A REPORT ON THE ROLE OF SCHOOL BOARDS AND TRUSTEES

The second report of the
EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT COMMISSION
December 1997
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Letter of Transmittal

December 17, 1997

Dear Minister,

The Education Improvement Commission is pleased to present its second report, *The Road Ahead - II, A Report on the Role of School Boards and Trustees.*

As with our first report, we found it essential to position this report in the context of all the changes being made to education in the province. *The Road Ahead - II* builds on the vision we put forward in our first report and sets the stage for future documents. We believe this report is particularly important, given the pivotal role school boards and trustees play in Ontario's education system.

In preparing this report, we reviewed relevant research and governance models in other jurisdictions. We also undertook a province-wide consultation that included visits to 13 centres and meetings with provincial associations that have a direct interest in the role of boards and trustees. To frame the discussions, we asked those who participated in our consultation to respond to four questions:

- How will the responsibilities of school boards be affected by restructuring?
- What roles will trustees play in Ontario’s new district school boards?
- How will changing roles for trustees affect other partners in the education system?
- What training and support will trustees need to fulfil these roles?

A reference group composed of representatives of the trustee associations and parents involved in school councils across the province provided us with invaluable assistance.

We look forward to continuing to work with you as we carry out our mandate—overseeing the transition to a new system of education governance in Ontario.

Sincerely,

Dave Cooke  
Co-Chair

Ann Vanstone  
Co-Chair

Arlene Wright  
Commissioner

Peter Cameron  
Commissioner

Rémi Lessard  
Commissioner

Betty Moseley-Williams  
Commissioner

Mearl Obee  
Commissioner

Arlene Wright  
Commissioner
1. Introduction

In this second report of the Education Improvement Commission, we continue the process of clarifying a vision for education in Ontario. The people of this province want and need a clear image of where education reform is heading. We heard this message repeatedly during our consultation with students, parents, community representatives, and educators from across the province.

In our first report, we used the analogy of a road map. We believe this analogy accurately expresses our purpose in this report as well. Once again, we are providing a road map so that all partners in the education system will have a common vision of where we are going and what we can expect when we get there. We acknowledge that there are alternative routes, reflecting the diversity of this immense province. It is critical, however, that we have a common destination.

The people of Ontario are asking three important questions:

- What must our students learn?
- How can we be sure they have learned these things?
- What is the best education structure to make this learning happen?

The first two questions are being addressed by other groups. Our focus is on the third question.

Our mandate is to oversee the transition to a new system of education governance. Providing advice and direction on the roles of the new district school boards and the trustees who serve on them is, we believe, an important part of our mandate. We cannot address the operation of school boards or the role of any partner in education, however, without reflecting on the roles and responsibilities of the others. The descriptions of roles in chapter 2 are based on the preliminary visions set forth in our first report. Several of these roles, including those of senior staff, school councils, and principals, will be further clarified in future reports.

At the outset, we wish to state our support for four principles that we believe are fundamental to the achievement of excellence in Ontario’s education system. These principles underlie the text and recommendations of this report. They build on the substantial contributions made in Ontario to date by publicly elected school boards, and they are critical to the success of education reform.

The Education Improvement Commission supports:

1. District school boards that are both publicly funded and governed by publicly elected trustees. Ontario’s publicly funded school boards are accountable to their communities, as well as to students and their families. This accountability is ensured through public funding and public elections. Schools operated by a publicly funded board are accessible to all students who fall within the board’s mandate. School boards provide efficient service delivery and equitable programming across their entire jurisdictions.

2. A publicly funded education system in which the province, district school boards, and school communities all have significant roles to play. Our recommendations recognize that, given the diversity of the province, all of these partners must be involved. The history of education in Ontario tells us that this partnership has worked well. While there may be some shifts in responsibilities, each level must continue to play an important role.
3. **Four distinct and equal systems that share many common goals and responsibilities, while simultaneously protecting and promoting the cultural, linguistic, and religious values that are central to their individual purposes.**

Section 93 of the Constitution Act, 1867, guarantees Ontario’s Roman Catholics the right to govern their own education. Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides a similar guarantee to French-language rights holders in Ontario. The province recognizes these rights by providing for four distinct school board systems: English- and French-language secular and English- and French-language Catholic. All four systems must be adequately and equitably funded so that they can fulfill the rights and responsibilities inherent in their mandates.

4. **A model of school board operation in which the board of trustees focuses on setting policy and monitoring its implementation.**

It is essential that boards of trustees establish policy and ensure, through their directors of education, that it is carried out. This operational model is effective, efficient, and reasonable, particularly in light of education reform.

The strength of Ontario’s education system rests in the accountability, accessibility, efficiency, and flexibility inherent in these four principles. We are aware that other Canadian jurisdictions have extended public funding to schools that operate independently of school boards. These schools are often referred to as “charter” schools. We believe such funding is unnecessary and inappropriate in Ontario. Funding charter schools would weaken Ontario’s system of education by reducing its accountability to society, limiting equality of access, and diminishing the efficiencies that now exist. The Education Improvement Commission does not support the public funding of charter schools.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:**

That the Ministry of Education and Training continue to fund schools exclusively through district school boards and school authorities.
2. Partners in Education

Education in Ontario is a partnership consisting of the province, the school board, and the school. This collaboration must continue. Education reform requires, however, that certain responsibilities shift from one level to another. Given the degree of change, the roles of each partner must be clear. Clearly defined roles will lead to increased efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability.

