



**ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION**

Leading Education's Advocates

Ontario Public School Boards' Association

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Land Use Planning and Appeal System Consultation
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To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Land Use Planning and Appeal System and
Development Charges Systems Review

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.

Information about this consultation was shared with our member boards by the Ministry of Education. A memo (SB31) was sent to all senior business officials and superintendents of planning last fall. We discussed this with trustees who are members of OPSBA's Policy Development Work Team and representatives from the Ontario Association of School Business Officials (OASBO). We are supportive of the government's initiative to ensure systems that are predictable, transparent, cost-effective and responsive to the changing needs of communities. While this particular consultation is limited in scope, there are a number of related planning and capital infrastructure issues that we have received feedback on from our member school boards. As such, we felt that it is important to share all of the comments received.

On the specific matter of items that can be appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), OPSBA supports the position of OASBO as communicated in their correspondence dated January 10, 2014.

Land Use Planning and Appeal System

Last year OPSBA endorsed the submission from the OASBO Planning Committee regarding the Provincial Policy Statement Review as part of the five year review. In that submission we re-stated our belief that schools and their local communities have their own unique characteristics and a 'one size fits all' approach will not work. Individual community needs require local flexibility. This includes our communities in urban, rural, remote and northern areas, including French language and First Nations communities.

In decisions regarding land use planning, it is important that school boards and their planning departments be included in any and all discussions. For example, land use planning and development approvals must consider the resulting potential growth in school board capacities as a result of the introduction of new programs. We are currently mid-way through year 4 of Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) implementation. This year and Year 5 will see significant changes to many school facilities and sites in terms of additions and renovations. Further consideration will also have to be given to any space requirement possibly needed under the current proposed legislation (Bill 143 *Child Care Modernization Act, 2013*) that includes the provision of province-wide before and after school programming for children ages 6-12 years which could result in more students in our schools for longer periods of time. Schools are critical to local communities and require the appropriate space to meet the various and changing demands placed upon them. School boards are willing partners, but our schools require the appropriate space and additions/renovations to implement appropriate programming and must be fully funded.

Strong partnerships between local municipalities and school boards can facilitate the ability of school boards to acquire sites in a timely and economical fashion.

Development Charges Systems Review

We strongly believe that changes need to be made to the Education Development Charges (EDC) regulation as this has been an issue for a number of OPSBA member boards. EDCs are levies that are applied to all new residential and non-residential development, with certain exceptions and are used to fund the acquisition of school sites and related costs to accommodate growth-related pupil needs. Currently, EDC eligibility is determined based on board wide enrolment being greater than capacity. There are a number of boards that have pockets of growth but they are not currently eligible for EDCs because their board wide situation shows excess capacity. For example, this can be seen in the Ottawa-Carleton DSB and Toronto DSB. All of these boards are experiencing areas of growth but currently have overall excess capacity -- the problem is the available capacity is not in the communities where the growth is. Boards also take exception to how utilization of capacity is determined, for example, facilities that house adult education are considered surplus.

Ontario Regulation 20/98 Education Development Charges should be amended:

- to allow eligibility to be determined based on the pocket growth areas so students are not penalized based on geography. This would give the boards a source of revenue to purchase school sites in the growth communities and would take some financial pressure off of the Ministry that must currently fund those sites through the capital grant process;
- to remove the 5 year restriction on the eligibility trigger that would provide a more equitable opportunity for school boards to consider the development of an EDC by-law; and
- to remove existing limitations for eligibility and use of funds to support capital infrastructure. For example, boards should be able to use EDCs to fund underground parking. This would support the

overall theme of a recent Ministry of Education financial consultation that looked at finding ways to modernize and be cost efficient.

In closing we would like to emphasize the need for increased communication and consultation between the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Ministry of Education on such important issues. Last fall OPSBA provided a submission regarding *Building the Next Phase in Ontario's Education Strategy* and had these points that reflect on the importance of municipal partners and schools as community hubs.

Municipal Partnerships

The level of partnerships between school boards and municipalities varies greatly. The school board sector recognizes the value of good working relationships with municipal partners and the benefits in services to the community as a whole where these relationships exist. Benefits can be realized in municipal planning for schools, recreation, libraries, parks, transportation and other public services. A model at the provincial level that offers more collaboration and transparency between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing would assist the partners at the local level to find common ground. A government expectation for the local Member of Parliament to facilitate these kinds of partnerships would be helpful.

Schools as Community Hubs

Schools are a recognized resource in every community. They are welcoming and familiar places for families. As a result of declining enrolment, there are hundreds of schools with space that could accommodate a range of community services that would offer families access to screening for dental, vision and hearing leading to early identification of issues that have an impact on health, well-being and readiness to learn. The school as "community hub" can offer child care services, contact support for newcomers, as well as health and mental health information and referrals. More work needs to be done to eliminate the barriers to this practical use of school facilities. The various levels of government need to consider the value of supporting the cost of opening up the space for these purposes. Currently, under the education funding model a school board can only make the space available on a full cost recovery basis which is frequently a barrier to partners who would otherwise use the facilities. Discussions to find an efficient alternative to wasting this kind of empty community space need to take place among the relevant Ministries as well as municipalities, school boards and community agencies.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments. We look forward to learning more about next steps in this consultation process and hope for proposed changes that support students in our care.

Sincerely,



Michael Barrett, President
Ontario Public School Boards' Association

cc. The Honourable Liz Sandals, Minister of Education