



**ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION**

Leading Education's Advocates

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March 12, 2015

To: Mr. Gordon Brown, MP Leeds-Grenville
Chair, Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage (CHPC), Ottawa

Cynara Corbin, Clerk of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

Dear Mr. Brown and Committee Members,

Re: Submission Regarding Bill C-597, An Act to Amend the Holidays Act (Remembrance Day)

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) represents the province's 31 public district school boards. Together our members serve the educational needs of almost 70% of Ontario's elementary and secondary students. In addition to advocacy on behalf of Ontario students, our Association provides services to school boards and to school trustees who are elected to public office through municipal elections or are appointed as First Nation trustees. We are an organization that has a strong history of advocacy for student achievement and well-being and take pride in the contributions we have made to the shaping of education policy in Ontario.

Although we primarily respond to provincial legislation, this proposed federal bill garnered significant media coverage last Fall and became an issue for discussion at many board tables within our membership, including our Board of Directors.

The proposed legislation seeks to have Remembrance Day become a national holiday and we would like to offer you a school board perspective on this proposed change. It is strongly felt that school boards and the education sector are very effective at commemorating this important day with age-appropriate learning and appreciation activities. School boards are deeply concerned that this day would become a "vacation" for many and over time lose its significance and, for these reasons, we do not support such a change.

We believe that November 11 is an important day for all Canadians to honour and recognize the men and women who have served, sacrificed and continue to serve our country. As such, it must be given the respect and dignity it rightly deserves.

The Ontario education system has a responsibility to ensure that each student develops a real understanding and appreciation for significant days such as Remembrance Day. All Canadians, including families new to Canada, must have an appreciation and understanding of the sacrifices that many Canadians made to preserve and protect the way of life that they now embrace. Remembrance Day is an ideal time to introduce students to the importance of remembrance and

Submission to Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage (CHPC), Ottawa

Re: Bill C-23, Fair Elections Act (An Act to Amend the Canada Elections Act and other Acts and to Make Consequential Amendments to Certain Acts)

its relevance in today's society. Veterans' achievements and sacrifices in times of war, military conflict and peace have helped to shape and sustain our modern country.

Students, their families and communities are brought together by school organized ceremonies, events, guest speakers and special projects. These in-school services are compelling by the presence of service men, women and veterans. We fully support the long standing tradition that Remembrance Day be observed during the regular school day and those activities leading up to this day of remembrance.

While this proposed bill remains at the committee level and has yet to be discussed, we strongly suggest committee members consider our comments and be persuaded by our rationale for retaining Remembrance Day as it is, rather than make it a federal statutory holiday.

Sincerely,



Michael Barrett
President
Ontario Public School Boards' Association