**LOCAL GOVERNMENT WEEK – OCTOBER 18 to 22, 2021**

***#LocalGovWeek***

**The Ontario Public School Boards’ Association participates in the annual celebration of Local Government Week.**

**Did you know....?**

* School board trustees are members of a district school board. They are locally-elected representatives of the public, and they are the community’s advocates for public education.
* School board trustees are the oldest form of elected representation in Ontario. Since 1807, generations of community-minded citizens have made decisions on behalf of local, publicly funded schools, building the foundation of the system we have today.
* The election of school board trustees is governed by the *Education Act* and the *Municipal Elections Act*, *1996*. Both are the laws or rules that trustees follow.
* There are different kinds of trustees:
1. Trustees elected every four years during municipal and school board elections, including more than 320 publicly elected trustees representing 31 public English school boards and three school authorities across Ontario.
2. Indigenous Trustees appointed to the board by their First Nation. More than half of Ontario’s English public English school boards have Indigenous Trustees.
3. Student Trustees elected by the student body of the board. The Ontario Student Trustees' Association (OSTA-AECO) represents more than two million students.
4. Hospital board/school authority trustees are appointed by the Minister of Education for a term of four years, on the same term cycle as publicly elected trustees.
* The Kindergarten-Grade 12 education sector is the second-largest recipient of provincial funding, after healthcare. The provincial government invests more than $25.6 billion each year in education.
* Public school trustees oversee budgets ranging from approximately $43 million to over $3 billion.
* The next municipal election will be held on October 24, 2022.

**About Ontario’s Public Education System**

* Preparing students to become productive and contributing citizens is the foundation of a civil society.
* Ontario’s English public district school boards provide universally accessible education for all students, regardless of their ethnic, racial, or cultural backgrounds; social or economic status; gender; individual exceptionality; or religious preference.
* The English public system is founded on the principle of equity of educational opportunity: every student deserves an opportunity to achieve to his or her fullest potential.
* Public school boards provide high standards in their programs and ensure that there are supports and resources to help all students reach those standards.
* Public school boards also focus on character education to ensure that students develop as caring and responsible members of their community and of Canadian society as a whole.
* Character education embraces values such as Citizenship, Cooperation, Courage, Empathy, Fairness, Honesty, Humility, Inclusiveness, Initiative, Integrity, Kindness, Optimism, Perseverance, Resilience, Respect, and Responsibility.
* English public district school boards, in partnership with parents and caregivers, prepare students for success in whatever field they choose.

**What are the “rules” for school?**

* In Ontario, children and youth between the ages of six and 18 must be enrolled in a formal education program. The province’s *Education Act* and the regulations made under it establish the framework for the delivery of education programs.
* Typically, an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) requires students to complete 30 credits (18 compulsory, 12 optional), pass the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) and fulfill 40 hours of community involvement activities. Temporary changes have been made to graduation requirements for the 2021-22 school year, consistent with the changes made for the 2020-21 school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For this year, the OSSLT requirement for graduation has been removed, and the number of required community involvement hours has been reduced to 20.
* Students who leave school before earning the OSSD may be granted the Ontario Secondary School Certificate**.**

**What is a School Board Trustee?**

School board trustees are the oldest form of elected representation in Ontario. The office has been in existence since 1807 and represents citizens in the education decision-making process.

The election of school board trustees is governed by the *Education Act* and the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*. Both are the laws or rules that trustees follow.

**Trustee Role and Responsibilities:**

* Attend and participate in meetings of the board, including meetings of board committees
* Consult with parents, students and supporters of the board on the board’s multi-year plan
* Bring concerns of parents, students and supporters of the board to the attention of the board;
* Uphold the implementation of any board resolution after it is passed by the board;
* Entrust the day–to-day management of the board to its staff through the board’s director of education;
* Maintain focus on student achievement and well-being; and
* Comply with the board’s code of conduct.

**What are the Responsibilities of a School Board?**

School boards – the elected board of trustees – are responsible for student achievement and well-being, for ensuring effective stewardship of the board’s resources and for delivering effective and appropriate education programs for their students.

The *Education Act* and its regulations set out the services that district school boards and school authorities must offer. The responsibilities of a school board include a key governance role with respect to:

* operating schools according to provincial legislation;
* having a vision statement that reflects the board’s philosophy and local needs and priorities;
* setting the board’s budget within the provincial grants and accompanying regulations;
* implementing curriculum according to ministry curriculum policy;
* developing and delivering other programs that reflect provincial policies and local priorities;
* providing for the hiring of teachers and other staff required in their schools;
* maintaining school buildings and property with regard to student safety and in accordance with provincial legislation; and
* monitoring the policies of the schools and the achievement of students and, through the director of education, holding the entire system accountable for meeting provincial and board standards.

**People in a School Board**

* **Trustees** play a key leadership role in ensuring that schools operate within the standards established by the province, and that the programs and services remain responsive to the communities they serve.
* The **Director of Education** is the chief executive officer and chief education officer of the school board. The director is the sole employee who reports directly to the board and acts as secretary of the board.
* **Supervisory Officers**, often called superintendents, are accountable to the director of education for the implementation, operation, and supervision of educational programs in their schools.
* **Principals** are the educational leaders within their school communities and ensure that the programs that are in place are effective and align with board and ministry policies.
* **Teachers** are the front-line representatives of the education system. Their many activities go beyond instruction and include encouraging students to pursue learning, maintaining classroom discipline, and evaluating students’ learning and progress.
* **Education Workers** include a whole range of people that support students and keep a safe and healthy school environment. Educational Assistants, Early Childhood Educators, Caretakers, School Secretaries, Social Workers, and Speech and Language Pathologists are just some of these.
* **Parents/Caregivers** are critical in the support they provide in the overall education of our students.
* **Students** are the most important stakeholders in our system.

**Important and Current Issues in Education:**

* Current and Upcoming COVID-19 Pandemic Issues
* Anti-Racism Initiatives
* Capital and Local Priority Funding
* Child Care
* Children and Youth Mental Health
* E-learning
* Equity and Diversity
* Facilities (Repair and Backlog)
* French as a Second Language
* Healthy Schools
* Indigenous Education
* Skilled Trades and Apprenticeships
* Special Education
* Student Achievement and Well-Being
* Student Transportation

**A Voice from the Field - Questions/Discussion points**

* Why did you become a school board trustee?
* Describe a day in the life of a school board trustee?
* What qualifications are required to be a school board trustee?
* What kinds of responsibilities do you have in your position?
* Do you feel your job is rewarding? Why?
* What are the greatest impacts that school boards have?
* What are some of the challenges you encounter in carrying out your responsibilities?
* What are some of the current policies your board table is discussing?
* Highlight some of the biggest successes from your board table.
* What are the top three issues or concerns for your school board?

**Questions for the class:**

* Why do you think people run for public office?
* Why is it important to vote in elections?
* What do you think school trustees do?
* What do you think my office looks like?
* Why is it important to have a school board?

*This document was prepared by the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, which represents 31 English public district school boards and 10 public school authorities across Ontario serving more than 1.3 million public elementary and secondary students. The Association advocates on behalf of the best interests and needs of the public school system in Ontario. OPSBA is seen as the credible voice of public education in Ontario and is routinely called on by the provincial government for input and advice on legislation and the impact of government policy directions.*