and trustee caucuses, ensuring that diverse perspectives informed its advocacy.

In parallel, OPSBA supported trustees and boards with timely information and analysis, including the *OPSBA Emerging Issues* resource, which provided context, key messages, and guidance on governance, accountability, and the broader state of public education.

This work culminated in mid-March as OPSBA brought together groups representing all aspects of publicly funded education in Ontario to express concerns about comments from the Minister of Education regarding the potential elimination of elected school board trustees. The press conference at Queen's Park on March 11 garnered significant media coverage in calling for the following:

- The government and Minister Calandra should undertake broad consultations with education partners before advancing any legislative reforms to school board governance.
- The consultation should include the voices and perspectives of students and parents – including parents of students with disabilities, school boards, education staff, and subject matter experts, and
- The government should outline a detailed plan with clear goals and benchmarks for the return to local democratic oversight at school boards currently under supervision.

It became clear in early April that Minister Calandra was going to introduce legislation

proposing to fundamentally change the governance of Ontario's English public education system. At this time, OPSBA continued to pursue media and government relations strategies in an attempt to moderate the legislation, but on April 13, the minister introduced Bill 101, *Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026*. OPSBA staff reacted swiftly, immediately issuing a memo and key messages to members, and reviewing the legislation for impacts to the sector and the Association itself, before hosting information meetings for the Board of Directors, Chairs, and OPSBA delegates.

The Association was pleased that, through hard work, strong advocacy, and deep community engagement, the elected position of trustee was preserved. This was a meaningful win for the people of Ontario. However, many accountabilities that trustees have held for decades, which ensure that decisions about public education remain close to home, were removed and will now be managed by the Ministry of Education.

There were provisions in the legislation that specifically targeted OPSBA. These included:

- Removal of OPSBA as the central employer bargaining agent and addition of powers for the Minister to move all of OPSBA's labour staff, and assets to the Council of Directors of Education of Ontario (CODE)
- Limiting trustee discretionary expenses, including membership fees in trustee associations
- Prohibiting school boards from paying certain external organization membership fees for trustees or costs to attend non-essential conferences

At the time of publication, it remains unclear the extent to which the regulations and policies associated with the legislation will impact OPSBA's ability to function in the manner it currently does.

Looking ahead, OPSBA will seek to find ways through the challenges on our doorstep. As of the time of publication, there is still much uncertainty.

Through these combined efforts, OPSBA reinforced the value of local democratic

governance in public education and ensured that the voice of trustees remained a central part of provincial education discussions.

## 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.

### Member Board Communications Inquiries

OPSBA staff host a secure Google Sheet accessible to all approved 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 the use of artificial intelligence in communications to employee recognition programs, community engagement strategies, and internal staff communications. Since the last OPSBA Annual Report, about two dozen inquiries have been made.

### School Board Days of Significance and Events Calendar

OPSBA's communications staff annually update and disseminate a School Board Days of Significance and Events Calendar. 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.

## Canadian Association of Communicators in Education (CACE)

In October 2025, OPSBA's government relations and communications staff accepted a Bravo! Award of Distinction for work completed on the refresh of the Association's brand in 2024-25.

As well, OPSBA's Manager of Strategic Communications, T.J. Goertz, continued to serve on the CACE Board of Directors, 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 2025-26 year, T.J.'s portfolio continued to include 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. As of April 2026, OPSBA has 1,469 followers on Instagram, 931 followers on Facebook, and 974 followers on LinkedIn.



SIGN THE PETITION

Keep education  
close to home

SIGN THE PETITION

LEARN MORE

Ontario's public school boards  
give families a real voice in  
education. Now, that voice is at risk.

# 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.

In early 2025, OPSBA reviewed its Awards program to ensure it continues to reflect the Association's mission, vision, values, and strategic priorities. As part of this process, some long-standing awards were retired to make way for the new forms of recognition. Past award winners are available on our website at [www.opsba.org/resources/awards](http://www.opsba.org/resources/awards).

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## Alumni Award

This Award recognizes former Ontario school board trustees who, after completing their trustee service, have continued to make exceptional and lasting contributions to the advancement of public education in Ontario or beyond. This award celebrates the enduring impact of educational leadership and civic engagement, highlighting the influence trustees can have on shaping policy, equity, accessibility, and innovation in public education. The 2026 Alumni Award recipient was Judith Bishop, former trustee, Hamilton-Wentworth DSB.

## Student Success Champion Award

The Student Success Champion Trustee Award is presented annually to one trustee who has demonstrated exceptional leadership and commitment to equity through tangible governance initiatives that have directly contributed to improving outcomes for marginalized students within their school board. This award recognizes trustees who prioritize inclusive education and equitable opportunities through their role in governance, policy, and community engagement. The 2026 Student Success Champion Award recipient was Trustee Angela Lloyd, Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB.

