



Annual Report 2023-24



Ontario Public School
Boards' Association

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Mission, Vision, and Values

MISSION

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) advocates for public education in Ontario.

VISION

OPSBA will be public education's expert voice, promoting a high-quality system, focused on improving every student's success and well-being.

VALUES

OPSBA operates by the following guiding principles:

-  Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
-  Truth and Reconciliation
-  Valuing Student Voice
-  Quality and Innovation
-  Environmental Stewardship, Good Governance, Accountability, Collaboration, and Integrity



Your hard work, passion, and unwavering belief in the power of public education have been the driving force behind every milestone we've achieved.

"We've come a long, long way together, through the hard times and the good. I have to celebrate you, baby, I have to praise you like I should". That line, sung by Camille Yarbrough, and later famously sampled by Fatboy Slim in his 1999 hit Praise You, eloquently sums up my thoughts after six years as OPSBA President. We've been through a change in government, public discussions on many issues of critical importance to our students, and even a long, long pandemic.

In 2018, I embarked on a journey with a singular commitment: to make the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) the expert voice of public education. Today, I can say we are well on our way to that lofty goal, and as a result, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude.

This past year has been our busiest yet – a testament to the tireless dedication of each and every trustee across our member boards. From bustling Toronto to Moose Factory, Morrisburg, Windsor, and Atikokan, it is the commitment of our trustees that has propelled us forward. Your hard work, passion, and unwavering belief in the power of public education have been the driving force behind every milestone we've achieved.

Together, we have forged a legacy of leaving public education in Ontario in a better place than we found it. As I prepare to step down from my role as President in July, I do so with absolute confidence in the future of OPSBA. Our association is in capable hands, with many thanks to the remarkable team of staff who have been instrumental in our success.

But amidst all the strategic planning, policy debates, and advocacy efforts, let's never forget our ultimate purpose: children and youth. Every decision we make, every initiative we undertake, is ultimately for the betterment

of their lives and futures. It is this unwavering focus on the well-being and success of our students that gives meaning to our work.

I often ask colleagues, many of whom I'm meeting for the first time, "What is your why?" I've learned over the years that in every corner of this province, trustees are driven by a profound sense of purpose – their why is our students.

As I bid farewell, I want to express my deepest gratitude to all of you. Together, we have achieved great things, and I have no doubt that under new leadership, OPSBA will continue to thrive and make a lasting impact.

Thank you for the privilege of serving as your President. OPSBA will forever hold a special place in my heart.

CATHY ABRAHAM
President



As I wrap up my first full school year as Executive Director of OPSBA, I look back on the past 12 months and immediately recognize how much change our public education system has experienced once again.

Throughout this period of transformation, our association has remained steadfast in our commitment to effective advocacy, stability amidst change, and driving constant progress in the pursuit of student success and well-being.

Our advocacy efforts have been wide-ranging and impactful, addressing issues that are crucial to equitable access to high-quality public education for all students. We have vigorously advocated for the implementation and enhancement of school food and nutrition programs, recognizing the fundamental role nutrition plays in supporting student learning and well-being. This advocacy extends to our support for school boards who have chosen to take part in recent litigation against social media companies. We know social media products, intentionally designed for compulsive use, have rewired the way children think, behave, and learn.

Through the Indigenous Trustees' Council, we have pushed for more comprehensive Indigenous language programs. We are all aware that we must act quickly to revitalize and maintain Indigenous languages in Ontario or risk losing them forever.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion have been a central focus of our advocacy efforts, as we have pushed for the incorporation of more Black History curriculum. Additionally, OPSBA has advocated for increased capital investments in schools, recognizing the critical importance of safe and modern learning environments in fostering student success.

The implementation of 2023's *Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act* brought about a flurry of regulatory changes, demanding swift and strategic responses from OPSBA's dedicated trustee work groups and support staff. We've been extremely proactive in supporting our members in navigating these changes while advocating

for policies that prioritize student well-being and academic achievement. I am extremely proud that we were able to secure several positive changes to many of the proposed regulations through our dedication, collaboration, and hard work.

OPSBA is proud of our role with the Canadian School Boards Association and our national efforts to safeguard public education and local democracy along with our provincial and territorial counterparts. OPSBA is honoured to host the 2024 Canadian School Boards Association Congress and National Trustees' Gathering on Indigenous Education in Toronto this year.

Central to our mission is the continuous support and professional development of trustees through new opportunities like the OPSBA Leaders Academy. On the collective bargaining front, we have now successfully negotiated deals with all of our labour partners, ensuring fair outcomes and labour peace until at least 2026.

I extend my gratitude to our member board trustees, stakeholders, and dedicated staff for their unwavering commitment and collaboration. Together, we will continue to navigate change, advocate tirelessly, and drive progress in creating a high-quality, equitable, and inclusive education system for all students in Ontario.

On the following pages, we go into greater detail on our advocacy and actions from the past year, of which our members were a critical part. Thank you for all you do in support of Ontario's students.

STEPHANIE DONALDSON
Executive Director



How We Serve Our Members



Access to financial savings stemming from interventions on copyright tariffs, and natural gas and electricity rates



United and credible voice in advocacy and action in legislative and policy changes



Effective leadership in collective bargaining



High quality professional development opportunities for school trustees



Media relations, social media, and other communications support on key issues



Practical support for complying with legislative and regulatory change



Strategic relations with education partners across Ontario and Canada

(Data is as of May 2024, since publication of 2022-23 Annual Report)

The Year in Review

ONTARIO'S ENGLISH PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

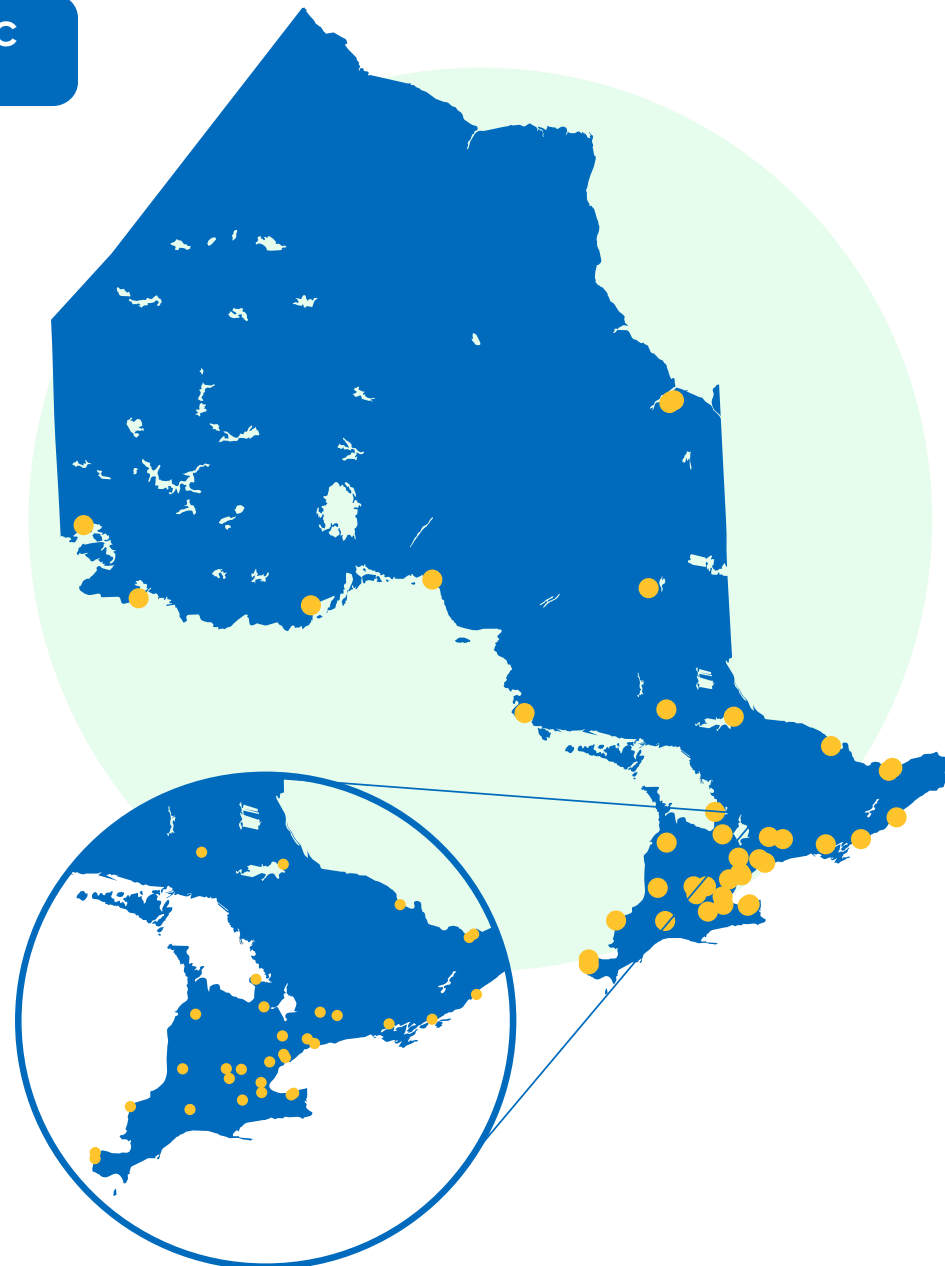
31 district school boards

10 school authorities and treatment centres

37 appointed and self-identified elected Indigenous trustees

317 publicly elected trustees

27 appointed school authority and treatment centre trustees



OPSBA

11 Executive Council members

49 Board of Directors members

5 Regions

24 Work Team members

OUR WORK

277 attendees at the Public Education Symposium

173 attendees at the 2023 Annual General Meeting and Program

171 attendees at the Education Labour Relations and Human Resources Symposium

16 written submissions to government

23 Board of Directors and Executive Council Meetings

4 Trustee Orientation Sessions

3 new OPSBA policies approved

402 media mentions

5 Indigenous Trustees' Council Meetings

7 Black Trustees' Caucus Meetings

10 Regional Meetings

9 Work Group meetings

OPSBA's Multi-Year Strategic Priorities

Guided by the Association's Mission, Vision, and Values, OPSBA's advocacy and support for school boards focuses on the following multi-year strategic priorities:

Student Success, Equity, and Well-Being

OPSBA promotes and advances high-quality, equitable, and inclusive learning environments to support student success and well-being.

