



Leading Education's Advocates

Ontario Public School Boards' Association

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To: The Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) welcomes this opportunity to provide feedback and comment on the issue of in-person requirements for Board and Committee meetings. In the spirit of our ongoing collaboration/collaborative working relationship, we have shared the Ministry of Education's survey multiple times with our members and appreciated this extension so that we are able to also share our Association's perspective by consulting with our Education Program and Policy Development Work Groups.

We thank you for following up on the consultation after it had been discussed many times on the calls with school board chairs.

OPSBA recognizes that face-to-face board of trustee meetings allow for rich dialogue, respectful debate and abundant discussion. In-person meetings can often allow for more collegial team work. We also note the importance and impact of non-verbal communications and interactions with staff, guests and in-person delegations and have seen that electronic and hybrid meetings have been successful and support a new working reality. School boards (staff and trustees) have adapted and made operational changes to pivot when needed.

The current in-person meeting obligations require a trustee to be physically present for at least three regular board meetings in a calendar year. Most boards have schedules with several committee meetings and one regular board meeting each month during the school year.

We respect the lived experience commentary from our northern and rural school boards that have large geographic distances to cover and often have challenging weather situations to contend with. These boards should have more options and allowances for the in-person attendance requirement.

We suggest that changes be made to allow more flexibility for northern and rural members to participate electronically, if they are unable to attend in-person the three required meetings in a calendar year due to extreme weather conditions and/or significant distances. These changes would be applicable to all members of the board (not just the Chair), including the Director of Education.

Any amendments should be applicable to regular board meetings, committee meetings, statutory committees, as well as all other types of committees. Each board is unique and has determined the types of committees needed to support their students and communities – this is always documented in local board by-laws.

We look forward to the ministry sharing the results of their consultation with the sector and discussion about what amendments might be made to [Ontario Regulation 463/97 – Electronic Meetings and Meeting Attendance](#) to support this request for flexibility.

Sincerely,

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

Cathy Abraham
President
Ontario Public School Boards' Association

cc.

Nancy Naylor, Deputy Minister, Education
Patrick Case, Assistant Deputy Minister, Education Equity Secretariat
Dasha Androusenkov, Deputy Director, Stakeholder Relations, Minister's Office

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.