## Emerging Leader Award

The Emerging Leader Award acknowledges the exceptional contributions of a first-term school board trustee who has demonstrated early and impactful leadership aligned with OPSBA's mission, vision, values, and Multi-Year Strategic Priorities. This award celebrates

trustees who are committed to equity, student success, and effective governance at the local level, and who serve as role models for the future of public education leadership in Ontario. The 2026 Emerging Leader Award recipient was Trustee Karla Bailey, Peel DSB.

## Good Governance Award

The Good Governance Award recognizes a Board of Trustees (as a collective body) for demonstrating exemplary leadership, innovation, and integrity through governance practices, initiatives, or projects that have significantly impacted their school board and community. The award celebrates trustees who govern in ways that strongly reflect OPSBA's mission, vision, values, and Multi-Year Strategic Priorities, contributing to the advancement of equitable, student-centered public education. The 2026 Good Governance Award recipient was the Lakehead DSB Board of Trustees.

## Student Achievement Pathways Award

This Award recognizes and celebrates students in Ontario's public schools who have demonstrated outstanding achievement, growth, or contribution through a variety of learning pathways. This includes, but is not limited to, trades and apprenticeships, special education programs, alternative education, entrepreneurship, the arts, co-operative education, Indigenous education programs, or community service initiatives. The 2026 recipient was Anya Guo of the Ottawa-Carleton DSB.

## Outstanding Service Award

This Award recognizes school board staff and/or volunteers whose service directly advances OPSBA's mission, vision, and strategic priorities at their local school board, especially in advocacy, inclusion, equity, sustainability, and student well-being. One recipient is chosen from each OPSBA region\*. The 2026 recipients were:

- Northern – Keith Nutley, Lakehead DSB
- Central West – Janet Jackowski, Peel DSB
- Central East – Kulbir Dhaliwal, Simcoe County DSB
- Western – Edie Duncan, Bluewater DSB

*\*There were no 2026 nominations from the Eastern Region.*

## The Healthy Democracy Student Leadership Award

The Healthy Democracy Student Leadership Award is a partnership—began 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 2025 recipients were:

- Central East: Reagan Tucker, Gravenhurst High School, Trillium Lakelands DSB
- Central West: Emily Cheng, Waterloo Collegiate Institute, Waterloo Region DSB
- Eastern: Gabe Fitzmaurice, Opeongo High School, Renfrew County DSB
- Northern: Isabelle Meeks, Fort Frances High School, Rainy River DSB
- Western: Ishpreet Gill, Kincardine District Senior School, Bluewater DSB

The 2026 recipients will be announced after the publication of this Annual Report and will be included in the 2026-27 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 2026 recipients will be announced in next year's Annual Report.



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

(as of May 2026)

## **Michelle Aarts**

*Second Vice-President*  
Toronto District School Board

## **Cathy Abraham**

*Past President*  
Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board

## **Shannon Binder**

*Vice-Chair, Eastern*  
Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board

## **Donna Danielli**

*Regional Chair, Central West*  
Halton District School Board

## **Susan Humphries**

*Regional Chair, Eastern*  
Renfrew County District School Board

## **Elaine Johnston**

*Chair, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Trustees' Council*  
Algoma District School Board

## **Jan Johnstone**

*First Vice-President*  
Bluewater District School Board

## **Debbie King**

*Chair, Black Trustees' Caucus*  
Toronto District School Board

## **Jaine Klassen Jeninga**

*Regional Chair, Central East*  
Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board

## **Martha MacNeil**

*Vice-Chair, Central West*  
Upper Grand District School Board

## **Arlene Morell**

*Regional Chair, Western*  
Thames Valley District School Board

## **Jason Nesbitt**

*Vice-Chair, North West*  
Superior-Greenstone District School Board

## **Kelley Robertson**

*Vice-Chair, Western*  
Lambton Kent District School Board

## **Dr. Elizabeth Sinclair**

*Vice-Chair, Central East*  
York Region District School Board

## **Bill Steer**

*Regional Chair, North East*  
Near North District School Board

## **Deborah Williams**

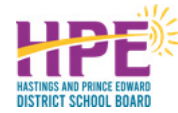
*Enrolment Representative*  
Toronto District School Board

## **Kathleen Woodcock**

*President*  
Waterloo Region District School Board



# Member Boards



# OPSBA STAFF

## Executive Staff and Advisors

**Stephanie Donaldson**  
Executive Director

**Shane Gonsalves**  
Managing Director of  
Government and Public Affairs

**Lisa Reinhardt**  
Managing Director, 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**  
First Nations, Inuit, and Métis  
Trustees' Council Liaison

**Vanessa Trinh**  
Director of Corporate Finance

## Labour Relations

**Alison Warrion**  
Senior Manager of  
Labour Relations

**Tiffany Maia**  
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

**Vivian Fragale**  
Executive Coordinator

**Diana Hong**  
Financial Coordinator



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