Truth and Reconciliation

OPSBA develops and strengthens relationships to facilitate access to programs, resources, and supports for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students that reflect the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

Local School Board Governance

OPSBA supports the role and leadership of local, democratically elected school boards in Ontario's English public education system.

Effective Relationships and Sustainable Resourcing

OPSBA works with members, partners, the government, and federations/unions to ensure that fiscal and human resources match school board needs and priorities.

The following pages describe the actions OPSBA has taken in the 2023-24 school year to support the multi-year strategic priorities.



**Student
Success, Equity,
and Well-Being**

OPSBA WORK GROUPS

Members of OPSBA’s two Work Groups continue to play a meaningful role in advancing the Association’s identified priorities by proactively providing feedback and responding to relevant education issues and consultations.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORK GROUP

The Policy Development Work Group (PDWG) was regularly engaged and involved throughout this school year with much work devoted to the legislative amendments stemming from Bill 98, *The Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act*. Trustees were extremely efficient and responsive to unpredictable consultation timelines, providing quality, thoughtful, and authentic feedback based on their on-the-ground local experience.

The focus of the work and discussions supported the Association’s priorities of Student Success, Equity, and Well-Being; Local School Board Governance; and Effective Relationships and Sustainable Resourcing.

OPSBA continues to invite external guest speakers to work group meetings to demonstrate the Association’s broad stakeholder connections and build on existing relationships. Two valuable resources continue to be David Wright, Associate Director – Corporate Services, Durham District School Board, who provides support with regular education finance updates, and Sheila MacKinnon of Shibley Righton LLP, who provides dependable legal counsel.

Other guests throughout the year included:

- **Didem Proulx**, ADM, Capital and Business Supports Division, Ministry of Education
- **Andrea Dutton**, Director, Capital Policy Branch
- **Clayton La Touche**, Assistant Deputy Minister (Acting), Student Support and Field Services Division
- **Shirley Carder**, Director, Mental Health, Ministry of Education
- **Venetta Miranda**, Manager (Acting), Strategic Planning Unit, Ministry of Education
- **Magdalena Stec** and Patrick Smith from Elections Ontario
- **Sanjay Dhebar**, new Chair of the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)
- New Parliamentary Assistants **MPP Billy Pang** and **MPP Natalie Pierre**
- **Lindsay Mazzucco**, CEO, CIVIX

In addition to the items led by the guest speakers, the topics for work group consultations and discussion included:

- Annual Professional Learning Plan for Trustees / Professional Development
- Applying EDI Lens to policy, programs and decision making
- Board Self-Assessment Work
- Director of Education Performance Appraisal
- Disposition of Surplus Property
- In-person Attendance Requirements for Board and Committee Meetings (Ontario Regulation 463/97)
- Integrity Commissioner Qualifications, Code of Conduct Complaint Process, Trustee Code of Conduct Sanctions – Maximum Reduction of Honoraria
- Municipal Governance
- National School Food Policy and Private Members’ Bill C-322 – National Framework for a School Food Program Act
- Policy/Program Memorandum 128: The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct.
- Policy/Program Memorandum 169: Student Mental Health
- Provincial Budget
- Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines
- Schools in Joint Use Facilities and on a Shared Site
- The Grants for Student Needs & Planning and Priorities Funding
- Wilfrid Laurier University/OPSBA Local Government Week Research Project Results and Resources

Areas for ongoing consideration

The work group will continue its work on implementation issues related to Bill 98, *The Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act*. Other areas of continued advocacy will include local governance, municipal elections review, and expanding the Association outreach with key stakeholders. OPSBA will continue to also work with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) on the Healthy Democracy Project and with the Canadian School Boards Association (CSBA) on the implementation of the National School Food Policy.



WORK GROUP MEMBERS (2023-24)

- **Donna Edwards**, Durham, Central East
- **Shelley Laskin**, Toronto, Central East (Chair)
- **Amy Collard**, Halton, Central West
- **Karla Bailey**, Peel, Central West
- **Robin Hutcheon**, Limestone, Eastern
- **Michel LaBonte**, Upper Canada, Eastern
- **Jennifer Sarlo**, Algoma, Northern (E)
- **Patricia Johansen**, Lakehead, Northern (W)
- **Julia Burgess**, Greater Essex County, Western (Vice-Chair)
- **Robert Hunking**, Avon Maitland, Western
- **Howard Archibald**, Ontario North East, Indigenous Trustees’ Council Representative

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL LIAISON

Kathleen Woodcock, First Vice-President, Waterloo Region

ALTERNATES

- **Nadeem Mahmood**, York Region, Central East
- **Ralf Mesenbrink**, Upper Grand DSB, Central West
- **John McAllister**, Upper Canada, Eastern
- **Judy Kosmerly**, Rainbow, Northern (E)
- **Jason Nesbitt**, Superior-Greenstone, Northern (W)
- **Jane Bryce**, Lambton Kent, Western
- **Marilyn McLeod**, Moose Factory Island DSAB, Indigenous Trustees’ Council Representative

EDUCATION PROGRAM WORK GROUP

Government Consultations

OPSBA, through the Education Program Work Group (EPWG), provided responses to provincial government consultations and advocated through letters to the Minister of Education. Jointly with the PDWG, the EPWG took positions on several program-related issues and made submissions to the provincial and federal governments, including consultations regarding the Accelerated Apprenticeship Pathway Proposal, the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario’s proposed Digital Privacy School Charter, as well as input into the OPSBA Grants for Student Needs (GSN) submission.

Ontario’s Education Partner Discussion Table

The Education Partner Discussion Table collaboratively created a discussion paper entitled *Beyond knowledge: Preparing students for an uncertain future* that was released in May 2023. The Table, which represented Ontario’s K to post-secondary education partners, was brought together to share evidence, insights, and hopes drawn out of the pandemic experience to collaboratively reframe and reimagine the future of learning and teaching in Ontario’s publicly funded education systems. Conversations among education partners about possibilities for reimagined schools were grounded in a commitment to adapt systems to better meet the strengths, aspirations, interests and needs of future students. OPSBA created an advocacy action plan to engage in dialogue among education stakeholders to begin to answer the discussion questions and promote the vision.

Indigenous Education

A report from the Indigenous Trustees’ Council is a standing item on the EPWG agenda to assist in aligning advocacy efforts. The EPWG continues to advocate for the implementation of Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Committee’s Final Report with regards to a need for a mandatory curriculum.

Online Learning and the Ontario e-Learning Consortium

OPSBA has continued to engage in ongoing discussions with the Ontario e-Learning Consortium (OeLC) leadership to support their role in offering online courses to 55 member boards (28 Public and 27 Catholic) representing students who reside in both urban and rural areas throughout Ontario. OPSBA has participated in the Ministry of Education Online Learning Working Group that discusses the progress made, and any challenges in, implementing online courses in meeting the mandatory two-credit graduation requirement for students.

French as a Second Language

French as a Second Language (FSL) continues to be identified, both in OPSBA’s GSN submission and in discussion with the Ministry of Education, as a priority area that requires a provincial focus to address issues impacting school boards’ ability to deliver high-quality and sustainable FSL programming and instruction. OPSBA, through the EPWG, has been successful in securing ongoing annual funding from both the Governments of Ontario and Canada through 2025. This funding is to support school boards in the mobilization and implementation of evidence-based strategies and practices in the recruitment, hiring, professional support, and retention of FSL teachers and education workers.

OPSBA has created a dedicated FSL microsite, which is a repository for all the research reports, evidence-based resource documents, and videos that have been created and distributed to school boards since 2017. This year, OPSBA added FSL experiential learning educator and student resources to support school boards in implementing FSL STEM resources for Grades 6 to 9 that connect French language to authentic and real-world STEM activities.

Specialist High Skills Major in Education

OPSBA continues to promote two Specialist High Skill Majors (SHSM) in the Non-Profit Sector in Education stream. One stream was specifically designed for Grade 11 and 12 students in FSL programs (core, extended, and immersion) and was implemented in the 2023–24 school year. OPSBA has created many supportive resources for school boards to assist in the implementation of the new SHSM, which can be found on the OPSBA microsite for FSL related resources.

The Ontario Coalition for Children and Youth Mental Health

OPSBA was the founding member of the Coalition in 2010. Through the EPWG, the Coalition provides ongoing advice to the Ministry of Education. The Coalition position paper *Let’s put our heads together* was released in November 2022 and continues to be quoted and referenced in terms of influencing new ministry initiatives. It was intended to summarize the current research on children and youth mental health and addictions, and identified goals with rationale for action, along with evidence-informed recommendations. The recommendations are aligned with *Right time, right care: Strengthening Ontario’s mental health and addictions system of care for children and young people* (School and Community System of Care Collaborative, 2022). The recent addition of a Collaborative Health and Education Provincial Coordination Table, which has both OPSBA and Coalition representation, was a specific recommendation from the Coalition position paper. The Coalition engaged in a project, funded by the Ministry of Education, to gather information from parents/caregivers with the goal of supporting student mental health. Working with partners on the Coalition, focus groups and a survey were used to gather feedback about the needs and kinds of resources that would best help. The data gathered will inform the work of School Mental Health Ontario in the creation of information for parents/caregivers.

