



2018

Ontario Municipal
& School Board
Elections

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MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR KIDS

Running for Election as a School Board Trustee
Guide for Candidates and Communities

Election Day:
Monday, October 22, 2018



Change The Future. Become A School Board Trustee.

Talk to any trustee and you will hear about the joys and challenges that come with working on behalf of Ontario's children, their families and their communities.

Visit any school board and prepare to be amazed by the breadth and depth of the programs and activities that Ontario school boards have developed to guide and shape the next generation of learners. There are programs designed to promote achievement of First Nation, Métis and Inuit students and to welcome new immigrants to Canada. There are math Olympiads, literacy initiatives, sports programs, art exhibitions, science fairs, robotics competitions, innovative programs for children with special education needs, EcoSchools, early learning centres, adult education, homework clubs and a strong safety net of support services – all designed to help students succeed to the best of their abilities.

Students need the skills, attitudes, values and knowledge to succeed in today's complex global context. Recent changes in education have focussed on coding and financial literacy, as well as experiential learning programs such as cooperative education, apprenticeships, Dual Credit Programs and Specialist High Skills Majors.

Through their membership on local school boards and their involvement with provincial school board associations, trustees have the opportunity to play a broad advocacy role and influence government policy.

Ontario's school boards have demonstrated time and again that, through the collective efforts of creative and committed trustees, they are making a difference for kids.

Interested in becoming a school trustee?

This guide provides the basic details candidates need know to run for office and outlines the roles and responsibilities of school boards and trustees.

Key Dates – 2018 Municipal and School Board Elections

Nomination and Campaign Period Begins	May 1, 2018
Nomination Day (Last Day to be Nominated)	July 27, 2018
Final Day for Withdrawal of Candidacy	July 27, 2018
Voting Day	October 22, 2018
School Board Term Begins	December 1, 2018
Campaign Period Ends	December 31, 2018
Financial Filing Deadline	March 29, 2019
School Board Terms Ends	November 14, 2022

More information can be found on the Ministry of Municipal Affairs website:
www.ontario.ca/municipalelections.



Contents

School Boards and School Board Trustees

- What is a School Board? 4**
- School Board Trustees – Who are they? Why are they important? 5**
- What are the time commitments for a School Board Trustee? 7**
- Can anyone be a School Board Trustee? 8**
- Experience and knowledge that would be good to have 9**
- Orientation for School Board Trustees 10**
- Honorarium for School Board Trustees 10**
- Board administration 10**
- Trustees, School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees 11**
- I want to run for School Board Trustee. What do I have to do?12**
- Election finances Q & A13**
- Ontario’s School Board/Trustee Associations15**



School Boards and School Board Trustees

What is a School Board?

A school board is a body that operates the province's publicly funded schools. The school board is governed by its publicly elected board members (the board of trustees). Collectively, boards of trustees set the vision for the school board, develop policies, allocate resources and set the goals that lay the foundation and drive programs and operations in the school board.

Trustees can be elected to one of four different school board systems: English public, English Catholic, French public and French Catholic.

A fundamental pillar of a democratic society is free education for its citizens. Ontario's publicly funded school boards provide high standards in programming and ensure that there are supports and resources to help all students to reach those standards.

The responsibilities of school boards are set out in Ontario's *Education Act* which states that every school board shall:

- promote student achievement and well-being;
- promote a positive school climate that is inclusive and accepting of all pupils including pupils of any race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status or disability;
- promote the prevention of bullying;

- ensure effective stewardship of the board's resources;
- deliver effective and appropriate education programs to its pupils;
- develop and maintain policies and organizational structures that,
 - (i) promote the board's goals and,
 - (ii) encourage pupils to pursue their educational goals;
- monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of policies developed by the board in achieving the board's goals and the efficiency of the implementation of those policies;
- develop a multi-year plan aimed at achieving the board's goals;
- annually review the multi-year plan with the board's Director of Education or the supervisory officer acting as the board's Director of Education; and
- monitor and evaluate the performance of the board's Director of Education, or the supervisory officer acting as the board's Director of Education, in meeting,
 - (i) his or her duties under this Act or any policy, guideline or regulation made under this Act, (including duties under the multi-year plan),
and
 - (ii) any other duties assigned by the board.