The Provincial Level

The Ministry of Education and Training is responsible for providing province-wide direction, including establishing what students are required to know at each grade level. The Ministry is also responsible for providing sufficient—and equitable—funding to achieve the desired results.

The Education Quality and Accountability Office also plays a critical role at the provincial level. It is responsible for measuring student achievement as well as other indicators of school and school board effectiveness and for communicating its findings. Similarly, the Ontario College of Teachers establishes standards of practice for teacher certification, teaching, and professional development, and ensures that these standards are upheld.

These bodies provide the province-wide consistency that all Ontarians expect and demand.

The School Board Level

The formal responsibilities of school boards continue to be much the same as before. Boards develop policies that are based on provincial standards and in keeping with a locally established vision of education. They ensure that schools in their area comply with ministry policies. Through their directors of education and other supervisory officers, boards hold schools accountable for student achievement, measured against provincially established standards. And, they continue to carry the critical responsibility of establishing a budget that allocates resources to programmes and services on an equitable basis throughout their jurisdiction.

As employers, boards are responsible for employing adequate teaching and support staff to meet the needs of their students. They must also compensate their employees appropriately and provide a just and fair work environment.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

That school boards continue to fulfil their traditional responsibilities, which include but are not limited to:

- establishing and monitoring board policy
- implementing provincial education policy
- establishing a budget and monitoring its implementation
- providing, equipping, and maintaining schools
- holding schools accountable for the results achieved by students, and
- employing and compensating staff

Although these responsibilities remain constant, shifts in focus are necessary. In recent years, for example, public demand for accountability has increased, with the emphasis on good value for the public investment in education. This increased demand heightens the need to measure and communicate student achievement and the need for supervisory officers to concentrate on monitoring the results. Now education reforms have altered the number of boards as well as the distribution and remuneration of trustees. These changes too will cause a shift in the way boards and individual trustees carry out their responsibilities.
School boards have served Ontario well by providing efficient region-wide services that can easily be linked with services provided by others in the community. Boards can take advantage of economies of scale in delivering specialized services and business functions, economies that are not available to individual schools. And boards can respond to regional needs and priorities—an absolute necessity in a province as large and diverse as Ontario.

**The School Community Level**

The roles and responsibilities of schools are being transformed in response both to public demands for accountability and involvement and the changes to the role of school boards.

Schools have the primary responsibility for the way student achievement standards are met. Although board administrators perform an important role in supporting and supervising schools, principals, in consultation with their staff and community, are responsible for providing effective programming. Individual schools reflect and respond to the culture and priorities of local communities. They make maximum use of the benefits provided by the involvement of their students' families. And they establish collaborative relationships with local businesses, industries, and services.

Our first report noted that education reforms will significantly affect the role of school principals. As educational leaders, principals continue to lead and manage their schools. But they will have to place increased emphasis on gaining access to and using community resources and on listening and responding to the ideas and questions of staff, parents, and the public.

The staff of schools should work as teams to deliver innovative, results-oriented programmes. Led by their principals, staff members must focus on the flexible delivery of programmes and services that will enable their students to meet provincial standards as well as local priorities. They must share their skills and recognize the expertise of both certificated teachers and other professionals.

School councils are playing an increasingly important role. They perform a valuable function, advising principals and ensuring that schools respond to local needs and reflect local values. They also provide a vehicle through which schools can take maximum advantage of community resources, creating a partnership in which all members are familiar with the services and needs of the others. Their role will continue to evolve.

We are aware of public concern about the future mandate of school councils. Given their emerging significance, we will discuss their role in a future report.¹

In the next chapter, we examine the impact of current education reforms and other trends in society on the operation of school boards.
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<td>• develop policies based on vision and provincial policy</td>
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A trustee’s primary role is the representation of the community’s needs while participating in policy development.

Submission of the Ontario Public School Boards’ Association, p. 1
Who... | Does What... | Accountable to... | For...
---|---|---|---
School principals | • act as educational leaders | • the director of education | • academic achievements of their students
• lead and manage schools | • local school community | • implementing board policies in their schools
• ensure effective programmes are in place | • | advice that reflects community

**At the local school community level**

School councils
• at present, advise their school principal and, if requested, their school board (The role and accountability of school councils will be developed further in a future report.)

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3. The Way School Boards Operate

Education is the oldest public institution in Ontario, predating the establishment of the province. Publicly elected boards of trustees have governed schooling in Ontario since 1816. Over the years, the public and members of the education community have acknowledged the successes of the board system and noted, sometimes vociferously, its shortcomings. In general, boards have evolved in response to changes in society. This process of adaptation has produced an education system of which the people of Ontario can be proud.

A particularly significant stage in the evolution of boards occurred in 1969, with the formation of county boards. The province amalgamated small local boards into county boards in the belief that the larger, county-wide units would be able to offer broader accessibility (equal opportunities for more students) and more extensive support services and that they would benefit from economies of scale.