Committees

OPSBA staff contributed to the following provincial committees in 2023–24:

- EQAO Advisory Committee
- Teacher Supply and Demand Action Table Working Group
- Online Learning Working Group
- FSL Provincial Working Group
- Collaborative Health and Education Provincial Coordination Table
- PPM 128: Provincial Code of Conduct Implementation Task Force

WORK GROUP MEMBERS (2023-24)

Christine Thatcher,
Durham, Central East

Neethan Shan,
Toronto, Central East

Kathy McDonald,
Peel, Central West

Carol Ann Sloat,
Grand Erie, Central West

Lynn Scott,
Ottawa-Carleton, Eastern

Carole Dufort,
Upper Canada, Eastern

Marie Murphy-Foran,
Algoma, Northern (E)
(Vice-Chair)

Dave Cornish,
Keewatin-Patricia, Northern (W)

Patricia Smith,
Avon Maitland, Western

Jan Johnstone,
Bluewater, Western (Chair)

Lisa Corbiere-Addison,
Rainbow, Indigenous
Trustees’ Council
Representative

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL LIAISON

Kathryn Pierroz,
Second Vice-President,
Rainy River

ALTERNATES

Carolyn Butterworth,
York Region, Central East

Carla Johnson,
Waterloo Region,
Central West

Karen McGregor,
Limestone, Eastern

Julie Bertram,
Near North, Northern (E)

Leah Vanderwey,
Lakehead, Northern (W)

Beth Mai,
Thames Valley, Western

Roberta Northmore,
Lambton Kent, Indigenous
Trustees’ Council
Representative

SUBMISSIONS

Throughout the year, Policy Development and Education Program Work Group members provided direct and indirect input on the following matters:

June 7, 2024	OPSBA submission regarding the regulatory posting for Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act, 2024
June 6, 2024	OPSBA letter to the Ministry of Education regarding information gathering on kindergarten
May 2, 2024	OPSBA submission regarding Bill 185, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024 and proposed amendments to the Planning Act
April 2, 2024	OPSBA Submission regarding three regulatory postings (Integrity Commissioner / Code of Conduct, Trustee Sanctions, In-person Attendance Requirements)
January 19, 2024	OPSBA Letter to Minister Chrystia Freeland regarding the 2024 Federal Budget and a National School Food Program
January 11, 2024	OPSBA Submission to the 2024 Ontario Pre-Budget Consultations
December 14, 2023	OPSBA Letter to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities Regarding Private Members' Bill C-322
November 17, 2023	OPSBA Submission regarding the Accelerated Apprenticeship Pathway Proposal Consultation
November 9, 2023	OPSBA Submission regarding 2024-25 Education Funding and the Grants for Student Needs
November 2, 2023	OPSBA Submission to Ontario's Regulatory Registry for postings for Bill 98, <i>The Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, 2023</i> : Director of Education Performance Appraisal
October 19, 2023	OPSBA Submission to Ontario's Regulatory Registry for postings for Bill 98, <i>The Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, 2023</i> : Disposition of Surplus Property and Schools on a Shared Site
September 29, 2023	OPSBA Black Trustees' Caucus Submission to the Ontario Human Rights Commission's Consultation on Anti-Black Racism in Education
August 24, 2023	OPSBA Letter to the Honourable Jenna Sudds, federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development
August 21, 2023	Indigenous Trustees' Council Letter to Minister Stephen Lecce
July 11, 2023	OPSBA letter to the Education Equity Secretariat regarding OPSBA Professional Development
July 6, 2023	OPSBA submission regarding Bill 98 regulations
June 9, 2023	OPSBA Indigenous Trustees' Council (ITC) Submission on 2023-2024 Indigenous Education Priorities
May 26, 2023	OPSBA letter regarding in-person school board meetings

BLACK TRUSTEES' CAUCUS

The Black Trustees' Caucus (BTC) of OPSBA aims to provide a safe and supportive platform for publicly elected or appointed trustees who identify as Black, fostering collaboration to influence positive change within the Ontario public education system.

While focusing on the needs of Black students, the BTC also strives to support the needs of all children. By sharing lived experiences, BTC members form a collective provincial voice and facilitate knowledge-sharing within and across all school boards. In the 2023-24 school year, Peel DSB Trustee Kathy McDonald chaired the BTC, with York Region DSB Trustee Dr. Elizabeth Sinclair serving as Vice Chair.

As part of OPSBA, the BTC is aligned with the Association's Multi-Year Strategic Priorities, which prioritize student success, equity, and well-being. The Caucus endeavours to hold bimonthly meetings attended by Black-identifying trustees and allies, as well as OPSBA staff representatives. All trustees and student trustees from member boards and school authorities who identify as Black are encouraged to participate.

The BTC, in collaboration with OPSBA staff, established their terms of reference outlining Caucus operating norms and scope of work. These were incorporated into OPSBA policy at the AGM in June 2023.

In 2023-24, BTC members were actively engaged in three priority areas:



Communication and Advocacy



Governance



Strategic Planning

Caucus members regularly participate in initiatives to address educational issues impacting Black students and families, both through participation in research and community engagement. In April 2024, BTC representatives engaged with Minister of Education Stephen Lecce and Parliamentary Assistant Billy Pang in a virtual meeting on various topics, including the BTC's submission to the Ontario Human Rights Commission's consultation on Anti-Black Racism in Education, mandated Black History curriculum, the Graduation Coach Program for Black Students, enhanced community engagement, and broadened accountability measures for tracking the achievement of Black students. The BTC strategic priorities were reviewed and reaffirmed, with a commitment to developing actionable objectives as a next step. Additionally, BTC members provided input during consultations leading to the development of OPSBA strategic priorities and professional learning plan, policy, and program advocacy, and the 2024-25 Grants for Student Needs.

Truth and Reconciliation



INDIGENOUS TRUSTEES' COUNCIL

The Indigenous Trustees' Council (ITC) of OPSBA is a group of trustees who bring expertise and experience to the Association's advocacy and action. It is composed of First Nations trustees appointed to school boards, and other Indigenous trustees – including trustees who identify as Indigenous – elected through the municipal electoral process.

The members come from diverse professional backgrounds, and have included teachers and former teachers, education directors, post-secondary education academics and professionals, health care professionals, counsellors, staff from various Indigenous organizations, First Nation Chiefs and councilors, private sector management, and non-profit executive administration, among others.

The ITC meets regularly to guide OPSBA in its strategic priorities and operational activities, discuss emerging issues and concerns occurring in Indigenous education, determine advocacy efforts, and mobilize specific activities for the benefit of all students in Ontario. OPSBA staff support ITC meetings, which are open to all trustees and Indigenous student trustees who are interested in advocating for Indigenous education.

Over the 2023-2024 school year, the ITC was led by Algoma DSB Trustee Elaine Johnston, who served as ITC Chair. Grand Erie DSB Trustee Claudine VanEvery-Albert served as Vice-Chair.

Over the past year, the ITC engaged in several significant activities, including the following:

1

INDIGENOUS STUDENT TRUSTEE GATHERING

Indigenous Student Trustees from six Ontario public school boards gathered in Sault Ste. Marie on October 13 and 14, 2023, for a weekend of networking, leadership development, and confidence-building. The students were able to engage with each other safely and confidently on the unique opportunities, issues, and challenges experienced as student leaders, but more specifically, as Indigenous Student Trustees.

2

ADVANCING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Advancing the priority of Indigenous language revitalization and Indigenous languages curriculum was a topic of significant importance. The ITC has repeatedly noted these concerns and need for priority in several meetings with officials from the Ministry of Education. The ITC was inspired by the Elders' Endorsement Model work that was shared by Education Officer Romaine Mitchell and featured in a keynote presentation at the 2024 Public Education Symposium (PES). The ITC looks forward to supporting the advancement of this important and promising initiative.

3

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION FUNDING

Over the 2023-2024 school year, changes were introduced to the way in which Indigenous education is funded in Ontario. The ITC discussed and noted concerns to the ministry, while continuing to monitor the implementation of the new funding approach.

4

PUBLIC EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM MEET AND GREET

The Indigenous Trustees indicated a desire for a meeting to network with each other more informally. This opportunity was made possible at PES in January. Although originally intended to be a casual and informal discussion, the meeting became a profound Sharing Circle of issues and concerns in Indigenous education, as represented by the various school boards that were present. Parliamentary Assistant Patrice Barnes joined the Circle to introduce herself and meet the ITC members in attendance and was able to listen to some of the sharing.

5

INDIGENOUS CURRICULUM REVISION

ITC members participated in various elements of curriculum revision processes and engaged in Ministry of Education meetings that were specific to Indigenous curriculum revision updates. Call-outs from the Ministry of Education pertaining to opportunities to participate in curriculum revision processes were shared with ITC members to share further with each of their own networks. The Indigenous Curriculum Revision process continued to be a significant area of discussion and concern.

6

PLANNING FOR THE NATIONAL TRUSTEES' GATHERING ON INDIGENOUS EDUCATION (NTGIE)

The ITC established a committee to support the planning of the 2024 National Trustees' Gathering on Indigenous Education (NTGIE). The committee, and the ITC overall, has been committed to developing an engaging program while also raising awareness about how to conduct Indigenous events in a respectful way.

**Local
Governance**



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Empowering Trustees through Innovative Professional Development

OPSBA leads the charge in pioneering professional development initiatives that empower trustees and board employees. From symposia to regional workshops, our programs provide timely insights into emerging education issues, equipping trustees with the skills and knowledge necessary for informed decision-making.

OPSBA drives governance excellence. Through our initiatives, trustees are empowered to initiate vital discussions, champion innovative solutions, and enhance student outcomes across Ontario.

OPSBA Leaders Academy

In the fall of 2023, OPSBA launched a series of governance lunch and learn sessions called **The OPSBA Leaders Academy**. The sessions were designed to reach a province-wide audience through virtual platforms and were offered free of charge, fostering participation and engagement.

September 20, 2023	In the Boardroom, How Great Boards Meet
October 18, 2023	Meaningful Engagement: How to hear from the voices that matter on the issues that are important
November 22, 2023	Delegations: Opportunities to hear from the public and what to do when disruptions get in the way

Sessions were presented by consultant **Marion Thomson Howell** and drew an average of 100 participants.

90% of survey respondents who attended the sessions said they were "likely" or "very likely" to apply their Leaders Academy learning back at their boards.

OPSBA conferences provide trustees and school board staff with dynamic, in-person platforms for professional learning and networking.

CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

2023 OPSBA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

At OPSBA's AGM, members determine priorities and directions for the coming year, elect officers, and plan for the future. The event also offers a comprehensive professional development program for trustees.

The 2023 OPSBA AGM took place at the Blue Mountain Resort near Collingwood, Ontario from June 8 to 10. OPSBA welcomed over 170 attendees to the conference where OPSBA's 35th year was celebrated. Keynote speaker **Karl Subban** joined us and shared his vision for success. We also heard from keynote speakers **Toni Lauzon** (Supporting Every Student's Mental Health and Well-Being) and **Njeri Sojourner-Campbell** (Human Rights and Equity Priorities for School Boards). The Toronto DSB and Simcoe Country DSB participated in a panel discussion showcasing Successful Director of Education and Chairperson Relationships.



Very useful and foundational information was shared. Also useful are the real discussions about current issues and concerns.





CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

2023 NORTHERN MEETING AND PROGRAM

OPSBA was pleased to host Northern trustees and directors in Sault Ste. Marie on October 13 and 14 for the first in-person Northern Meeting and Program since 2019. Northern boards gathered for professional learning and to discuss Northern priorities. We welcomed keynote speakers **Mitch Case** (Métis Nation) who spoke about Métis communities in Ontario and self-government and **Dr. Jonathan Pitt** (Nipissing University) who delivered the presentation Planning Pathways to Decolonization. Attendees were also treated to visit from the Algoma District School Board's Trades Trailer where they got to experience the trades hands on. Concurrent to the Northern Meeting, and as noted in the report from the Indigenous Trustees' Council, OPSBA was delighted to host Indigenous Student Trustees from across the province for a day of learning and confidence development.



CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

2024 PUBLIC EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM (PES)

On January 25 and 26, 2024, OPSBA welcomed nearly 300 attendees to PES in Toronto. This leading professional development symposium, specifically designed for school board leaders, offered dynamic sessions on topics directly affecting the role of the trustee and the broader environment within which school boards operate.

This year's symposium theme was *Leadership Excellence: Strengthening Public Education Together*. Trustee learning focused on governance and leadership. OPSBA welcomed TVO's **Steve Paikin** who spoke about the difficult dance between education and politics. OPSBA was also thrilled to welcome **Romaine Mitchell** (Indigenous Education Office, Ministry of Education) who addressed the group with a keynote address entitled *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action – What Happened? What Can I Do? How Can I Help?* Romaine also delivered a session on Indigenous Language Revitalization. On Day 2, OPSBA was joined by the Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario trustees for a keynote presentation on Leadership and Emotional Intelligence delivered by **Jamelle Lindo**.



I thought the variety of session offerings and speakers were very pertinent to our times. The event was very well organized.

Minister of Education **Stephen Lecce** addressed the group via video and we were pleased to welcome Parliamentary Assistant **Patrice Barnes** who attended the PES meetings of the Black Trustees' Caucus and Indigenous Trustees' Council.

The conference continued with a variety of workshops and sessions on topics such as Working with Municipalities, School Food Programs, Public Relations Challenges, Media Literacy, and Education Finance.

OPSBA was also pleased to offer special professional learning designed exclusively for School Board Chairs, Vice Chairs and Directors of Education. The goal for these tailored sessions was to enhance a board's ability to run effective meetings and properly manage disruptions. Funded by the Ministry of Education, the sessions offered were Running Effective Meetings (presented by **Marion Thomson Howell**) and Human Rights and Equity Issues facilitated by Hicks Morley's **Njeri Sojourner-Campbell**.



CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

2024 EDUCATION LABOUR RELATIONS AND HUMAN RESOURCES SYMPOSIUM

On April 25 and 26, 2024, more than 200 guests joined OPSBA for the Education Labour Relations and Human Resources Symposium in Toronto.

Trustees, Directors of Education, Supervisory Officers and Human Resources and Labour Relations practitioners gathered to share, strategize, and learn about next and best practices and explore practical solutions to the challenges faced by Ontario school boards.

The symposium featured a keynote address by **Robert Richler** (Partner, Bernardi Human Resource Law) who spoke about Employment Law and Human Resources in the Age of Artificial Intelligence. The symposium also featured 16 workshops on topics such as Cybersecurity, Employee Privacy, Online Misconduct, Equity Audits, Mental Health, Pay Equity, Workplace Investigations, and Attendance and Sick Leave.



CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

REGIONAL MEETINGS

OPSBA's five regional councils – Northern, Western, Eastern, Central East, and Central West – share information related to issues and matters affecting their school boards with the Executive Council and Board of Directors. In the 2023-24 school year, the member boards and school authorities of each region held meetings via Zoom and in-person throughout the year, including in November and April. The Northern Region continued to meet virtually.



LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

OPSBA is a non-partisan association and as such, advocates for public education regardless of which political party is in power at Queen’s Park. The Association works with key decision makers and stakeholders on many advocacy initiatives to support its priorities.

OPSBA monitors legislation, regulations, and policy directions that could affect students and member boards and school authorities. With the support of our Work Groups, Indigenous Trustees’ Council, Black Trustees’ Caucus, Executive Council, Board of Directors, senior staff provide submissions and feedback to many government consultations.

Provincial Updates are shared with all member boards on a regular basis and our advocacy efforts can be seen at all levels of government.

Municipal

OPSBA continues to build a deeper relationship with AMO. Executive Director Stephanie Donaldson is a member of their Healthy Democracy Project Advisory Group. OPSBA fully supports the Project’s objective to, “promote the value and importance of municipal governments in Ontario’s political system, while focusing on the importance of diversity of leadership and perspectives.”

OPSBA worked with AMO and other partners, including CIVIX, Equal Voice, and The Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO), to promote Local Government Week (LGW). This week aims to increase youth and public awareness about the important role local government plays in our communities. OPSBA created resources to facilitate in-person and virtual sessions with students in Grade 5 or 10 classrooms, including a PowerPoint presentation and video. In addition to classroom visits, trustees were encouraged to connect and share information with municipal counterparts.

OPSBA has also partnered with AMO on the creation of the new Healthy Democracy Student Leadership Award, which is being awarded in the amount of \$1,000 to one graduating English public school student in each of OPSBA’s five regions. Scholarship recipients will be students of strong character, leadership skills and potential, who care deeply about their communities and furthering their own learning.



Provincial

OPSBA continued its strong working relationship with the Minister of Education, the Honourable **Stephen Lecce** (MPP King-Vaughan) and MPP **Patrice Barnes*** Parliamentary Assistant (PA). **Kate Manson-Smith** became Deputy Minister of Education in June 2023. She was previously the Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. OPSBA senior staff have regular and direct communications with the staff in both offices.

The Minister continued to conduct weekly teleconferences with school board chairs that provided updates and the opportunity to ask questions.

Minister Lecce remotely addressed OPSBA’s 2024 Public Education Symposium (PES) in January and PA Barnes attended meetings of the Indigenous Trustees’ Council and the Black Trustees’ Caucus.

The Association maintained regular contact with the other political parties and their education critics. This included **Chandra Pasma** (New Democratic Party Education Critic), **Steven Blais**** (Liberal Party Education Critic), and **Mike Schreiner** (Green Party Leader and Education Critic). OPSBA has also met with **Bonnie Crombie**, who was elected leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario in December 2023, and **Karen McCrimmon** (Liberal Party Education Critic as of February 28, 2024).

OPSBA held its 2023 Advocacy Day at Queen’s Park on November 27, with more than 40 Board of Directors members and designates attending nearly 50 meetings throughout the day with Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) from across Ontario, representing all parties in the Legislature. The purpose of an OPSBA Advocacy Days is to re-introduce OPSBA and its priorities to the government and the opposition parties. It is also an opportunity to increase and elevate the overall awareness of the Association and its advocacy efforts. Trustees attended Question Period in the morning, with many MPPs introducing their local trustees to the House by name. In the evening, a reception was held for MPPs and their staff.

OPSBA provided one page backgrounders to each MPP, supporting our recent Grants for Student Needs (GSN) submission:

- Indigenous Education
- Education Funding (Mental Health Supports; Special Education; Student Transportation)
- School Capital and Facilities

Similar to past years, OPSBA entered a Research Partnership with the Master of Applied Politics program at **Wilfrid Laurier University**. The 2023 spring/summer project focused on local governance and the roles and responsibilities of public school board trustees. The students gathered 2022 to 2026 trustee data and information and updated Local Government Week resources. The 2024 project will be led by the ITC with students collecting information and data from member boards regarding what types of education agreements exist between Ontario public school boards and Indigenous communities.

Building on the success of last year’s inaugural event, OPSBA asked member boards to participate in the OPSBA advocacy initiative “Take Your MPP to School Week.”



* On March 28, 2024, the government announced new PAs with MPP Billy Pang and MPP Natalie Pierre assigned to the Ministry of Education.

** On February 28, 2024, the Liberal Party of Ontario announced a shuffle of their critic portfolios. MPP Karen McCrimmon became their education critic.

The objective is to continue raising awareness among MPPs (all four major parties and independent members) about the importance of local school board governance and build upon the relationships following our Advocacy Days at Queen’s Park. It’s also an opportunity to showcase the amazing students, staff, and programs happening in local schools, as well as the local realities of public education in our communities. This year’s Take Your MPP to School Week occurred from May 21 to 24 – a constituency week for Members of Provincial Parliament.

Throughout the year, OPSBA leadership and senior staff also attended several speeches, seminars and conferences including (but not limited to):

- AMO Annual General Meeting
- Canadian Association of Communicators in Education Annual Conference and Regional Meeting
- CIVIX’s Educating for Democracy Symposium
- DemocracyXChange 2024 Summit
- Empire Club speech featuring Minister of Education Stephen Lecce
- National School Boards Association Annual Conference
- RTO-ERO’s Political Action Committee Meeting
- TMU Democracy Forum Lecture re: featuring the Minister of Education

Federal

As a member of the CSBA, OPSBA examines provincial and federal legislation and advocates for federal policy and funding that supports Canadian students. President Cathy Abraham and Executive Director Stephanie Donaldson represented OPSBA on the CSBA Board of Directors in 2023-2024 and participated in CSBA’s October 2023 Advocacy Day in Ottawa to meet with key Members of Parliament and decision makers.



A focus of shared OPSBA-CSBA advocacy this year was the work to support a National School Food Policy on two fronts:

- 1) Inclusion in the Federal Budget* – Last fall, OPSBA senior staff met virtually with policy leads from MP Jenna Sudds’ office, as well as policy staff in the office of the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. Both meetings were coordinated to demonstrate our support for a national program, and were followed up with a letter requesting the inclusion for funding of a National School Food Program in Budget 2024. A template letter was also created for member boards as well as CSBA members.
- 2) Support for the Private Members’ Bill C-322 – National Framework for a School Food Program Act. OPSBA sent a letter of support for this bill and provided a template letter for member boards and CSBA members. The Association continues to monitor the status of this legislation, which has been sent to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

** On April 1, 2024, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced a new National School Food Program with an investment of \$1 billion over five years. This was included in the federal budget which was announced on April 16, 2024.



OPSBA-OSTA LIAISON COMMITTEE

The OPSBA-OSTA Liaison Committee continued its commitment to supporting student trustees and student voice. Savrup Saran, Vice-President Public (Thames Valley DSB) and Shreena Sribalan, Public Associate Vice-President (Halton DSB) were the lead contacts in joining OPSBA’s work groups and participating in other Association advocacy initiatives, including Advocacy Day at Queen’s Park. OPSBA President Cathy Abraham presented at the OSTA-AECO Fall Conference and spoke to the group of public school student trustees and senior staff who were part of a session at their Annual General Meeting held in May.

The Committee’s work this year included:

- A revised 2024 Ontario Public Student Trustee Leadership Award application launch and selection, now in an online fillable form.
- Preparing for a review of the Student Trustee Handbook.

Committee representation included trustees from across OPSBA’s membership and governance levels.

Members

- **Cathy Abraham**, Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB, OPSBA President
- **Howard Archibald**, DSB Ontario North East, Indigenous Trustees’ Council
- **Sarah Cipkar**, Greater Essex County DSB (Western)
- **Crystal Hewey**, District School Board Ontario North East (North)
- **Margo Shuttleworth**, Halton DSB (Central West)
- **Tiffany Lloyd**, Limestone DSB (Eastern)



Effective Relationships and Sustainable Resourcing

RELATIONSHIPS AND RESOURCING

OPSBA works with members, partners, the government, and federations/unions to ensure that fiscal and human resources match school board needs and priorities.

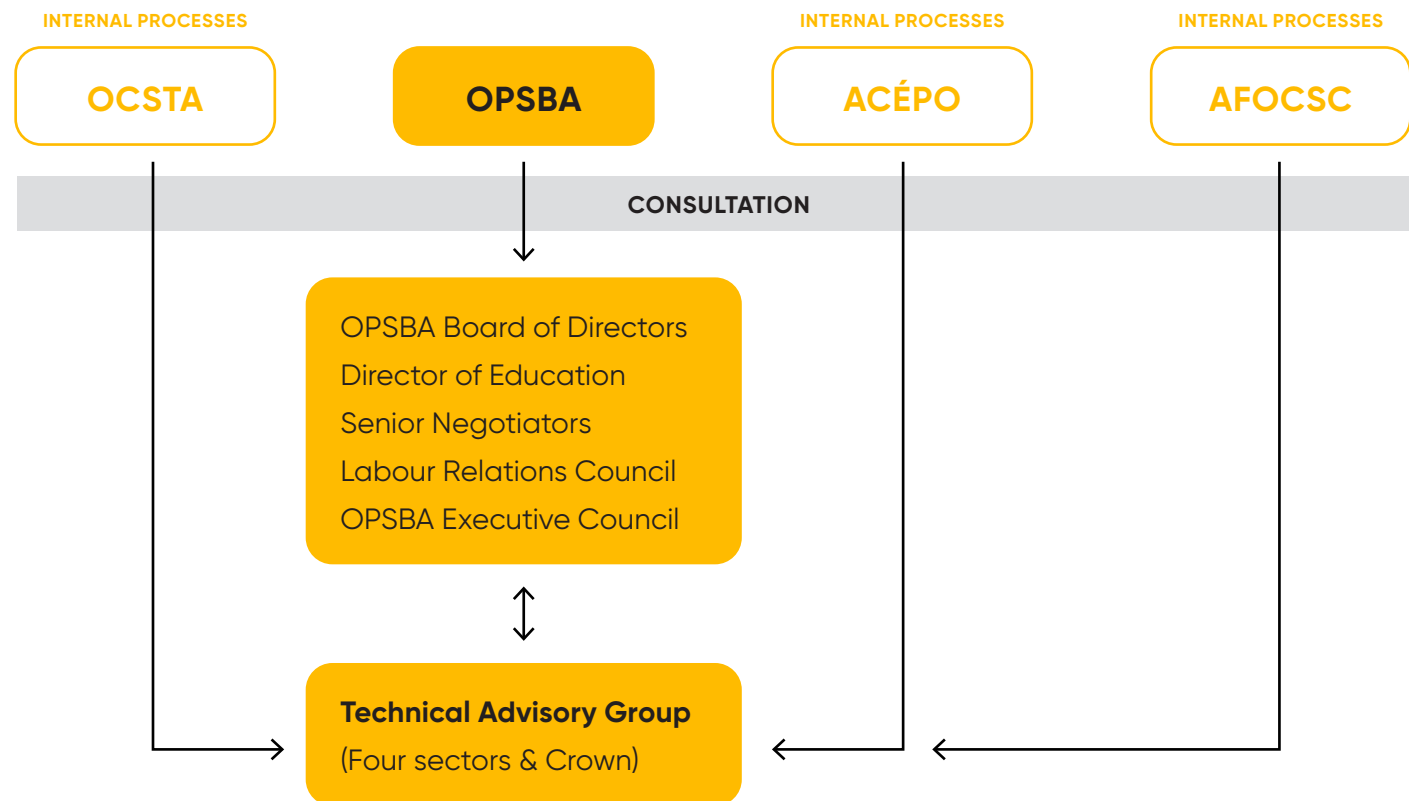
LABOUR RELATIONS

OPSBA believes that teachers and education workers deeply influence a productive learning environment for students and are supported in this role through the positive relations engendered by successfully negotiated collective agreements.

Central Bargaining

Under the *School Boards' Collective Bargaining Act (SBCBA)*, the OPSBA Board of Directors established the following collective bargaining and consultation models. These models were designed to create mandates and local mechanisms to ensure all voices are heard.

OPSBA Consultation Model



OPSBA Bargaining Model

OPSBA Board of Directors

Trustees as elected by all sector school boards

- Consultation and approval of mandate and strategic direction
- Ratification of central agreements as set out by OPSBA by-laws



OPSBA Executive Council

Trustees as elected by the general membership at the Annual General Meeting

- Act as Steering Committee to monitor bargaining and report to Board of Directors



Labour Relations Council

Trustees - Executive Council:

- Chair, PCODE + Directors of Education (4)
- Sr. Negotiators Chair + 3 HR/Negotiators (4)
- Sr. Business Officials (2)
- OPSBA Executive Staff (4)
- Finance, Program, Communications
- Legal Counsel (Ex Officio) (1)
- OPSBA Labour Relations Staff

- Consultation with reference groups
- Framing of recommended mandate
- Participation in table and backroom teams

Technical Advisory Group

Crown, ACÉPO, AFOCSC, OCSTA, OPSBA

Sr. Negotiators

All Member Boards

PCODE

All Member Boards

OPSBA Board Of Directors

Trustees representing all Member Boards



Negotiating Teams

Team for each central table established (Director of Education, Senior Negotiator / HR, OPSBA Spokesperson)

