



# ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION

**Leading Education's Advocates**

**Ontario Public School Boards' Association**  
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Michael Barrett  
President

Gail Anderson  
Executive Director

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TO: David Thompson, Board Chair and Jackie Young, Director of Education  
CC: Liz Therrien, Superintendent of Business

## NEAR NORTH DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

The success of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) is strengthened by the commitment of our members to publicly funded education. We appreciate this opportunity to share with you the benefits of OPSBA membership and show highlights of our success this past year.

We invest our expertise and energy in ways that we know will have positive impacts on a wide variety of student needs across the province. Our voices are always rooted in our five priorities:

- *The Whole Child and Student Well-Being*
- *New Generation Education*
- *Trustees – Building Leadership Capacity*
- *Education Funding*
- *Labour Relations*

Throughout the past year, we have seen success on a number of our key action items, which include:

- An unprecedented Labour Relations role for the association as OPSBA successfully concluded and ratified seven central collective agreements for the first time as designated employer bargaining agent under the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Act* (SBCBA). Agreements were reached with CUPE, ETFO Teachers, ETFO Education Workers, the Education Workers' Alliance of Ontario, the Ontario Council of Education Workers, OSSTF Teachers and OSSTF Education Workers. Since January 2016, OPSBA has also been involved in a comprehensive consultation process to review the SBCBA.
- The provincial government's legislative agenda has engaged OPSBA in a wide range of [advocacy work](#), including responses to Bill 181, the *Municipal Elections Modernization Act*, Bill 113, *Police Record Checks Reform Act*, and amendments to Regulation 444/98 (Disposition of Surplus Real Property).
- OPSBA was the founding member of the Ontario Coalition for Children and Youth Mental Health. The Coalition's profile continues to grow and its ability to provide timely expert advice on issues is well-recognized. In April 2016, the Coalition held a successful fourth Summit on Children and Youth Mental Health in Toronto, attracting more than 700 attendees. The next Summit will be held on April 12 and 13, 2018.
- OPSBA's First Nation Trustees Council provides a strong voice in advocating for First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education. The Council has engaged in a range of initiatives this year, with a primary focus on mandatory components in Ontario's elementary and secondary curriculum on FNMI histories that includes treaty education, the history and legacy of residential schools, and the impact of the *Indian Act*.
- Our five new and 14 updated [Professional Development Modules](#) were available in time for the beginning of the 2015-16 school year. Inspired by the thoughtfulness and commitment that trustees bring to their governance work, the modules include: What Makes a Great Board Chair?; First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education for school board trustees; Code of Conduct for Trustees; Social Media; and Internal Audit Committees.

- In early May, OPSBA President Michael Barrett spoke to media regarding the importance of autism intervention programs for children over the age of five after the government announced changes to eligibility for Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI), IBI wait lists and the automatic transition from IBI to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) at age five. “We’re hoping the government will give careful reconsideration to changes being made,” President Barrett told [the Toronto Star](#). “It’s never too late to correct a mistake.” He also called on the government to show “the same courageous leadership” it demonstrated in April when it changed plans to close provincial schools for deaf students and those with severe learning disabilities.

In addition to the accomplishments noted above, our advocacy for student success and the governance role of school board trustees has extended well beyond the borders of Ontario. OPSBA responded with [strong public support](#) of the Quebec English School Boards Association in their fight against that province’s Bill 86, which would have amended Quebec’s Education Act to replace commissioners (trustees) with school councils. This spring, the government abandoned the legislation. We stand proudly alongside our colleagues in Quebec in defending the role of trustees, the only democratically elected position solely responsible for providing sound educational opportunities for all students.

More recently, OPSBA has emerged as a key signatory to a Canadian School Boards Association [letter](#) to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau supporting a private member’s bill, Bill C-241 – *An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (school authorities)*. This proposed bill would amend the *Excise Tax Act* so as to increase the goods and services tax rebate rate for school authorities/boards from 68% to 100%, resulting in millions of dollars in savings for our member boards. We continue to advocate in support of Bill C-241 through all available channels and are promoting the [public petition on our website](#).

**Our programs and services are highly cost effective.** The financial benefits of membership far exceed not only the membership fee itself, but the outcomes that could be achieved by boards acting individually. Our interventions on copyright tariffs, natural gas rates and electricity rates have continued to create significant savings for all school boards and cover membership fees many times over. When this is combined with the indirect benefits created by OPSBA coordination and advocacy identified in this correspondence and our [Key Work](#) document, the value of membership speaks for itself.

Examples of 2015-16 savings realized for:	
Near North District School Board	
Savings in Copyright Fees: \$23,237	Savings in Energy Costs: \$111,800

The 2016-2017 OPSBA membership fee for your board is \$33,729.

OPSBA is an issues-driven, problem-solving organization dedicated to serving our members. We represent an influential force in the shaping of education policy and school board governance. You are invited to review more information about the valuable services OPSBA offers your board by clicking on the Key Work and Annual Report links at [www.opsba.org](http://www.opsba.org).

We thank you for your membership and participation in OPSBA this coming year.

Best Regards,



Michael Barrett  
President



Gail Anderson  
Executive Director

Attachment: Invoice for the 2016-2017 OPSBA fees