We view recent school board reforms as consistent with the evolution of boards. For example, the creation of four equal publicly funded school systems—rather than the previous model, which provided for public and separate boards—is a natural progression, given the traditions and cultures of the province. With the creation of French-language district school boards in particular, Ontario now has a more equitable education system.

Current reforms in education governance should not be seen as a step towards the elimination of school boards. During our province-wide consultation, many people expressed concern that Ontario was planning to eliminate school boards. We believe that neither the province nor local schools can adequately manage the education and business functions carried out by school boards. Boards play the essential role of tailoring education to the specific needs of their jurisdictions. The new school board structure affirms the unique and significant values of both the province’s French- and English-speaking communities and upholds the constitutionally guaranteed rights of its Catholic community.
Current reforms in education governance should not be seen as criticism of the valuable roles that have been played by school boards. Current reforms flow from several changes in society, including advances in transportation and communications technology and greater demand for financial accountability. School boards have served the province well by providing a balance between a completely centralized and a completely school-based system.

We agree with the Royal Commission on Learning, which stated in its 1994 report, For the Love of Learning:

...Education is a significant enough public activity to merit its own locally elected representatives, with responsibilities that neither municipal councillors nor members of the provincial legislature can handle properly....School boards are necessary in translating provincial policy into local contexts, for setting local priorities, and for providing co-ordination and support for their schools.²

Participants in our consultation frequently asked us for what boards are accountable and to whom they are accountable.

As the elected governing body of a school board, the board of trustees is accountable for everything the board does. It is responsible for establishing policy direction and ensuring that its policies are implemented. In other words, it determines the goals of the organization and holds board staff accountable for meeting these goals. Trustees are accountable to their constituents—the people who elected them. They are also accountable to the province, through the Ministry of Education and Training, for the proper conduct of their duties and powers, including the implementation of provincial policy and the wise use of provincially allocated funds.

Ontario’s Education Act (sections 170 and 171) outlines the duties and powers of boards, among which are the following:

**Provision of instruction, including:**
- appointing supervisory officers, principals, and teachers
- operating schools and providing instruction consistent with the Education Act and its regulations
- providing special education programmes for exceptional students

**Provision of facilities, including:**
- providing adequate accommodation for all pupils
- keeping school buildings and premises equipped and in good repair
- where necessary, transporting pupils

**Financial administration, including:**
- investing and borrowing funds
- spending money for school purposes and for the promotion of the interests of schools as authorized by the Education Act and its regulations

District school boards, like their predecessors, will have extensive power and authority in Ontario’s reformed education system. Their ability to raise funds through local property taxes has been suspended, but boards will continue to administer provincial grants. The Ministry of Education and Training will set standards for what students are required to know, but boards, through
their supervisory officers, will be accountable for ensuring that these standards are achieved by the students in their schools.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:**
That school boards continue to be accountable:

- to the people of Ontario for the quality of education delivered in schools
- to the people and the provincial government of Ontario for responsible management of money allocated to boards, and
- to the provincial government, through the Ministry of Education and Training, for the implementation of provincial education policy

As part of their accountability, boards must report on their performance to their communities and to the Ministry of Education and Training. The board’s performance report must be clear and easily understood, and it must allow for comparisons with other boards.

A common framework for reporting would help achieve these goals.

**RECOMMENDATION 4:**
That the Ministry of Education and Training develop a standard “school board report card” for the annual reporting of board results, and that this report card include space for boards to report on their performance in meeting locally established priorities

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**Board Effectiveness**

A 1991 study of school board effectiveness found that only one in 100 Canadian school boards surveyed had a formal process for monitoring whether policies were being implemented. To ensure that their boards are operating effectively, trustees, in addition to setting policies, must establish a process for keeping track of policy implementation and observing the degree to which the goals they have established are being met. Boards should also review their policies periodically to ensure they remain relevant.

Research across North America suggests that the line between policy making and policy implementation is often blurred. Boards of trustees sometimes function more like management committees. The Canadian School Boards Association noted in its 1991 survey of school board effectiveness that “…there is consensus that too little time is spent on certain education-related goals, and too much time on some system management issues.”

In our consultations, we frequently heard that trustees become too involved in day-to-day administration. One participant from western Ontario suggested that, with fewer trustees to do the work, boards will have to “concentrate on major, critical issues, and leave operational decisions to school administrators…”

Experience elsewhere in North America indicates that when trustees delegate operational decision-making to board administrators and school staff, they “concern themselves with education and educational outcomes rather than managerial responsibilities.” In January 1997, in presenting the Fewer School Boards Act, then Minister of Education and Training John Snobelen made it clear that the government’s intention was to focus the energy of trustees on policy setting. He stated that the trustee’s role “will be policy direction and support,” not “hands-on, day-to-day” management of schools. We support this focus. Boards should set direction, rather than make what an Edmonton trustee called “rules for schools.”

Some consultation participants expressed concern that, with reductions in the numbers of trustees and other factors, policy setting might shift to administrators. This shift must not happen; boards of trustees must retain full responsibility for setting policy. As noted earlier, trustees are accountable to both the province and the local community. To be truly accountable and carry out their mandate, they must retain responsibility for the establishment and monitoring of policy.