Beyond these broad areas of accountability, the *Education Act* also spells out duties for school boards that include such obligations as overseeing the effective operation of schools, setting the board's budget, overseeing implementation of the Ministry's curriculum policies, and ensuring that appropriate staff are hired as required by schools.

Boards will also make determinations about such matters as pupil transportation, school libraries, continuing education, and childcare facilities on school sites. More details can be found in section 170 of the *Education Act*.

A school board is **not**:

- a parliament with party divisions. A school board is a single body made up of members, i.e., trustees. A school board should speak with one voice on the decisions it has collectively made.
- interested only in the opinions of families with children. A school board must recognize that all of society has a stake in public education.
- a sub-committee of the municipality. In fact, school boards govern budgets substantially greater than those of most municipalities.
- a closed or private body. All school boards are public institutions and their meetings are open to the public subject to certain exceptions (see section 207 of the *Education Act*).

“School board trustees are the oldest form of elected representation in Ontario. They are champions of public education whose singular focus is the promotion of student achievement and well-being, and ensuring that all students are able to reach their fullest potential.”

- Member of Provincial Parliament

School Board Trustees – Who are they? Why are they important?

School board trustees are the members of a school board. They are locally-elected representatives of the public, and they are the community's advocate for public education. They are required to carry out their responsibilities in a manner that assists the board in fulfilling its duties under the *Education Act*.

A trustee's role is to maintain a focus on student achievement, well-being and equity and to participate in making decisions that benefit the board's entire jurisdiction

while representing the interests of their constituents. Trustees must also communicate the views and decisions of the board back to their constituents.

This is not as simple as it sounds. Because Ontario is large and diverse, the job of school board trustee varies widely. A trustee is responsible for identifying the needs and priorities of their community and for ensuring these are considered in the decisions that result in practical educational opportunities for students. In doing so, trustees must mediate conflicting interests and values. A trustee must do this in collaboration with the other members of the school board by developing policies that work for all students, and ensuring

they are implemented effectively. It is the local trustee who makes sure that the community has a direct way to express its views on vital education decisions that affect our day-to-day lives. School trustees play an indispensable role in preserving our democratic heritage.

The school trustee is a member of a team

Only the team (the board of trustees), not an individual trustee, has the authority to make decisions or take action. A school board must place all students first when making any decision. Trustees are required to uphold the implementation of any board resolution after it is passed by the board.

Trustees are responsible for establishing policy direction

Policies set out the expectations about what should happen or how services are to be provided within the school board. A well-written policy describes to parents, the public and the board's staff what they can expect. The board of trustees ensures that the Director of Education carries out responsibilities for implementing the board's policies. They entrust the day-to-day management of the board to its staff through the board's Director of Education.

Trustees, as members of the board, are accountable to the province

The board of trustees is accountable to the Province of Ontario for the proper conduct of their duties and powers, including the implementation of provincial policy and the use of provincially allocated funds.

Trustees are accountable to their electorate

As elected officials, trustees must balance the demands of the community with the duties required by the Ministry of Education. By law, they are required to consult with parents, students and supporters of the board on

the board's multi-year plan and bring the concerns of these groups to the attention of the board. This can be challenging and takes dedicated leadership coupled with a willingness to seek innovative ideas and the courage to implement them.

School board trustees are community leaders

School board trustees have a responsibility to all the families in their community – not just their neighbours, and not just families with school-aged children. Trustees build and maintain relationships with the entire community. They work with their school board colleagues and with other community partners to ensure that all the students within the board's jurisdiction have equal opportunities to reach their full potential.

Trustees demonstrate their leadership in the following key areas:

- Establishing the board's multi-year strategic plan, which includes the vision to ensure a strong public education system
- Setting goals for student achievement, well-being and equity
- Monitoring progress against the board's strategic goals and priority areas
- Promoting accountability throughout the school board
- Allocating resources in ways that ensure equity of outcomes and demonstrate accountability
- Establishing a respectful, caring, professional climate throughout the school board
- Creating collaborative relationships inside the board and across the community
- Promoting continuous improvement
- Promoting community involvement and establishing communications
- Holding the director of education accountable as they lead, execute and monitor activities on behalf of the board of trustees

- Ensuring effective stewardship of the board's resources which includes passing the budget

Trustees champion equity in education

Trustees work to ensure equity across their school boards so that every student has the opportunity to succeed regardless of background, identity or personal circumstances. The role of school board trustee involves bringing the voice of everyone, including marginalized communities (e.g., Indigenous students, newcomers/immigrants, people coming from low socio-economic backgrounds, etc.) to the board table.

Trustees hold themselves accountable for their conduct

In exercising their role, trustees are required to comply with the board's Code of Ethics or Conduct which sets out standards that govern the ethical behaviour of trustees. This includes the expectation to act with integrity, adhere to high ethical standards and to conduct themselves in a manner that enhances public confidence in Ontario's publicly funded education system. Boards of trustees hold themselves accountable to their codes.

What are the time commitments for a School Board Trustee?

Attending board meetings and committee meetings

Trustees are expected to prepare for, and participate in, all board meetings and all meetings of board committees of which they are members. Preparing for a board meeting by reviewing all the material can be time-consuming.

A trustee must be physically present in the meeting room of the board for at least three regular meetings of the board in each 12-month period beginning December 1. Furthermore, a trustee cannot miss three consecutive meetings unless approval is granted by the board. All boards have policies in place to allow for electronic participation in meetings if a trustee is unable to attend in person. Attendance at board and committee meetings can be in person or through electronic means subject to limitations in Ontario Regulation 463/97 (Electronic Meetings).

Recent amendments to the *Education Act* now allow trustees to take parental or pregnancy leaves for up to 20 weeks without authorization from their board. The seats of the members who take parental or pregnancy leaves would not be declared vacant.

Board meetings are not, however, the only time commitment for trustees. To get a full picture of board-related requirements, candidates should check with their local school board office.

Other duties at the school board

There are other obligations for school board trustees to undertake in their role as a school board member. Some of these are statutory (meaning mandated by the province) and some are not. Statutory duties include the appointment of a trustee to various committees: the Special Education Advisory Committee, to board-based quasi-judicial committees such as those responsible for conducting proceedings dealing with the suspension or expulsion of students, to the Audit Committee, the Supervised Alternative Learning Committee and the Parent Involvement Committee. The board may also establish non-statutory committees or working groups as needed and these will also have trustee membership.

Attending community meetings as a representative of the school board

One of a trustee's key responsibilities is to facilitate communication between the board and community groups. Trustees may be asked to attend meetings such as school council meetings, community groups, municipal councils and municipal committees, meetings with MPPs and MPs, and other community agencies such as district health councils and library boards. Trustees not only have the responsibility to attend these meetings, they must also bring back information from meetings and share it with the board. Community meetings are often held at night to enable working parents to attend. Attending school events and community functions will give trustee candidates a fuller picture of the role.

Responding to the concerns of parents and others

A trustee is often the first point of contact for parents and community members who have questions and/or concerns about their local school. While individual trustees do not have the authority to direct board staff to undertake any particular action, they can help in answering questions, finding solutions or facilitating interaction with the school and board administration.

Communications

Responding to telephone calls or e-mails, meeting requests and queries from constituents is an important part of the trustee role and requires some time commitment.

Time commitments will vary, but it is not uncommon for a trustee to spend an average of 15 hours per week on activities associated with the role. The focus of a trustee's work can vary depending on the board's goals and on internal factors (e.g., number and types of committees) and external factors (e.g., growing and declining student enrolment, geography, travel distances). All prospective trustee candidates should contact their local school board for specific information about commitments.

Can anyone be a School Board Trustee?

A person is qualified to be elected as a school board trustee if the person is qualified to vote in a school board election and is a resident of the school board district.

When filing a nomination a candidate must meet all of the following requirements:

- a resident within the jurisdiction of the board;
- a supporter* of the board;
- a Canadian citizen;
- at least 18 years old;

- Roman Catholic (if running for a Catholic school board);
- not legally prohibited from voting; and
- not disqualified by any legislation from holding school board office.

(*”Supporter” refers to the individual’s support for one of the four publicly funded school systems. A list of supporters for each system is kept by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation.)

Note: A candidate, if nominated, must remain qualified throughout the election and, if elected, throughout the term of office. The term of office is 4 years. School board candidates should confirm that they have the

qualifications described here and in section 219 of the *Education Act*. It is the responsibility of the candidate to determine whether he or she is qualified to be elected to and hold office.

The following persons are disqualified from being elected to school board office:

- any person not eligible to vote for the school board;
- an employee of any school board, or clerk, deputy clerk, treasurer or deputy treasurer of a municipality within the jurisdiction of a board, unless they
 - (i) take an unpaid leave of absence before being nominated, and
 - (ii) resign, if elected to the office; (See additional note below)
- a judge of any court;
- a member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, a Senator or a member of the House of Commons; or
- an inmate of a penal or correctional institution under sentence of imprisonment.

Note: An employee of a school board who wishes to run for office on any school board must take an unpaid leave of absence prior to being nominated. If elected, the employee must resign. A person may not be employed by one school board and hold office on a different school board. A clerk, treasurer, deputy clerk, or deputy treasurer of a municipality wishing to run for office on a school board must also take unpaid leave prior to being nominated and resign if elected. An employer is required to grant a leave of absence.

Experience and knowledge that would be good to have

Trustee candidates do not need to have a background in education. However, the following skills and experience would be assets for potential trustee candidates.

Basic understanding of official meeting procedures and governance policies

Candidates should review a copy of their board's bylaws, governance policies and Code of Ethics or Conduct. They could also observe board meetings to get an understanding of the process.

Basic understanding of a Trustee's role as member of a Board

Under the *Education Act*, trustee power lies solely in membership on the corporate school board. The corporate board of trustees is accountable to the public for the collective decisions of the board and for the delivery and quality of educational services. This means that once the board of trustees has voted, it is a trustee's responsibility to act in a manner that promotes and upholds the board's decision and to communicate the board's decision back to the constituency.

Trustees should also have some awareness of the legal, political and legislative parameters in which school boards operate. School board operations must align with legislation, regulations or other provincial policies. Candidates need to be aware of this fact, especially when making campaign promises.

Willingness to learn

A newly-elected school trustee has a fairly steep learning curve, and must be willing to spend time becoming familiar with existing board policies and relevant legislation. Trustees should also be mindful to enter their new role with an attitude that is fair, open-minded and understanding of the importance of equity and inclusiveness.

Acceptance to serve on a school board assumes an awareness of the legislated expectations and responsibilities conferred through legislation, provincial policy, contractual agreements or any other mechanism. Trustees must act within these parameters, and be aware of the consequences of decisions that do not respect these commitments.

Anyone considering candidacy for school board membership should carefully consider these accountability relationships and responsibilities when making the important decisions to serve, or continuing to serve, on a district school board.

Orientation for School Board Trustees

At the start of the term of office, each school board provides an in-depth orientation session for trustees to acquaint them with roles, relationships and responsibilities within the board and to provide an overview of the specific environment of the school board. Beyond the initial orientation, trustees are provided with regular professional development opportunities throughout their term of office.

Honorarium for School Board Trustees

School board trustees are entitled to be paid an honorarium while in office. The amount varies from board to board within limits set by Ontario Regulation 357/06 (Honoraria for Board Members). The honorarium is made up

of an annual base amount, an amount related to the school board's enrolment, an amount payable to the trustee for attendance at meetings, and a distance amount in the case of boards covering large areas. The chair and vice-chair of a board are entitled to additional amounts for the responsibility of their office. In 2017-18, the honorarium limits across Ontario ranged from \$7,500 to \$29,500.

Board administration

The chief executive officer of the district school board is the Director of Education. The Director is the only direct employee of the board of trustees. One of the most important leadership relationships in the school system is the one that exists between the board of trustees and the Director of Education. While their roles are distinct and different, they must also be complementary for the system to operate effectively. Each board's success

“As individual advocates for public education, we are all invested in creating the conditions that make a better world for our students and our society. Trustees are on the front line, working closely with local communities, living that commitment every day and Ontario is the better for it.”

– School Board Trustee

depends on the direction provided by the board and on the leadership of the Director of Education in running the school board. Each Director of Education's job is greatly influenced by the successes the board achieves and by the challenges it faces. Both parties need to be cognizant of their inter-dependence, and willing to work cooperatively for the successes of the system and the students in the schools.

Organizational structures differ among boards. However, the school board's administration, under the leadership of the Director of Education, manages the day-to-day functions of operating the school board. Trustees must hold the Director accountable for running the school board and for making progress against goals.

Trustees, School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees

Trustees and School Councils

School councils comprise of parents and guardians of children within each school. School councils are provincially-mandated advisory bodies, providing advice to the school principal and, where appropriate, to the school board. Their structure and responsibilities are determined by government regulation.

Effective trustees establish regular and consistent communication with their school councils. Through the use of email, e-newsletters, social media, websites, meetings and other public forums, trustees and school councils can remain in communication. Increasingly, trustees are using online tools to help them communicate with their constituents. Trustees who have open communication among school councils within their jurisdiction are better able to speak on their councils' behalf at the board table.

It is important to note that a trustee's responsibility is to advocate for decisions which will better serve the diverse needs of the board's entire jurisdiction. School councils advocate almost exclusively for their own students in their own schools. This is an important point to remember when determining what advice one should consider.

Parent Involvement Committees

Every school board in Ontario has a Parent Involvement Committee (PIC). A key part of the PIC role is to encourage and enhance meaningful parent involvement across the board to improve student success in school and in life. They do this by:

- Providing information and advice to the board of trustees on parent engagement;
- Communicating with and supporting school councils; and
- Undertaking activities to help parents support their children's learning at home and at school.

Most members are parents and the committee is chaired by a parent. The Director of Education and a trustee representative also sit on the committee. This helps communication flow both ways. It helps the school board communicate with parents and makes sure that parent voices are heard by the board.

Ontario Regulation 612/00 (School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees) sets out the mandate, structure and functions for both Parent Involvement Committees and School Councils. More information can be found at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/getinvolved.html>.

I want to run for School Board Trustee. What do I have to do?

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Detailed information can be found in the *2018 Candidates' Guide for Ontario Municipal and School Board Elections* available at www.ontario.ca/municipalelections

Nomination

Interested candidates must file nomination papers. Nomination papers may be filed in the office of the municipal clerk from May 1, 2018 until 2 p.m. on nomination day, Friday, July 27, 2018. Visit your municipality's website to find the location of your municipal clerk's office.

Nomination Process

- Obtain nomination papers from the clerk of the municipality. Forms can also be accessed online at www.ontario.ca/municipalelections.
- A nomination paper must be filed in person either by the candidate or by an agent on the candidate's behalf. The nomination paper may not be faxed, mailed or emailed. Either the candidate or the agent must bring the completed and signed nomination papers to the office of the clerk. The candidate may be required to show proof of identity and qualifications.
- The nomination paper must have original signatures.
- The nomination filing fee for the office of school trustee is \$100. This fee must be

paid at the time of filing the nomination. Payment to the municipality must be made by cash, certified cheque, money order or an electronic payment method specified by the clerk.

Withdrawal of Candidacy

If a candidate decides to withdraw from the election, they must notify the clerk in writing no later than 2 p.m. on nomination day (Friday, July 27, 2018).

A candidate who withdraws is still required to submit a completed financial disclosure covering all financial transactions made up to the date the nomination was withdrawn. A candidate who withdraws is entitled to have their nomination fee refunded if they file their financial statement by the filing deadline.

Election Finances

All candidates are responsible for acting in accordance with the financial provisions set out in the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*. Candidates should become familiar with these provisions.

Election finances Q & A

When can I accept contributions and spend funds?

The campaign period defines when a candidate can accept contributions or spend dollars in support of the campaign. The campaign period begins on the day when the candidate files a nomination for office, and ends on December 31, 2018. Contributions cannot be made to or accepted by a candidate nor an expense incurred outside of the candidate's campaign period. Candidates cannot accept campaign contributions or incur expenses before they are nominated. At the end of the campaign period, all candidates are required to file a financial statement with the municipal clerk and should ensure that an accounting system that meets the requirements of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* is used.

What are the limits that apply to campaign contributions?

The limit on contributions donated in money, goods or services from any individual is \$1,200 to any one candidate, regardless of the number of offices the candidate was nominated for during the election period. The limit applies whether the contribution consists of one large donation or is the total of a number of smaller contributions of money, goods or services from the same contributor. The maximum total amount a contributor may contribute to candidates in the same jurisdiction is \$5,000. Each municipal council and each school board is a separate jurisdiction. Only a contribution that is \$25 or less can be made in cash. Contributions greater than \$25 (including tickets to a fundraising event) must be made by cheque, money order or other method that clearly shows where the funds came from.

Can I contribute to my own campaign?

A candidate may contribute to their own campaign. There is no limit on contributions from a candidate or their spouse to the candidate's campaign, but they are considered to be a contribution and must be reported as such and a receipt must be issued. Contributions to a candidate's (or spouse's) own campaign do not count toward the \$5,000 limit.

If a campaign ends in a surplus, a candidate may withdraw from the campaign surplus the value of the candidate's (and spouse's) contribution(s).

Financial reports must be filed by 2 p.m. on March 29, 2019.

What rules apply to fundraising events?

Fundraising functions are events or activities held by a candidate or under the candidate's direction for the primary purpose of raising money for the candidate's campaign. Such activities include dinners, dances, barbeques, etc., for which there is an admission charge, as well as auctions, button sales, etc., for which there may not be an admission charge. A campaign event at which incidental fundraising takes place does not qualify as a fundraising function.

Fundraising functions for a candidate can only be held during that candidate's campaign period. The gross income (both admission revenue and other revenue) and expenses from each function must be recorded and reported on the candidate's financial statement. The price of admission to a fundraising function is a campaign contribution and a receipt must be issued for the full amount.

What are the limits that apply to campaign spending?

There are limits on the amount a candidate may spend on expenses during the candidate's campaign period. Campaign expense limits are based on a formula that corresponds to the number of electors in the jurisdiction or ward in which the candidate is seeking office. There are different expense limits for heads of municipal council and for members of municipal councils and school boards.

The clerk must provide each candidate with an estimated spending limit upon filing of nomination papers. The estimate will be calculated based on the number of electors in the previous election. The clerk must provide each candidate with a final spending limit on or before September 25th, 2018.

The final campaign spending limit will be calculated based on the number of electors on the voters' list for the current election. If the final limit is lower than the estimate, the higher amount becomes the candidate's official spending limit.

Formula to calculate the candidate's limit:

For candidates in school board elections: \$5,000 plus \$0.85 per eligible elector.

There is a separate spending limit for expenses related to parties and other expressions of appreciation after the close of voting. This limit is calculated at 10% of a candidate's general spending limit.

Penalties

An individual who is convicted of an offence under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, including contravention of the contribution rules, may be subject to the following penalties:

- a fine of up to \$25,000
- ineligibility to vote or run in the next general election
- up to six months in prison
- forfeiture of the elected office if the judge finds that offence was committed knowingly

Candidates who are convicted of exceeding the spending limit may also be fined the amount by which they exceeded the limit.



“Trustees have the privilege and responsibility to use our voice to speak up for the truth and for others, to stand up and be strong in supporting all our students to achieve success.”

- School Board Trustee

Ontario’s School Board/ Trustee Associations

This publication was developed in partnership with Ontario’s four school/board trustee associations:

- Ontario Public School Boards’ Association (OPSBA)
www.opsba.org
- Ontario Catholic School Trustees’ Association (OCSTA)
www.ocsta.on.ca
- Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l’Ontario (ACÉPO)
www.acepo.org
- Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC)
www.afocsc.org

Each association listed above represents the school boards/trustees within their system and advocates for their boards’ needs and interests.

Ontario’s Student Trustee Associations

Two student trustee associations represent student trustees across Ontario. They work to advance the student vision and bring the student voice to the board table:

- Ontario Student Trustees’ Association- l’Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l’Ontario (OSTA-AECO)
www.osta-aeco.org
- Le Regroupement des élèves conseiller.ère.s francophones de l’Ontario (RECFO)
www.recfo.ca





This resource was developed by



Ontario Education Services Corporation
La corporation des services en éducation de l'Ontario



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Ontario Municipal & School Board Elections

The Ontario Education Services Corporation represents:



ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates



Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA)



Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario (ACÉPO)



Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC)



Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE)

Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA)

Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA)

Funding provided by the Ministry of Education of Ontario. The views in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the ministry.