- Preparation and presentation of proposals

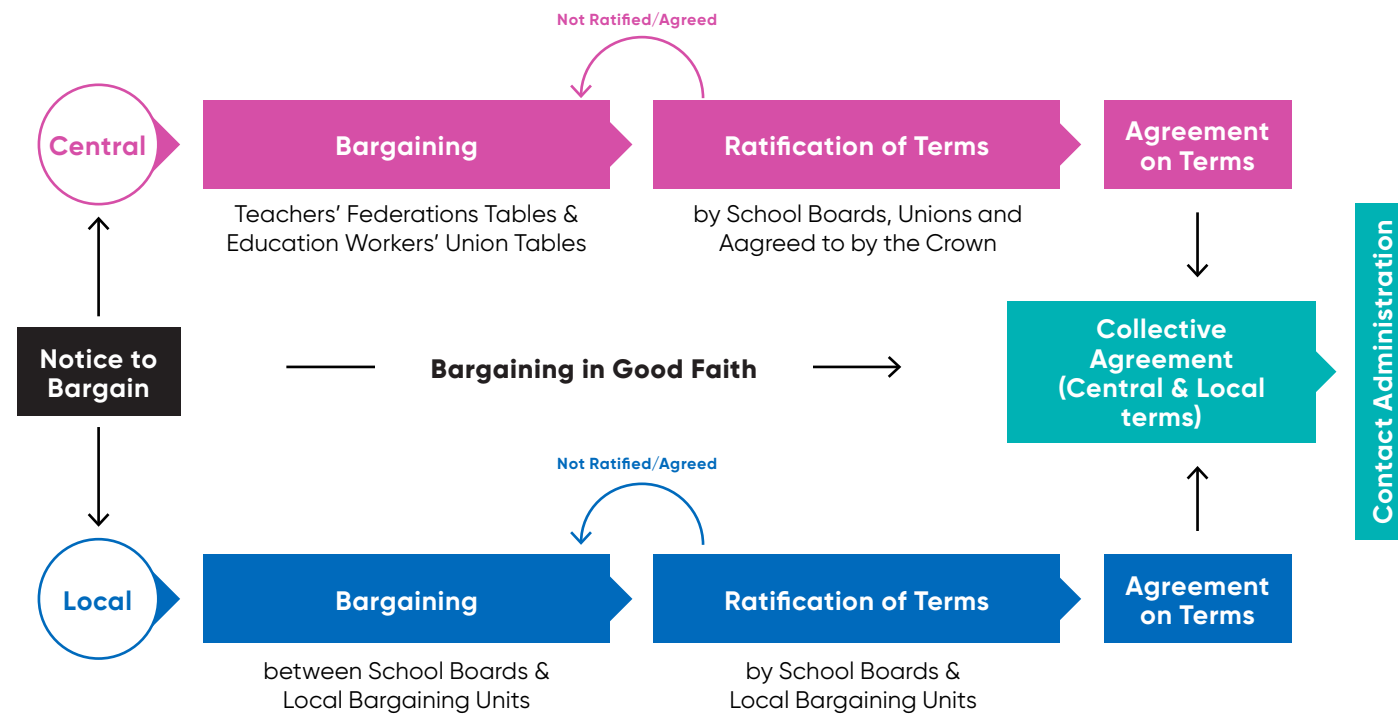


Backroom Teams

Team for each central table established plus: Senior Business Official, Principal, HR Official, Trustee, Supervisory Officer, plus required expertise by issue

- Provision of issue expertise

School Boards Collective Bargaining Act: Process Map



*Local bargaining may occur at the same time as, or after, central bargaining.

**A collective agreement is only completed once both central and local agreements are ratified.

Bargaining Model

OPSBA is the designated bargaining agent for 31 English public school boards and 10 public school authorities and negotiates with seven bargaining groups/federations. There are a total of 263 local bargaining units. These bargaining units join one of the following central tables: Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) Teachers and Education Workers, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) Teachers and Education Workers, Educational Workers Alliance of Ontario (EWAO) and Ontario Council of Educational Workers (OCEW).

Of the seven tables, four-year agreements have been reached with CUPE, ETFO-Education Workers, ETFO-Teachers, the Ontario Council of Educational Workers (OCEW) and the Education Workers' Alliance of Ontario (EWAO).

On August 25, 2023, OPSBA, the Council of Trustees' Associations, the Crown, and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF – Teachers/Occasional Teachers and OSSTF-Education Workers) agreed to a Voluntary Binding Interest Arbitration (VBIA) agreement, to establish a process to conclude the current round of central and local collective bargaining. The VBIA Agreement is only applicable to the 2022-2026 round of negotiations.

This process was intended to expedite resolution to any bargaining-related impasse(s) in the current round of central and local collective bargaining and precludes any disruption and impact to students and schools in the event of impasse at any of the OSSTF-Teacher/Occasional Teacher or OSSTF-Education Worker central or local tables.

The Central Parties engaged in collective bargaining in accordance with the SBCBA until October 27, 2023. Most items were agreed to, however several items for both OSSTF-T/OT and OSSTF-EW proceeded to Interest Arbitration. On April 24, 2024, the Arbitration Board released its decision in the OSSTF-EW Voluntary Binding Interest Arbitration. The award concluded central bargaining for OSSTF-EW units.

Local school boards and unions engaged in collective bargaining in accordance with the SBCBA until March 28, 2024. The majority of OPSBA boards concluded and settled local bargaining by this date, with only a few proceeding to Local Interest Arbitration.

Actions Taken in 2023-24

- Participated in central bargaining
- Supported local collective bargaining for 2022-26 when requested
- Provided support for the implementation of the 2022-26 central terms
- Provided support to school boards for the implementation of the Bill 124 Remedy Payments
- Heard grievances and disputes through the central grievance/arbitration process included in the central terms
- Maintained and improved the OESC/ OPSBA Portal
- Tracked grievances, disputes, and arbitrations through the Grievance Tracking System (GTS) in coordination with the Council of Trustees' Associations (CTA) and the Ministry of Education
- Provided presentations regarding labour matters at Labour Relations Council (LRC), Senior Negotiators and the Public Council of Ontario Directors of Education
- Participated at: Technical Advisory Group (TAG), LRC, and CTA
- Co-chaired meetings of Central Labour Relations Committees (CLRC) to problem solve and build relationships
- Organized and delivered OPSBA's annual Education Labour Relations and Human Resources Symposium on April 25 and 26, 2024
- Participated and presented at the 2024 North American Association of Educational Negotiators Conference
- Met with the Crown, ETFO-Teachers/Occasional Teachers and OSSTF-Teachers/Occasional Teachers to review and provide recommendations to revise Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) 128: The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct
- Met with the Crown and ETFO-Teachers/Occasional Teachers as a party to the ETFO Support for Students Committee
- Attended meetings with the Crown, CUPE, and the CTA to review school boards and local unions' joint applications for on-the-job skilled trades training funding for CUPE employees as apprentices.
- Attended meetings with the Crown, OSSTF-EW, and the CTA to review school boards and local unions' joint applications for on-the-job skilled trades training funding for OSSTF-EW employees as apprentices.
- Participated and acted as a liaison to the employee life and health trusts (ELHTs) on benefits matters in all benefits committee meetings

Committees and Workgroups Arising from Collective Bargaining or Provincial Discussions (Principal and Vice-Principal)

Coming out of collective bargaining of the central terms for the English public school boards, the following committees were established among the Crown, the unions/federations and OPSBA/CTA. OPSBA is part of the CTA along with the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA), the Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario (ACÉPO) and the Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC).

Committees:	Mandate:
Provincial Working Group Health and Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CTA Crown OSSTF ETFO CUPE EWAO OCEW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To consider areas related to health and safety in order to continue to build and strengthen a culture of health and safety mindedness in the education sector. Areas of discussion may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caring and Safe Schools Workplace violence prevention training Notification of potential risk of physical injury occupational health and safety training
One Benefit Plan Committee for each central table (OPSBA and the Crown attend all tables) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> OSSTF ETFO CUPE EWAO OCEW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefits meetings continued throughout the 2023-2024 school year.
Education Worker Diverse and Inclusive Workforce Committee (EWDIWC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CTA/school board representatives Crown Representatives from each of the education worker employee bargaining agents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The EWDIWC was established in the 2014-2017 CUPE central terms, which was subsequently extended to 2019 through the extension agreements, the 2019-2022 and the 2022-26 central terms. The committee was extended to include representatives from other education worker employee bargaining agents. The mandate of the committee is to jointly explore and identify best practices that support diversity, equity, and inclusion, and to foster diverse and inclusive workforces reflective of Ontario's diverse communities. The committee will identify existing recruitment, retention and promotion strategies that aim to eliminate barriers for individuals who identify as members of historically underrepresented groups. In addition, the committee will review training and education programs that support the creation of positive, equitable and inclusive workplaces, and foster diverse and inclusive workforces. Once jointly identified, materials and resources may be shared with school boards and locals.

Committees:	Mandate:
Ministry/School Board Initiatives Committees (OPSBA and the Crown attend all tables) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> OSSTF ETFO CUPE EWAO OCEW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ministry of Education resumed meetings for the 2023-2024 school year, on March 26, 2024.
Learning and Services Continuity and Absenteeism Task Force/Task Force on the Utilization of Sick Leave – Education Workers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACÉPO AFOCSC OCSTA OPSBA Crown CUPE ETFO-EW OCEW OSSTF-EW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This Provincial Task Force was established during the 2022-2026 round of bargaining. The Task Force will review and explore leading practices related to learning and service continuity and absenteeism. In addition, the task force will gather data and review information regarding the utilization of sick leave and short-term disability plans (STDP), and a jurisdictional scan on sick leave and STDP from the Canadian Education sector and other broader public sector employers. The Task Force is scheduled to meet in the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years, completing its work by August 31, 2025. The Task Force will report its findings to school boards and local unions. Membership from the employee bargaining agencies will be determined following the outcome of all central bargaining tables.
Learning and Services Continuity and Absenteeism Task Force/Task Force on the Utilization of Sick Leave – Teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> OPSBA Crown ETFO-T/OT OSSTF-T/OT 	
Supports for Students Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> OPSBA Crown ETFO-T/OT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This Committee was established during the 2022-2026 round of bargaining. The Central Parties agree to recirculate the Final Report of the Support for Students Committee established through Letter of Agreement #9 of ETFO-T/OT's 2019-22 collective agreement. Using the three areas of focus in the report, the committee met to gather and identify examples of best practices across school boards. The committee strives to complete its work in time for the beginning of the 2024-25 school year.

Committees:

Mandate:

Safe Teaching and Learning Environments

- OPSBA
- Crown
- ETFO-T/OT
- OSSTF-T/OT

- The Central Parties agreed to establish a requirement for schools to have publicly facing signage that communicates behavior expectations for everyone that are consistent with a safe learning and teaching environment.
- The Central Parties will develop recommendations for the Crown regarding the content of the signage and they will be shared prior to the distribution to school boards. The Crown commits to have the revisions to PPM 128 completed, and endeavors to ensure publicly facing signage is distributed to school boards to be posted, prior to the start of the 2024-25 school year.

Apprenticeship Sub-Committee CUPE

- ACÉPO
- AFOCSC
- OCSTA
- OPSBA
- Crown
- CUPE

- For the 2022-26 term, the Crown created a one-time Priorities and Partnerships Fund (PPF) for distribution in the amount of \$4.5 million for the duration of the agreement. The purpose of the PPF is to provide on-the-job skilled trades training for CUPE employees as apprentices.
- The Central Parties met to review the joint applications received from school boards and CUPE locals for skilled trades apprenticeships.

Apprenticeship Sub-Committee OSSTF-EW

- ACÉPO
- AFOCSC
- OCSTA
- OPSBA
- Crown
- OSSTF

- For the 2022-26 term, the Crown created a one-time Priorities and Partnerships Fund (PPF) for distribution in the amount of \$500,000 for the duration of the agreement. The purpose of the PPF is to provide on-the-job skilled trades training for OSSTF-EW employees as apprentices.
- The Central Parties met to review the joint applications received from school boards and OSSTF-EW locals for skilled trades apprenticeships.

EW LTD Sub-Committee OSSTF-EW

- ACÉPO
- AFOCSC
- OCSTA
- OPSBA
- Crown
- OSSTF

- The Central Parties agreed to establish a sub-committee group of the Central Labour Relations Committee (CLRC), to examine the feasibility of a provincial EW Long Term Disability plan, with the goal of establishing efficiencies for premium payors, as compared to the current individual plans. The subcommittee will also consider the impacts of any changes to existing plans.
- Starting in the 2024-2025 school year, the sub-committee will meet at least three times per year during the term of the collective agreement.
- The EW LTD Sub-Committee will make a recommendation back to the CLRC no later than August 31, 2026.

P/VP Provincial Liaison Committee

- ACÉPO
- AFOCSC
- OCSTA
- OPSBA
- Principals/Vice Principals Associations

- This Committee has been established to discuss the implementation of the P/VP Provincial Agreement.
- Three sub-committees have been established:
 - Benefits
 - Provincial Working Group –Compensation
 - Recruitment Retention Strategy Working Group.

Central Labour Relations Committees (CUPE, ETFO, EWAO, OCEW, OSSTF)

The purpose of these committees is to facilitate communication between rounds of bargaining on issues of joint interest.

Central Dispute Resolution Committees (CUPE, ETFO, EWAO, OCEW, OSSTF)

All collective agreements established a process by which disputes over the interpretation of collective agreement language are addressed in an orderly fashion and removed from the workplace through either informal or formal resolution. Central parties may file disputes as a grievance and engage in settlement discussions. It is the responsibility of each party to inform their respective local parties of each step in the dispute resolution process, and to direct them accordingly.

Provincial Labour Relations

In the role of designated employer bargaining agent, to systematize both the implementation of the current collective agreements and prepare for the next round of bargaining, OPSBA delivers professional learning throughout the year and at the annual Education Labour Relations and Human Resources Conference. This year, the conference was held on April 25 and 26, 2024.

To facilitate consultation and communication, OPSBA has established or maintains participation in:

Labour Relations Steering Committee

The Executive Council of the OPSBA Board of Directors serves as the steering committee to consider and vet Labour Relations strategies.

Council of Trustees' Association (CTA)

The CTA involves Labour Relations Teams from ACÉPO, AFOCSC, OCSTA, and OPSBA. Consultation among the parties occurs regularly to ensure consistency of practice related to collective agreement implementation across all four publicly funded education systems.

Labour Reference Groups

Expert groups have been gathered from across the teaching and bargaining portfolios to offer advice to labour relations. These teams meet on an ad hoc basis.

Labour Relations Council (LRC)

The LRC is a cross section of OPSBA Executive Council, Directors of Education, HR Officials, Senior Business Officials and OPSBA staff. The LRC meets regularly to give advice and guidance to the bargaining process.

Principal and Vice-Principal Associations

The Ontario Principals' Council is composed of Principals and Vice-Principals in public school boards across Ontario and information is obtained and shared as needed.

Public Council of Ontario Directors of Education (PCODE)

PCODE comprises Directors of Education in public school boards across Ontario. Consultation occurs through the Labour Relations Council by Director members and updates are provided directly to PCODE by OPSBA staff.

Senior Negotiators

The labour negotiators from the 31 OPSBA member boards and 10 school authorities meet to share issues, ideas, and solutions from their respective education settings as well as through teleconferences to deal with specific issues.

Technical Advisory Group (TAG)

TAG is composed of Labour Relations teams from the Crown, ACÉPO, AFOCSC, OCSTA, and OPSBA. The purpose is to ensure communication and understanding of implementation issues across provincial educational sectors.

National and International Labour Relations

Canadian Education Negotiators (CEN)

CEN is an organization with representation from the provinces and territories who are bargaining on behalf of the employer in education settings. Membership comes from the school board associations and/or governments as applicable. OPSBA participates in these meetings to understand issues facing provincial jurisdictions including collective bargaining issues, and changes in legislative frameworks. In July 2023, the Director of Labour Relations attended CEN in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.

North American Association of Educational Negotiators (NAEN)

NAEN is an annual conference that brings together educational negotiators and Human Resources professionals from across Canada and the United States to share challenges and solutions from the sector. In March 2024, the Director of Labour Relations attended and presented NAEN in Clearwater, Florida.



EDUCATION FUNDING

OPSBA continues to work with members, partners, the government, and federations/unions to ensure that fiscal and human resources match school board needs and priorities.

The Ministry of Education has increased its focus on capital – with streamlined approvals – as well as introducing innovative ideas to address areas of growth and density. OPSBA supports this, and feedback was shared through a submission in October 2023 that updated the regulation concerning the Disposition of Surplus Property and new regulation for Schools on a Shared Site (podium schools.)

OPSBA continued its advocacy for the ministry to lift the moratorium on school closures and releasing revised Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines (PARG). In addition, OPSBA has been advocating for Education Development Charges (EDC) to be updated to include rates that accurately match actual land purchase costs, and that the regulation be amended to allow the flexibility for non-eligible boards to collect EDCs.

In November, OPSBA provided a response to the Ministry of Education's request for input regarding 2024-25 Education Funding and the Grants for Student Needs (GSN). The submission reflected feedback from students, trustees, the Black Trustees' Caucus, the Indigenous Trustees' Council, senior OPSBA staff, as well as the Council of Senior Business Officials (COSBO). This year the ministry's themes for input included: Strengthening Accountability (enhancing transparency and reducing complexity) and Modernization of the Special Education Grant (in particular, the Special Incidence Portion (SIP) and Special Equipment Amount (SEA).

OPSBA also provided specific recommendations regarding the following areas of funding that support the Association's multi-year strategic priorities:

- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
- Indigenous Education
- Local School Board Governance
- Mental Health Supports
- Student Transportation
- Skilled Trades and Apprenticeships

There were other issues that have impacted boards, and the Association continues to advocate for funding to address:

- The impacts of inflation on school board expenses and the growing gap between government funding and rising costs for school boards.
- The operational and financial pressures created by inadequately funded short-term sick leave costs.
- The employer costs of federal increases to Canada Pension Plan and Employment Insurance contributions.
- We also requested that all funding decisions must support equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility (AODA), anti-racism, and anti-oppression commitments and standards.

These funding recommendations and requests were also shared with the Members of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs as part of their 2024 Pre-Budget Consultations. OPSBA was fortunate to have three representatives address the Committee in person: President Cathy Abraham, Central East Regional Chair Jaine Klassen Jeninga; and Ottawa-Carleton District School Board Chair Lynn Scott.

Re-branded Funding Formula Announced

In May 2024, the Ministry of Education introduced changes to the education funding formula, formerly known as the GSN. These changes were made from stakeholder feedback asking for the funding to be simpler to understand and from amendments considered in Bill 98, Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act.

The GSN funding formula has been renamed Core Education Funding.

The capital component is now called Building, Expanding and Renewing Schools (BERS.)

Priorities and Partnerships Funding (PPF) are renamed to:

- **Responsive Education Programs (REP)** – representing the school board funding portion and;
- **Funding to External Partners (FEP)** – representing the third party funding portion

A simplified education funding guide will be introduced to replace the Technical Paper that is currently used as the primary communications document. The Technical Paper will continue to be provided as a detailed reference for school boards.

What's Changed?

The 18 GSN grants have been condensed into six Funding Pillars and from 77 specific allocations to 28 allocations.

The new pillars are:



The PPF funding shifts from 10 themes to nine themes:



OPSBA's Finance Database

Our finance consultants respond to school board needs through ongoing database enhancements and providing timely analysis of government finance announcements. Access to these resources is available to OPSBA member boards on a by-request basis.

COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA RELATIONS

As of May 13, 2024, since May 2023

402 Media mentions

10 News releases and media statements

7 Virtual provincial communications meetings

1 In-person Provincial Communications Officer Meeting



9,220

Twitter/X followers



1,060

Instagram followers



552

LinkedIn followers

46,000

Instagram post impressions

1,055%

LinkedIn engagement growth



477

Facebook fans

206%

LinkedIn follower growth

OPSBA's advocacy, communications, and media and government relations strategies are designed to increase public confidence in the quality and effectiveness of our public school system and support OPSBA's four multi-year strategic priorities. OPSBA stands out as the expert voice of public education in Ontario.

The Association saw sustained media coverage on a variety of issues, with media appearances in stories regarding education funding, the impacts of social media on students, labour relations and collective bargaining, pupil accommodation reviews, educator recruitment, skilled trades, Indigenous and Black history and culture curriculum, and more. OPSBA is consistently a primary point of contact for journalists when they are looking for a provincial perspective on education issues. The Association had around 400 appearances in a variety of media sources (including print, television, and radio) throughout the year.



In 2023-2024, OPSBA staff provided comprehensive communication support and leadership to member boards on key issues impacting education across the province to ensure positive and consistent messaging and positioning to highlight the strength of public education, including the release of the 2024 Ontario Budget and 2024-25 education funding. OPSBA's much-read daily "Media Report" service, now in its 12th year, provides breaking and feature news updates to hundreds of trustees and board staff.

Since the last OPSBA Annual Report was published in June 2023, 12 media statements and news releases (as of May 2024), templates for local use, and other communication vehicles and supports were developed and distributed to all trustees, directors of education, senior human resources and finance officials, and communication officers.

Meetings with School Board Communications Staff

Communications officers from all 31 OPSBA member boards participated in monthly video conference calls with OPSBA staff to discuss items of mutual interest and share best practices and key messages on the pressing issues of the day. In late April, during the Education Labour Relations and Human Resources Symposium in Toronto, OPSBA hosted a meeting of communications staff from our member boards. Staff from more than half of OPSBA's member boards attended. This year's meeting included:

- A keynote and discussion with former City of Toronto and TTC communications leader Brad Ross regarding issues management and reputation rehabilitation
- A workshop from the York Region DSB on launching and managing new board and school websites and family portals
- Updates from OPSBA staff and icebreaker activities

OPSBA Brand Refresh

In summer 2023, OPSBA began work with Toronto-based design firm Creative Currency to undergo a full-scale strategic brand refresh of all design, information, and website properties. Throughout fall 2023, the Association engaged in a collaborative process to modernize the existing brand identity and website, which had been consistent for more than 14 years. The brand identity was launched at the 2024 Public Education Symposium, with a special video launch, and all attendees receiving a hat with the new OPSBA logo.

Social Media

OPSBA uses social media to disseminate items of urgent interest, media releases and statements, and policy statements and submissions, while also sharing relevant content from its member boards related provincial advocacy priorities.

As of May 2024, @OPSBA has significant followings of 9,219 followers on X/Twitter, 1,059 followers on Instagram, 477 likes and 665 followers on Facebook, and 519 followers on LinkedIn.



@OPSBA



@OPSBA_Official



OPSBA_Official



OPSBA

OPSBA AWARDS

Each year, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association honours individuals who have made significant contributions in the field of education. While it is impossible to honour all those special people who make a difference, the recipients of these awards represent the many who contribute to the creativity and hard work that make our schools and education system leaders in the world.

Jack A. MacDonald Award of Merit and Certificate of Recognition

The winners of these student awards are selected based on a sound academic record throughout their career, accompanied by outstanding community service and leadership. This year's Jack A. MacDonald Award of Merit was presented to **Ailia Syeda**, Frontenac Secondary School, Limestone DSB.

Certificates of Recognition were presented to **Grace de Varennes**, Sydenham High School, Limestone DSB, and **Ella Rickard**, Napanee District Secondary School, Limestone DSB.

Dr. Harry Paikin Memorial Award

This award is given to an active or retired public school trustee for outstanding service. This year's recipient is Trustee **Arlene Morell**, Thames Valley DSB.

Fred L. Bartlett Memorial Award

The Fred L. Bartlett Memorial Award is given to an active or retired member of the teaching profession for outstanding contribution to education in Ontario. This year's recipient is **Shaun Maddock**, Special Education Consultant, Grandview School Authority.

The Healthy Democracy Student Leadership Award

New for 2024, the Healthy Democracy Student Leadership Award is a partnership between the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and OPSBA and is being awarded in the amount of \$1,000 to one graduating English public school student in each of OPSBA's five regions. Scholarship recipients are students with leadership skills and potential, who care deeply about their communities and furthering their own learning. The 2024 winners will be announced after the publication of this Annual Report and will be included in the 2024-25 OPSBA Annual Report.

OPSBA Award of Excellence and Achievement Award

The OPSBA Award of Excellence and the Achievement Award are presented by the local board to volunteers for outstanding, exemplary and/or unique contributions to the overall well-being of the school or community through in-school, board-wide, extra-curricular and/or volunteer activity.

The Achievement Award was presented to the following individuals:

Michele Gordon, Durham DSB

Andrew Gibson, Derek Doucet, and **Jennifer Robertson**, Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB

Jason Pilot, Rebecca Cross, Moffat Mankuto, and **Destiny Linklater**, Lakehead DSB

Deb Katyal, Gloria Wen, Shehla Kerim, and **Gillian Cooper**, Ottawa-Carleton DSB

Daniel Park and **Vickram Bachan**, Toronto DSB

Krista Patterson and **Jennifer Eason**, Trillium Lakelands DSB

Laura Gonzalez, Zeinab Jradi, Andi McKillop, and **Pierce Casey**, Thames

The Ontario Public Student Trustee Scholarship

The Ontario Public Student Trustee Leadership Scholarship is an award jointly provided by OPSBA and the Public Board Council of OSTA-AECO. The intent is to recognize outstanding achievement in a leadership role and provide financial support to a graduating public board student trustee to assist with their post-secondary education plans (University, College, or Apprenticeship).

The 2023 winners were announced after the publication of the 2022-23 Annual Report. They were:

Isaiah Shafqat, Toronto DSB

Kenzy Soror and Vaishnave Raina, Waterloo Region DSB

The 2024 winners are:



Dora Chen
Near North DSB



Julianna Marcel
DSB of Niagara

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2023-24

(as of May 2024)

Cathy Abraham

President
Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board

Kate Baggott

Central West
District School Board of Niagara

Michael Barrett

Treatment School Authorities
Grandview School Authority

Greg Bowman

Northern (East)
Algoma District School Board

Becky Buck

Central West
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

Esther Childs

Central East
Trillium Lakelands District School Board

Sarah Cipkar

Western
Greater Essex County District School Board

David Cornish

Northern (West)
Keewatin-Patricia District School Board

Donna Danielli

Regional Chair, Central West
Halton District School Board

Will Davies

Central West
Peel District School Board

Alexis Dawson

Central East
Toronto District School Board

Kim Dougherty

Eastern
Renfrew County District School Board

Donna Edwards

Central East
Durham District School Board

Sheryl Evans

Regional Chair, Northern
Algoma District School Board

Jeanne Gray

Central West
Halton District School Board

David Green

Enrolment Representative
Peel District School Board

Susan Humphries

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Renfrew County District School Board

Jennifer Jennekens

Eastern
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

Elaine Johnston

Chair, Indigenous Trustees' Council
Algoma District School Board

Jan Johnstone

Western
Bluewater District School Board

Jaine Klassen Jeninga

Regional Chair, Central East
Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board

Judy Kosmerly

Northern (East)
Rainbow District School Board

Jeff Lehman

Northern (West)
Rainy River District School Board

Diane Lloyd

Central East
Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board

Jodi Lloyd

Central East
Simcoe County District School Board

Martha MacNeil

Central West
Upper Grand District School Board

Nadeem Mahmood

Central East
York Region District School Board

David McDonald

Eastern
Upper Canada District School Board

Karen McGregor

Eastern
Limestone District School Board

Marilyn McLeod

School Authorities
Moose Factory Island DSAB

Kelly Miller

Central East
Durham District School Board

Sherri Moore

Western
Thames Valley District School Board

Arlene Morell

Regional Chair, Western
Thames Valley District School Board

Jason Nesbitt

Northern (West)
Superior-Greenstone District School Board

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Central West
Waterloo Region District School Board

Kathryn Pierroz

Second Vice-President
Rainy River District School Board

Lori-Ann Pizzolato

Western
Thames Valley District School Board

Rosemary Pochopsky

Northern (East)
District School Board Ontario North East

Amanda Robertson

Eastern
Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board

Kelly Robertson

Western
Lambton Kent District School Board

Neethan Shan

Central East
Toronto District School Board

Lynn Scott

Eastern
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

Elizabeth Sinclair

Central East
York Region District School Board

Ryan Sitch

Northern (West)
Lakehead District School Board

Bill Steer

Northern (East)
Near North District School Board

Claudine VanEvery-Albert

Central West
Grand Erie District School Board

Bruce Whitaker

Western
Avon Maitland District School Board

Deborah Williams

Enrolment Representative
Toronto District School Board

Kathleen Woodcock

First Vice-President
Waterloo Region District School Board



MEMBER BOARDS SCHOOL AUTHORITIES, AND TREATMENT CENTRES



OPSBA STAFF

Executive Director
Stephanie Donaldson

Corporate and Office Services

Lisa Reinhardt
Managing Director, Corporate Affairs

Vanessa Trinh
Comptroller

Mary Adams
Receptionist

Carla Garbas
Administrative Assistant

Diana Hong
Financial Officer

Debbie Lazaroff
Computer Systems Administrator

Kendra Tedford Devine
PD and Events Consultant

Jennifer Moir
Manager of Events

Communications and Public Affairs

Shane Gonsalves
Managing Director, Government and Public Affairs

T.J. Goertz
Senior Communications and Policy Officer

Black Trustees' Caucus
Michelle Rodney Bartalos
BTC Staff Liaison

Indigenous Education
Alicia Cameron
ITC Staff Liaison

Education Funding

David Wright
Associate Director, Durham DSB, and Special Advisor to OPSBA

Labour Relations

Andrew Gold
Director of Labour Relations

Janet Edwards
Associate Director of Labour Relations

Alison Warrion
Manager of Labour Relations

Tiffany Maia
Coordinator of Labour Relations

Policy

Jennifer McIntyre
Director of Policy

Education Program

Erin Kelly
Director of Program Policy



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