By setting goals and policies and articulating the board’s values, trustees set the boundaries for staff, who manage the system. Senior board staff are responsible for and should be held accountable for the achievement of the board’s goals throughout the system. Trustees cannot ignore operational issues, however. While “good policy development does not prescribe how a policy is to be implemented,” it does set some limits, such as cost.
RECOMMENDATION 5:
That school board trustees continue to be responsible for establishing school board policy and monitoring its implementation.

RECOMMENDATION 6:
That directors of education continue to be responsible for implementing school board policy.

The way a school board conducts its business will vary with the size of the board, the linguistic and denominational nature of the board, the communities it serves, and sometimes with the individual personalities of trustees. Together, these characteristics can be described as a school board’s organizational “culture.” The new district school boards face the formidable challenge of developing their organizational cultures in the first few months of 1998.

As consultation participants suggested, one thing is sure. With structural change—fewer trustees and larger territories—school boards will not be able to operate as they have in the past. For example, boards will meet less often, and many of their meetings will be conducted electronically. And trustees will have to supplement their visits to schools with strong communication strategies. We discuss the implications of these changes in more detail in chapter 5.

The Policy Leadership Model

In preparing this report, we reviewed relevant research and governance models, including those operating in other jurisdictions. One model we reviewed was the goal-oriented governance model developed by John Carver, a policy consultant. Some of the principles underlying Carver’s model are paraphrased below:

- The board of trustees as a body has the responsibility to serve the general public rather than groups of the population or the professionals whom boards employ.
- The board of trustees exists to govern the school system, not manage it.
- The board of trustees has multiple and varied responsibilities, but involvement in the details of these concerns should never displace students as the central occupation and focus of the system.

Based on the practices identified during our consultation and our review of models in other jurisdictions, we believe that the most efficient and practical governance model is one that focuses on the establishment and monitoring of policy direction. This governance model should begin with the development of a vision. We urge each board to develop a vision that promotes this role and then refer to this vision in all its policy decisions, including the hiring of a director, the setting of budgets, and the establishment of employment practices.

A French-language board should create a vision that reflects the importance of its role in preserving, promoting, and celebrating the French language and communities, and adhere to this vision in all its policies and decisions. A large urban board may wish to establish a vision that is aimed at meeting the needs and values of its multicultural community, or a northern board its large population of Native people. These boards should then ensure that all their policies and administrative decisions honour that vision.

We believe that the policy governance model set out in the following graphic should be adopted by all district school boards:
A Policy Governance Model for School Board Operations

Each district school board should:

1. Create a vision in consultation with its staff and community

2. Appoint a director of education who shares the vision and has the skills to work with the board to realize the vision

3. Establish policies critical to achieving the vision

4. Establish a budget consistent with the priorities set out in the vision and policies

5. Develop an organizational model for senior staff and assign responsibilities, so that the vision and policies are implemented throughout the system

6. Establish procedures for monitoring the implementation of its policies, and tie this procedure to the performance appraisal of the director of education

7. Communicate its performance to the community and the ministry

8. Reassess its vision

School boards must formulate a mission and goals for their school system that are consistent with their own community. All the activities of the board must bring the system closer to the accomplishment of that mission.

Submission of the Ontario Catholic School Trustees’ Association, p. 2
**RECOMMENDATION 7:**

That each district school board carry out its responsibilities through the policy governance process outlined in this report.

**Board Committees**

In many boards, committee work consumes a considerable amount of trustees’ time. Practice varies across the province. A study conducted in 1991 found that a trustee in one Ontario school board served on 16 committees. Other boards have only two or three committees.

District school boards will have fewer trustees—some as few as five. In most cases, an elaborate committee structure will not be possible. With fewer trustees, fewer boards, and a cap on trustee honoraria, the number of board committees and their role in board governance must change.

The Education Act mandates trustee representation on special education advisory committees (SEACs) and committees on supervised alternative learning for excused pupils (called SALEP committees). Since SEACs make recommendations directly to boards, trustee representation is appropriate. The present mandatory number of three trustees on each SEAC is impractical, especially for those boards with as few as five trustees.

**RECOMMENDATION 8:**

That the Ministry of Education and Training revise section 206 (2) (d) of the Education Act to reduce the compulsory membership on special education advisory committees to a minimum of one member of the board.

Regulation 308 of the Education Act requires SALEP committees to have one trustee. SALEP committees, however, perform an operational role and, as such, they are more properly the responsibility of staff.

**RECOMMENDATION 9:**

That the Ministry of Education and Training revise the mandatory membership of committees on supervised alternative learning for excused pupils (SALEP committees), as outlined in regulation 308, by deleting the requirement that one member of the committee be a trustee.

**RECOMMENDATION 10:**

That SALEP committees be required to report to district school boards twice a year on the numbers of students admitted to supervised alternative learning programmes.
4. The Role of Trustees

The Education Act gives boards of trustees the authority to act as corporate bodies but does not confer powers on trustees as individuals. Throughout the province, individual trustees have defined their roles according to their personal beliefs, the expectations of their community, and the issues they face. While individual trustees do not have legislated powers, they perform many important roles in their communities. Education reform will undoubtedly affect these roles. But, as one participant in our consultation put it, “The way trustees operate will have to change, but the substance of what they do should be the same.”

Trustees as Local Politicians

Trustees represent the interests of their constituents at the board and communicate the views and decisions of the board to their constituents. This political role can be time-consuming, involving such activities as attending school events and community functions and meeting with parent and community groups.

With the restructuring of Ontario’s school boards, each trustee will represent more constituents spread over a larger area. Many of those who participated in our consultation felt that, as a result, public representation might suffer. To ensure that it does not, and to reassure members of the public that they will still have ready access to their trustees, boards and individual trustees will need effective communication tools and strategies.

During our consultations, a few participants expressed concern about the inability of boards to deal with trustees who fail to comply with the expectations set out for them in the Education Act and board policies. Of particular concern is the disclosure, from time to time, of information discussed during the limited in-camera sessions allowed by the Education Act. Participants who raised this issue suggested that boards need a mechanism for enforcing established expectations. (The consequences of most other inappropriate actions are covered by the provisions of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act.)

RECOMMENDATION 11:

That the Ministry of Education and Training, in consultation with the board/trustee associations, establish an enforceable code of conduct for school board trustees.
RECOMMENDATION 12:
That each district school board develop and communicate to its constituents a policy that outlines procedures for handling the public’s concerns

Trustees who represent First Nations will continue to play an important advocacy role on the new district school boards. Native trustees are selected and appointed to boards by their communities to represent the interests of Native students for whom education agreements exist between First Nations and the boards. Once appointed, Native trustees are full members of a board except where their appointment is limited to either the elementary or secondary panel. Board restructuring will present new challenges to many Native trustees, who will now have responsibility for larger geographic areas and, in some cases, a larger number of First Nations communities.

Trustees in the Catholic and French-language school systems are expected by the francophone community to advocate for the preservation, promotion, and celebration of the French language and communities in Ontario.

Student trustees have a valuable and unique role to play in representing the perspective of a board’s students. Boards should encourage student trustees to become involved in the decision-making process as extensively as legislation permits.

Trustees During the Transition Period
The period of transition to the new district school boards will be a critical time in the development of boards’ organizational cultures. Trustees will have to become familiar with and build relationships with their constituencies—many of which will be larger than in the past—and with their board’s entire jurisdiction. In areas where boards have been merged, or where one trustee has been elected to represent several small communities that previously had their own representatives, trustees will have to help communities connect with their new district board.

Trustees may have to devote considerable time to pulling their communities together, helping some communities overcome the loss of their former “own” local trustees, and helping others shift their identity and loyalty from a small board to a much larger one. Many trustees will be required to act as conciliators and ambassadors. They will need strong communication skills, in addition to the effective communication tools and strategies referred to earlier.

Northern and French-language trustees will face particular difficulties during the transition period. Their situation is described in more detail in chapter 5.
5. Training and Support for Trustees

Given the magnitude of the changes to education in Ontario, providing trustees with good training is more important than ever. Training and other forms of support must be a collaborative effort, and we in the Education Improvement Commission are committed to doing our part. We also believe that the cost of training trustees should be recognized in the province’s education funding formula.

RECOMMENDATION 13:
That the Ministry of Education and Training include in its funding formula adequate provision for costs incurred in the orientation and training of trustees.

Training

All partners must keep certain principles in mind in preparing for the training of district school board trustees:

1. Training activities must include both orientation and follow-up sessions. District school boards will be conducting orientation sessions, but ongoing training will be required as trustees mature in their roles and as the boards’ organizational cultures evolve.

2. All trustees, including those with considerable experience in the role, must receive training. Extensive legislated changes, as well as the need for both experienced and novice trustees to share in the development of the board’s organizational culture, require the involvement of all trustees.

3. Training must be readily accessible. Delivery should be flexible, both in location and timing. A variety of media should be used, including teleconferencing, video-conferencing, and face-to-face sessions.

4. Training must be planned and delivered cooperatively. The Ministry of Education and Training, district school boards, trustee associations, supervisory officer associations, and the Education Improvement Commission all have roles to play. Partnerships with other education agencies and institutions should also be considered (such as TVOntario and TFO, as well as the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and the Centre du leadership en éducation). In particular, where they are available, existing cooperatives such as the Northern Centre for Instructional Leadership and the Northwestern Ontario School Boards’ Cooperative could be of assistance.

5. Training must be practical and related to the challenges faced by trustees. The content of the training will vary according to local needs but should address the following major topics:

   i) public education and the responsibilities of boards
   • the duties and powers of boards (sections 170 and 171 of the Education Act)
   • the significance of the four distinct, equal school board systems, including the relevance of constitutional and charter rights and the responsibilities implied by those rights
   • the roles of other partners, including the Ministry of Education and Training, school councils, and administrators at the school and board levels
   • the financial responsibilities of boards, including those related to changes in the way education is financed in Ontario

As always, we can expect mixed levels of expertise as experienced trustees return and new trustees embark on an important undertaking—our young people’s education. Trustees will be called upon to look after their board’s “big picture” as well as policy development and the governance of a geographically far-flung school structure that is much more complex and sophisticated than it used to be. Consequently, they must receive training to help them carry out their responsibilities properly.

Submission of l’Association franco-ontarienne des conseils d’écoles catholiques (translation), pp. 5-6
ii) orientation to the new district school boards, including statistical information (numbers of students, staff, schools, etc.) and the sharing of information about the policies, practices, and organizational cultures of previous boards

iii) operational practices of school boards
• the conduct of meetings and rules of order
• policy development procedures
• processes in group dynamics (consensus building, conflict resolution, problem solving, etc.)
• processes for public consultation and communication
• school board governance models

iv) roles of and expectations for individual trustees
• the role of Native trustees
• the role of student trustees
• effective communication strategies, including protocols for teleconferencing and video-conferencing
• interactions with the public, including procedures for responding to public concerns
• the roles of board chairs and vice-chairs
• the committee structure and related expectations for members

• roles and responsibilities related to the particular nature of the board (whether it is Catholic or secular, French or English, rural or urban, etc.)

We hope that this report, along with the resources listed in the bibliography, will help those involved in planning the training. The board/trustee associations have a handbook entitled Shaping the Future that will also be invaluable to trustees, although it requires updating to reflect recent education reforms.

Communication Links
During our consultation, participants emphasized that appropriate communications networks will be the most important support in helping trustees fulfill their roles. The need is especially great in northern Ontario, where boards cover huge geographic areas with widely dispersed populations.

Many of the new district school boards will have to rely on electronic modes of communication to stay in touch with their constituents, to hold board meetings (including meetings that are electronically accessible to the public), to work with other boards, and to contact and receive support from their board/trustee associations. In short, they need an extensive system of communication links.

Such a system requires an investment of money. To be cost-effective and to ensure that boards do not become isolated, it also requires coordination and the cooperation of government ministries, public agencies, and all boards, as well as private enterprise.

RECOMMENDATION 14:
That the Ministry of Education and Training recognize the cost of voice and video communication through special grants to boards that cover large geographic areas

RECOMMENDATION 15:
That the provincial government ensure that all relevant provincial ministries and public agencies work in a coordinated way to establish a comprehensive communications network throughout the province, and that the network established is compatible with the needs of district school boards

RECOMMENDATION 16:
That the Ministry of Education and Training assign the Education Improvement Commission the task of ensuring that all district school boards work in a coordinated way with one another and with provincial ministries and public agencies to establish a comprehensive and mutually compatible communications network.
French-language boards face particular challenges. In addition to covering large geographic areas, they will be establishing relationships that did not previously exist with constituents and with other boards. They will have to move quickly to make contact with their constituents and begin developing an organizational culture. Adding to these challenges is the lack of technological infrastructure in parts of the north. Without this infrastructure, these boards cannot establish the communications links essential to carrying out their mandate.

**RECOMMENDATION 17:**
That the Ministry of Education and Training recognize the exceptional challenges that French-language district school boards face in establishing themselves, by working with the federal government to provide funds for the establishment of these boards and for the development of technological infrastructures in the geographic regions covered by these boards.

**Board/Trustee Associations**
We believe that all school boards should belong to their respective provincial associations. The support of these associations will be crucial to boards during the transition period. Later, membership in these associations will help ensure the boards’ continuing viability and strength. As provincial bodies, these associations have the strength to—and should continue to—act as advocates of publicly funded education, speak out on behalf of their respective systems, and collaborate in training newly elected trustees.

**RECOMMENDATION 18:**
That each district school board join its provincial association.

**Trustee Remuneration**
Some participants in our consultations raised concerns about trustee remuneration. In the past, many trustees received an honorarium that was greater than the $5,000 limit now placed on trustee allowances. We will monitor this matter and, if necessary, address it in a future report.

6. Conclusion and Summary of Recommendations

In this report, we have continued the process of clarifying a vision of education in Ontario. We have focused on the roles of district school boards and the trustees who serve on these boards. Education reform has had a significant impact on school board operations. In view of the changes, we felt it was especially important to recognize and celebrate the longstanding contributions that publicly elected school boards have made to education in this province.

In considering the roles of boards and trustees, we have identified and expressed our support for four principles that are fundamental to the achievement of excellence in Ontario’s education system:

- district school boards that are both publicly funded and governed by publicly elected trustees
- a publicly funded system of education in which the province, district school boards, and school communities all have a significant role to play
- four distinct and equal systems that share many common goals and responsibilities, while simultaneously protecting and promoting the cultural, linguistic, and religious values that are central to their individual purposes
- a model of school board operation in which the board of trustees focuses on setting policy and monitoring its implementation
We have stated clearly that we do not support the funding of charter schools, as such a move would undermine the strength of Ontario’s public education system.

We have outlined what we believe to be the essential roles that boards and individual trustees must play. We have also stated our belief that, given the significant contribution trustees will continue to make to public education, and the number of changes taking place, the training of trustees has taken on an increased importance.

We believe our recommendations, reiterated here, will assist school boards as they move to the next stage in the history of Ontario education.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:**
That the Ministry of Education and Training continue to fund schools exclusively through district school boards and school authorities

**RECOMMENDATION 2:**
That school boards continue to fulfil their traditional responsibilities, which include but are not limited to:
- establishing and monitoring board policy
- implementing provincial education policy
- establishing a budget and monitoring its implementation
- providing, equipping, and maintaining schools
- holding schools accountable for the results achieved by students, and
- employing and compensating staff

**RECOMMENDATION 3:**
That school boards continue to be accountable:
- to the people of Ontario for the quality of education delivered in schools
- to the people and the provincial government of Ontario for responsible management of money allocated to boards, and
- to the provincial government, through the Ministry of Education and Training, for the implementation of provincial education policy

**RECOMMENDATION 4:**
That the Ministry of Education and Training develop a standard “school board report card” for the annual reporting of board results, and that this report card include space for boards to report on their performance in meeting locally established priorities

**RECOMMENDATION 5:**
That school board trustees continue to be responsible for establishing school board policy and monitoring its implementation

**RECOMMENDATION 6:**
That directors of education continue to be responsible for implementing school board policy

**RECOMMENDATION 7:**
That each district school board carry out its responsibilities through the policy governance process outlined in this report

**RECOMMENDATION 8:**
That the Ministry of Education and Training revise section 206 (2) (d) of the Education Act to reduce the compulsory membership on special education advisory committees to a minimum of one member of the board

**RECOMMENDATION 9:**
That the Ministry of Education and Training revise the mandatory membership of committees on supervised alternative learning for excused pupils (SALEP committees), as outlined in regulation 308, by deleting the requirement that one member of the committee be a trustee

**RECOMMENDATION 10:**
That SALEP committees be required to report to district school boards twice a year on the numbers of students admitted to supervised alternative learning programmes
RECOMMENDATION 11:
That the Ministry of Education and Training, in consultation with the board/trustee associations, establish an enforceable code of conduct for school board trustees.

RECOMMENDATION 12:
That each district school board develop and communicate to its constituents a policy that outlines procedures for handling the public's concerns.

RECOMMENDATION 13:
That the Ministry of Education and Training include in its funding formula adequate provision for costs incurred in the orientation and training of trustees.

RECOMMENDATION 14:
That the Ministry of Education and Training recognize the cost of voice and video communication through special grants to boards that cover large geographic areas.

RECOMMENDATION 15:
That the provincial government ensure that all relevant provincial ministries and public agencies work in a coordinated way to establish a comprehensive communications network throughout the province, and that the network established is compatible with the needs of district school boards.

RECOMMENDATION 16:
That the Ministry of Education and Training assign the Education Improvement Commission the task of ensuring that all district school boards work in a coordinated way with one another and with provincial ministries and public agencies to establish a comprehensive and mutually compatible communications network.

Endnotes

1. The Commission acknowledges that Bill 160’s removal of the word “advisory” from references to school councils has been interpreted by some to indicate a policy decision on this matter. This change was made at the Commission’s request and should not be viewed as a policy decision. Our intent in requesting this change was to avoid prejudicing our future consultations.


4. Ibid., 40.


7. Ontario, The Royal Commission on Learning, 111.


Appendix:
Consultation Participants

Note: A key to acronyms appears at the end of this appendix.

We wish to thank all those who provided us with information and comments and who shared their wisdom and expertise with us.

In particular, we would like to thank the members of the reference group, composed of representatives of the board/trustee associations and parents involved in school councils across the province, who provided us with invaluable assistance. Their names are listed below.

Reference Group

- Angele Brunelle, trustee
- Denis Chartrand, trustee
- Gerri Gershon, trustee
- Paul Whitehead, trustee
- Kathy Anstett, parent
- Mary Duquette, parent
- Michel Robichaud, parent
- Paul Trudel, parent

School Boards

Atikokan Board of Education
- trustee, director of education, school council parent, student trustee

Beardmore Geraldton Longlac & Area Board of Education
- director of education, trustee

Board of Education for the Borough of East York
- FWTAO, trustee, director of education, school council, student trustee, non-management support staff

Board of Education for the City of Brantford
- FWTAO, OPSBA, OSSTF, trustee, director of education, principal, school council, student trustee, non-management support staff, LEIC

Board of Education for the City of Hamilton
- school council, principal, non-management support staff, director of education

Board of Education for the City of London
- AEFO, Native trustee, principal, student trustee, non-management support staff, LEIC

Board of Education for the City of North York
- trustee, principal, school council, student trustee, non-management support staff, LEIC

Board of Education for the City of Scarborough
- trustee

Board of Education for the City of Toronto
- FWTAO, OECTA, OPSBA, principal, school council, student trustee

Board of Education for the City of Windsor
- trustee, principal, school council, student trustee

Board of Education for the City of York
- OPSBA, school council, OPSTF, principal, FWTAO, student trustee, LEIC, non-management support staff, director of education

Brant County Board of Education
- LEIC, trustee, student representative, school council member, school council parent

Brant County RCSSB
- director of education
Central Algoma Board of Education
- FWTAO, OPSBA, trustee, director of education, school council parent, school council member

Chapleau Board of Education
- trustee, principal, school council parent, school council member, LEIC

Chapleau District RCSSB
- principal, LEIC

Cochrane Iroquois Falls/Black River Matheson RCSSB
- non-management support staff, trustee, director of education

Conseil des écoles françaises de la communauté urbaine de Toronto
- trustee, director of education, principal, school council, non-management support staff, LEIC

Dryden Board of Education
- principal, trustee, director of education

Dufferin County Board of Education
- parent, vice-principal

Dufferin-Peel RCSSB
- director, student, non-management support staff, school council, AEFO, LEIC, principal

Durham Board of Education
- LEIC, director of education, school council, principal, non-management support staff, student

Durham Region RCSSB
- director of education, principal, trustee, school council, LEIC, non-management support staff, secondary school student, AEFO

East Parry Sound Board of Education
- FWTAO, OPSBA, trustee, director of education, principal, school council, student trustee, non-management support staff, LEIC

Elgin County Board of Education
- trustee, director of education, school council, student trustee, non-management support staff

Elgin County RCSSB
- trustee, director of education, principal, school council, non-management support staff

Essex County Board of Education
- FWTAO, trustee, director of education, principal, school council, student trustee, non-management support staff

Essex County RCSSB
- trustee, director of education, principal, school council, student trustee, LEIC

Fort Frances-Rainy River District RCSSB
- principal, school council, trustee

Frontenac County Board of Education
- trustee, principal, school council representative, LEIC, AEFO, non-management support staff

Frontenac-Lennox & Addington County RCSSB
- vice-principal, trustee

Geraldton District RCSSB
- trustee, director of education, LEIC

Haldimand Board of Education
- student representative, school council parent, principal, trustee, LEIC, non-management support staff

Haldimand-Norfolk RCSSB
- director of education, school council parent

Haliburton County Board of Education
- director of education, LEIC

Halton Board of Education
- school council

Halton RCSSB
- principal, school council

Hamilton-Wentworth RCSSB
- school council parent, trustee, student representative, non-management support staff

Hastings County Board of Education
- OPSTF, student trustee/secondary school student, non-management support staff, school council

Hastings Prince Edward County RCSSB
- LEIC, school council/community representative, principal, trustee, director of education, OPSTF, student representative, superintendent, parent council member, non-management support staff, school council

Hearst Board of Education
- principal, OPSTF, FWTAO, school council, trustee
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Wentworth County Board of Education
- director of education, school council, trustee, LEIC

West Parry Sound Board of Education
- FWTAO, OSSTF, trustee, director of education, principal, school council, student trustee

Windsor RCSSB
- trustee, director of education, school council, student trustee, non-management support staff, LEIC

York Region RCSSB
- OSSTF; student trustee, director of education, non-management support staff, LEIC, vice-principal, principal

Organizations

Advisory Committee on Special Education
l’Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO)
l’Association française des conseils scolaires de l’Ontario (AFCSO)
l’Association franco-ontarienne des conseils d’écoles catholiques (AFOCEC)

Atikokan Board of Education
Board of Education for the City of Hamilton
Board of Education for the City of North York
Board of Education for the City of Windsor
Brother Andre Catholic School Council
Byron Somerset School
Campbell Children’s School Board of Education
Carleton Assembly of School Councils
District School Board #18
East Parry Sound Board of Education
École Carrefour Supérieur-Nord
École secondaire Marc-Garneau
Etobicoke Parents
Fort Frances-Rainy River Board of Education
Haliburton County Board of Education
Halton Board of Education
Harnham School
Huron County Board Education
Huron-Perth County RCSSB
Kenora Board of Education
Lake Superior Board of Education
Lambton County RCSSB
Minister’s Advisory Council on Special Education
Niagara South Board of Education
North York Parent Assembly
Northumberland & Clarington Board of Education
Ontario Catholic School Trustees’ Association
Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers’ Association
Ontario Federation of Catholic School Associations
Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, Inc.
Ontario Public School Boards’ Association
Ontario Public Supervisory Officials’ Association
Organization for Quality Education
Ottawa Board of Education
Our Lady of Fatima School Council
Parry Sound RCSSB
Peterborough County Board of Education
Russell Arts and Education Centre
St. Joseph School Council

Written Submissions

Académie La Pinède
l’Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO)
l’Association française des conseils scolaires de l’Ontario (AFCSO)
l’Association franco-ontarienne des conseils d’écoles catholiques (AFOCEC)

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Ontario Public Supervisory Officials’ Association
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Ottawa Board of Education
Our Lady of Fatima School Council
Parry Sound RCSSB
Peterborough County Board of Education
Russell Arts and Education Centre
St. Joseph School Council
Key to Acronyms

AEFO
l’Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens

AFCSO
l’Association française des conseils scolaires de l’Ontario

AFOCEC
l’Association franco-ontarienne des conseils d’écoles catholiques

FWTAO
Federation of Women Teachers’ Associations of Ontario

LEIC
Local Education Improvement Committee

OCSTA
Ontario Catholic School Trustees’ Association

OECTA
Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association

OPSTA
Ontario Public School Boards’ Association

OPSIF
Ontario Public School Teachers’ Federation

OSSIF
Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation

PSSB
Protestant Separate School Board

RCSSB
Roman Catholic Separate School Board

SAB
School Area Board
Bibliography

Ontario Government Documents


General


**Articles**


