

Ministry of Education

Minister

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Ontario

April 20, 2018

Ms. Laurie French
President
Ontario Public School Boards' Association
18th Floor, 439 University Avenue
Toronto ON M5G 1Y8

Dear Ms. French,

Thank you for your letter about our proposed next steps related to the 2017 governance engagement. I am pleased to hear that OPSBA is generally supportive of our proposals, and appreciate the opportunity to provide additional information in response to your letter.

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude for OPSBA's collaboration with the ministry as part of this engagement. Ongoing conversations with our education partners are essential to informing the supports that will be most beneficial to school boards. Working together helps us to identify effective practices that foster strong, accountable and transparent school board governance. As a result, we have benefited greatly from your association's submission and follow-up conversations.

To speak directly to the comments in your letter, I want to confirm that the decision to introduce a regulation requiring all boards to have a publicly available trustee code of conduct, and to provide for its regular review, is consistent with the feedback we received. It is also a precursor to supporting boards in their efforts to strengthen local accountability and transparency frameworks. Recognizing the effective practices that boards are currently employing, the requirement to review codes of conduct at the beginning of each term of office would give trustees the opportunity to debate and take ownership of their code, which sets the ethical standards that trustees agree to uphold.

Establishing minimum standards for local codes may be a lengthy process. As you know, trustee conduct is already governed by a number of provincial and federal statutes. Any minimum standards would need to take into account the provisions that govern the conduct, obligations and consequences for breaches of provisions in other Acts in order to avoid the possibility of more than one sanction or legal challenge regarding the same action. Therefore, we are proposing a two-step process.

OPSBA's template for local codes of conduct will be taken into consideration as part of the important discussions ahead of the working group.

I appreciate your recommendations about access to and funding for integrity commissioners and a policy template for electronic participation rules. Your feedback will be considered as we plan our next steps. The ministry will contact the associations for further discussion following the provincial election.

The ministry looks forward to continuing to work with OPSBA and the other trustee associations as part of the code of conduct and trustee honoraria working groups.

Once again, thank you for writing and for your ongoing partnership. I truly appreciate your passion and dedication to ensuring the success of all students, now and in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Indira Naidoo-Harris". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Indira Naidoo-Harris
Minister of Education
Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care

