



**ONTARIO PUBLIC  
SCHOOL BOARDS'  
ASSOCIATION**

**Leading Education's Advocates**

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To: Amarjot Sandhu, MPP (Brampton West), and Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs  
Julia Douglas, Clerk of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

Email: [comm-financeaffairs@ola.org](mailto:comm-financeaffairs@ola.org)

Re: 2020-21 Pre-Budget Consultations

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) would like to take this opportunity to provide our considerations for the 2020-21 pre-budget consultations. OPSBA represents English public district school boards and public school authorities across Ontario, which together serve more than 1.3 million public elementary and secondary students. It is our role to advocate for the provision of stable funding that supports continuous achievement and well-being for all students.

This past week, the Standing Committee heard from school board trustees and staff at consultations throughout the province regarding the importance of education funding, the second-largest funding line in the Ontario budget.

The education budget, through the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) provided annually to school boards, has real and direct impacts on the lives of students, their families and the community. This includes providing access to world-leading STEAM curriculum and instruction in public schools, extracurricular opportunities including an incredibly wide variety of sports and interest-based clubs, and nutrition programs that keep students healthy and engaged in learning each day.

Our Association will be drafting a formal submission to the Ministry of Education regarding the GSN but there are a number of areas of funding that need to be protected and/or enhanced to ensure student achievement and well-being in Ontario. These include: special education and supports for mental health, student transportation, facilities repair and renewal, supports for skilled trades and apprenticeships, and classroom technology and broadband needs.

The Conference Board of Canada has stated that, "Each dollar of public education spending generates \$1.30 in total economic impacts to Ontario." In November, OPSBA worked with Nanos Research to poll Ontarians on a variety of current issues in public education. The research found that 94% of Ontarians agree or somewhat agree that spending in public

education is an investment in the future. Moreover, 61% believe spending money on public education is more important than eliminating the deficit or paying down debt. Education is too important. The government should look elsewhere in the budget to meet the objective of eliminating the deficit.

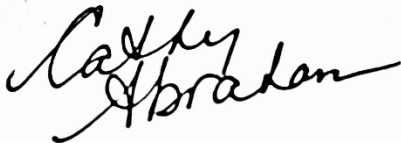
Two-thirds of Ontarians oppose or somewhat oppose having larger class sizes and less course selection in order to save money. As well, two-thirds of Ontarians think funding for education should be set based on the number of students and inflation. While the overall education budget has increased, funding has not kept pace with growth in enrolment - per student funding has in fact, decreased.

In order to address the local conditions and challenges that vary across our province, the education funding formula needs to allow for greater flexibility. For example, issues in rural and remote Ontario can be very different from large urban centres, and therefore locally elected boards must have the ability to address these local needs. We know that Ontarians support the important role that school boards play in their communities; our research found that 83% of Ontarians support or somewhat support school boards having more autonomy to ensure their budgets reflect local needs.

It is our hope that this research can help inform decisions to ensure public education is supported by stable and predictable funding. We know public education is an investment for the future and we will continue to advocate for the conditions that will help all students succeed.

We are confident that trustees and staff in all of our public member boards work very hard to ensure the best use of taxpayer dollars in support of public education. On behalf of all our members, I look forward to continuing these conversations and participating in the GSN consultation.

Regards,



Cathy Abraham  
President  
Ontario Public School Boards' Association

*The Ontario Public School Boards' Association represents English public district school boards and public school authorities across Ontario, which together serve 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*