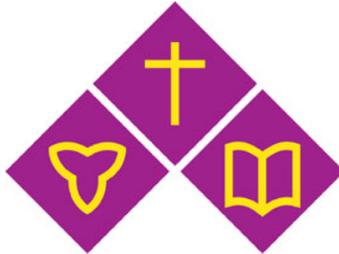


Funding the New Realities of Education in Ontario

A Brief to the Minister of Education

March 2013



Ontario Catholic School
Trustees' Association



Ontario Catholic School
Trustees' Association

OUR MISSION

Inspired by the Gospel, we provide leadership, service and a provincial voice for Catholic School Boards in promoting and protecting Catholic education.

OUR VISION

In keeping with our Mission, the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association:

OPERATIONAL VALUES

- **Embodies** and promotes the values and traditions of our Catholic faith in all Association activities.
- **Respects** the principles of democratic and accountable governance.

POLITICAL ADVOCACY

- **Protects** the constitutional right of the Catholic community to govern, control and manage Catholic schools.
- **Promotes** education in our province that reflects the Catholic principles of social justice.
- **Advocates** for government recognition of the distinctive nature of Catholic education.
- **Advocates** for provincial policy, legislation and funding support that enable Catholic boards to provide quality Catholic education.
- **Influences** the strategic and political direction of the Ontario government and opposition parties regarding issues that impact Catholic education.

INFORMATION & SERVICES

- **Provides** faith formation and professional development resources and opportunities for its members.
- **Provides** to member boards information and services that recognize their diverse circumstances and needs.

COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLIC RELATIONS

- **Develops** effective structures that enhance communication and working relationships among OCSTA and its member boards.
- **Communicates** with member Boards and Catholic partners regarding relevant educational issues and OCSTA activities.
- **Promotes** public understanding of and support for Catholic education.
- **Celebrates** and **highlights** Catholic education's significant and continuing contribution to Ontario society.

PARTNERSHIPS

- **Stimulates** ongoing visioning of how Catholic education partners can collaborate to serve the interests of Catholic education.
- **Builds** significant partnerships within and beyond the Catholic community in support of Catholic education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Special Education.....	2
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)	2-3
Aboriginal Education	3
Technology	4
Bill 115 and OECTA MOU	5
Transportation	5
Summary of Recommendations	6-7

Introduction

The Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA) was founded in 1930. It represents 29 English-language Catholic district school boards. Collectively, these school boards educate over 600,000 students from junior kindergarten to grade 12.

Inspired by the Gospel, the Mission of the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association is to provide leadership, service and a provincial voice for Catholic school boards in promoting and protecting Catholic education.

Annually, OCSTA submits a brief to the government with recommendations for improvements to the funding of education. Recommendations are made on the basis that the education funding system in Ontario must respond to four essential principles:

Equity: A funding formula must distribute education dollars equitably among all Ontario school boards and their students;

Adequacy: The level of funding for education must be adequate to ensure quality education for today's students;

Autonomy/Flexibility: The model must allow school boards the autonomy and flexibility in spending they require to achieve the distinctive goals of their system, and to meet local needs; and

Accountability: The educational funding model must include mechanisms that ensure the appropriate degree of accountability for all parties and transparent processes and reporting mechanisms to support efficient and effective use of educational resources for students.

The OCSTA has decided to focus on a small number of important items as the subject of this year's Finance Brief to the Minister of Education. It is our hope that this focus will increase the likelihood of our recommendations being reflected in the GSNs for 2013-14. As always, we would be pleased to meet with representatives of the Ministry to discuss any of the following items in more detail.

Special Education

There is perhaps no topic that has been so consistently on the list of priorities of school boards as the need for adequate funding as the special education needs of young learners in Ontario. Through various parts of the special education grant there is supposed to be adequate funding for the special education needs of all students. The issue at hand is not so much about one formula or another. It is about the fact that all but two of our member boards project a shortfall in funding for special education needs in 2012-13 and that this shortfall is not irregular; it is chronic and has been an issue severely impacting boards for many years. On average the shortfall is about 10% of special education funding or \$66 million in total. There has been much discussion about a possible new funding mechanism over the years and the funding has been revised slightly from time to time. However, the issue of adequate funding for special needs students has yet to be resolved.

