

To: All Trustees

CC: All Directors of Education, Senior HR and Finance Officials, and Communications Officers

Good morning,

Today should have been the first day back to school after March Break. Unfortunately, instead of getting back to class, we are facing a challenging and unprecedented situation as our schools remain closed across the province for at least another two weeks, and potentially longer.

I want to begin by acknowledging the hard work and dedication of the staff in our schools, school boards, the Ministry of Education, and our education partners who have all been collaborating to ensure we are able to identify and resolve any challenges that have arisen or will arise – and there are many. While the circumstances of our work may have changed, our dedication to ensuring the success and well-being of our students is as strong as ever.

Over the past week, across the education sector, we have begun to establish regular teleconferences and updates to ensure that accurate and timely information is being shared between the ministry, school boards, and trustees. OPSBA has been working closely with the Ministry of Education, and I've spoken personally with Minister Lecce and will continue to be in close contact with him. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have questions, concerns or feedback. I want you to know that we will continue to expand and refine our communications efforts as the situation evolves. OPSBA's goal is to share accurate information with all trustees as quickly as possible.

OPSBA staff are working remotely, with calls to the office being forwarded. As you know, we have made the decision to cancel Regional Meetings, and we expect a formal announcement about the status of the Education Labour Relations and Human Resources Symposium later this week. Decisions on future Board Meetings and the Annual General Meeting will be made in a timely fashion, but at this point we do not expect these to be in-person unless there is a very dramatic and highly unlikely change in the overall situation. We do have experience in holding online meetings and will endeavour to do so where possible and appropriate.

In Ontario, we are fortunate to have one of the best education systems in the world, and I know that by working together we will be able to face the challenges that may lie ahead over the course of this pandemic. Each of you, as leaders in your communities, will be an extremely important part of ensuring that we maintain public trust and confidence in our system. I know we will all do our best to support the efforts of the staff of our school boards as they work through the operational challenges. We're fortunate to have staff with the necessary expertise and I encourage you to continue your expressions of gratitude and confidence in their work.

I encourage you all to take the proper precautions to keep yourselves and your families healthy, and I wish you well throughout the challenging times ahead.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cathy Abraham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cathy Abraham, OPSBA President



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates