

**Ministry of Education**

Minister

Mowat Block  
Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1L2  
Telephone (416) 325-2600  
Facsimile (416) 325-2608

**Ministère de l'Éducation**

Ministre

Édifice Mowat  
Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1L2  
Téléphone (416) 325-2600  
Télécopieur (416) 325-2608



**MEMORANDUM TO:** Chairs of District School Boards and School Authorities

**FROM:** Honourable Kathleen Wynne  
Minister of Education

**DATE:** November 4, 2008

**SUBJECT:** **Modernization of School Board Governance**

---

In “Energizing Ontario Education” released last winter, the government recognized that:

*School board leadership (trustees, directors and supervisory officers) also needs ongoing development to improve the ability of board leaders to act together within the district to implement the core priorities and provide the supporting conditions required. In this respect, further efforts are needed to improve school board governance and the relationship between trustees and directors. Ten years after substantial changes to school board governance, it is time to clarify and modernize the role of trustees to ensure that they have the supports they need to make sound decisions essential to student success.*

I am pleased to inform you that we are moving forward to fulfil this commitment, with the creation of a Governance Review Committee. Its mandate will be to:

- Recommend ways to modernize and clarify in the *Education Act* the duties, powers and accountabilities of school boards, chairs, individual trustees and directors of education, while reinforcing the relationship between elected officials as a group and the director of education as sole employee accountable to the board;
- Identify and recommend effective practices in governance applicable to the education sector, including:
  - Codes of conduct for trustees, enforceable at the provincial or board level;
  - Audit committees with external members;
- Propose an appropriate long-term capacity building program for trustees;
- Recommend, after consultation with trustee associations, appropriate content and format of eventual provincial interest regulations designed to ensure that a board achieves student outcomes specified in the regulation, such as improved literacy and numeracy and graduation rates.

The following matters are outside the scope of the mandate of the committee: trustee expenses, trustee honoraria, board boundaries and the current regime of four school systems.

The modernization of school board governance is overdue. For example, the *Education Act* refers to boards' powers to erect fences, establish cadet corps and purchase milk for students, but it doesn't define boards' accountability to improve student achievement.

Most importantly, sound governance is key to the improvement of outcomes in any organization. The committee's deliberations will be informed by the ongoing work on school board governance as part of the Operational Review initiative. So far, 14 boards have voluntarily been assessed by external consultants against leading practices in governance.

The Governance Review Committee will be co-chaired by Rick Johnson and Madeleine Chevalier. Rick Johnson is president of the Canadian School Boards' Association, past president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) and chair of the Trillium-Lakelands District School Board. Madeleine Chevalier is a trustee and past chair of the Conseil des écoles catholiques de langue française du Centre-Est and former president of the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones.

Other members will include : Harold Brathwaite, executive director of the Retired Teachers of Ontario and former director of education of the Peel District School Board; Denis S. Chartrand, former director of education of the Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario and former chair of the Council of Directors of Education (CODE); Penny Milton, CEO of the Canadian Education Association, former chair of the Toronto Board of Education, former executive director of OPSBA and former Ontario Deputy Minister; Paula Peroni, president of the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, vice-president of the Canadian Catholic School Trustees' Association and chair of the Sudbury Catholic District School Board.

The committee will seek input from provincial stakeholders and engage with trustees and directors of education, as well as focus groups of school councils and parent representatives, to inform its recommendations expected by the end of the winter of 2009. Further information regarding the consultation process will follow.

The Ministry's intention is to seek legislative amendments to the *Education Act* as a result of this governance review during the spring of 2009, and file provincial interest regulations on student outcomes, literacy, numeracy and graduation rates during the summer of 2009.

Good governance involves an increasing use of data and results to assess our collective work, monitor progress, and address situations where additional guidance may be necessary. I have asked the Deputy Minister to engage with representatives from CODE to develop minimal requirements for Directors' 2008 Annual Reports. These requirements will encourage the sharing of consistent information across the system about the important work we are all engaged in. This will also better support trustees in making critical decisions around student success.

I thank you for your ongoing leadership of Ontario's publicly-funded schools. I look forward to the upcoming work to modernize the governance of our sector and reinforce our shared ownership and responsibility for the government's three key education goals to improve student achievement, reduce gaps in student outcomes and increase confidence in publicly-funded education.

Kathleen Wynne  
Minister of Education

- c. Members of the Education Partnership Table
  - Directors of education
  - Supervisory officers of school authorities