



**ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION**

Leading Education's Advocates

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Cathy Abraham
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Thursday, May 9, 2019

To: Stephen Crawford, MPP (Oakville) and
Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs
Timothy Bryan, Clerk of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

Email: comm-financeaffairs@ola.org

Re: OPSBA's Submission re: Bill 100 Protecting What Matters Most Act (Budget Measures), 2019

Earlier this year, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) shared a pre-budget submission to this Standing Committee that addressed our educational funding requests. At this time we would like to provide our comments on the two amendments proposed in Schedule 20 - *Education Act*, contained within the government's budget implementation legislation, Bill 100 Protecting What Matters Most Act (Budget Measures), 2019. The first is an alignment of recent amendments regarding the new Reciprocal Education Approach and the second moves the conditions under which school boards can run in-year deficits from the *Education Act* into a regulation.

1) The Reciprocal Education Approach

It is important to note that one of our priorities is Advancing Reconciliation – First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education and we support the Calls to Action of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Reciprocal Education Approach is to replace the former separate terms of Education Services (Tuition) Agreements and Reverse Tuition Agreements and this is anticipated to be effective September 1, 2019. OPSBA's Indigenous Trustees' Council and senior staff participated in the Minister's Working Group that examined legislation and practice regarding agreement language and made recommendations regarding this new approach.

Our members support any actions that enhance the educational opportunities and equity of outcomes for Indigenous students and help these students, their families and their communities. We fully support the ability of Indigenous parents to choose the schools that best meet the needs of their children. We also recognize and respect the jurisdiction of Indigenous communities around their schools.

We request the government continue to support school boards in their efforts to provide seamless transitions for those students entering an Indigenous-operated school. We recommend the working group continue to meet with all stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of this new approach and include communication to the sector prior to September 1, 2019.

2) In-Year Deficits

OPSBA and school boards were hopeful that details regarding this change would have been provided with the release of the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) on April 26, 2019. Although the Minister of Education still

has the authority to approve and authorize in-year deficits, the change will provide the government with more flexibility and the ability to adjust the provisions.

Traditionally school boards have been permitted to utilize deferred revenues for up to 1% of their total proposed annual operating budget without the Minister of Education's approval. School boards rely on this consideration in their budgeting process and its removal could have significant impacts on programming for students. At this time of year, many, if not all boards, are well into their local consultations and are conducting committee and board meetings to make final budget recommendations. As the financial stewards of a school board, trustees must have the local flexibility, provided by the 1%, when planning their education services and supports for students. With no further details at this time, many questions and concerns remain. These include:

- Will a regulation regarding in-year deficits (allowing for their continuation or allowance with conditions) become effective this school year?
- Will the regulation include an appeal process?
- Will school boards be able to access reserve funding and direct this towards their goal of submitting a balanced budget?

OPSBA requests to be part of any consultation regarding the development of this regulation and also requests that no changes be made to the utilization of deferred revenues for this year's budget process. Proper regulation consultation will allow our member boards the appropriate time to make any necessary planning and budget decisions for the following school year.

We look forward to discussing this further with the Ministry of Education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cathy Abraham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cathy Abraham
President
Ontario Public School Boards' Association

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association represents 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.

cc:

The Honourable Lisa Thompson, Minister of Education
Nancy Naylor, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education