Recommendation 1

OCSTA recommends that the Ministry develop a new funding strategy that provides for the actual costs of the needs for special education students.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

OCSTA and its member boards support fully the goals and principles of AODA and the long-term benefits that will accrue to all Ontarians when it is fully adopted.

While OCSTA welcomes the on-going implementation of the AODA and very much appreciates the collaborative process by which standards have been developed, we are concerned about the school boards' ability to fund the modifications to facilities, administrative processes and other aspects of board operations that will be required as a result of these new standards. School board funding does not currently recognize the specific costs associated with implementing the new standards. Ministry staff have advised school boards to use the School Renewal Allocation for facilities related costs, however, the AODA requirements are not just facility based. In addition, the provincial back-log of major repairs, renovations and upgrading of school facilities already exceeds the available School Renewal Allocation without consideration for AODA related projects. With spending reductions in Administration and Governance (in 2012-13 Catholic school boards anticipate a shortfall of 1% in Administration and Governance) as well as classroom computers it is difficult to understand how school boards will meet the requirements of the AODA.

Recommendation 2

That the Ministry establish a working committee of school boards and Ministry personnel outside of the Broader Public Sector group to review the requirements of the AODA with respect to school boards and make recommendations to the government to fully fund the additional costs associated with meeting any and all AODA standards.

Aboriginal Education

Ontario's Catholic school boards serve varying numbers of Aboriginal students. The education of Aboriginal children who live on-reserve but attend off-reserve schools is the responsibility of the Federal Government. Payment for the education of these students is done through "tuition agreements" between the school board and the appropriate Band Councils. For many First Nations students, the cost of delivering the educational services they need exceeds the revenue that flows from the tuition agreement. Ontario school boards find that many Aboriginal students require special education, English as a second language or other specialized programs to meet their needs. Band Councils do not always agree to provide for such services.

In addition, some school boards have experienced difficulty in collecting the tuition specified in agreements. This poses cash-flow problems. School boards are not staffed to act as collection agencies and the usually available measures to collect delinquent accounts have limited applicability when the owing party is a Band Council.

We agree with the Attorney General's recommendations on December 12, 2012, specifically the development of standardized tuition agreements, and would be pleased to assist with the development of such an agreement as well as other strategies to improve achievement among aboriginal students.

Recommendation 3

That the Ministry of Education work together with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to ensure the following:

- a. That a standard tuition agreement, or some other funding mechanism, be developed that recognizes all of the costs associated with educating aboriginal students, including special education and other specialized services;**

and

- b. That a system of payment for such services be implemented that avoids the undue burden of collecting tuition fees from Band Councils.**

Technology

In order to function effectively and efficiently and to meet both internal and external reporting requirements, school boards, as with most organizations, have become more reliant on information technology in both administrative and academic areas. A portion of the Foundation Grant provides funding for the latter, however, that funding was reduced by \$25 million three years ago and that reduction has now been made permanent. In addition, there is no specific recognition of administrative IT needs. Computer hardware and software quickly become obsolete and must be refreshed in order to maintain efficiency and effectiveness. Although the cost of hardware has generally decreased over the years, the costs of sophisticated software programs, support and training have increased.

In the past the GSN has not provided any one-time funding for the upgrading of the foundation ICT infrastructure for either academic or administrative purposes (e.g., servers, network switches and network communications), which have a maximum life cycle of seven-to-ten years. Consideration needs to be given as to how these replacement needs are best addressed in the future. OCSTA recognizes that the backlog of technological needs is so great that the Ministry will not be able to fund all that is required in a single year. It is critical, however, that the Ministry of Education signal its intention to address this pressing need.

Recommendation 4

That the Ministry at minimum reinstate the \$25 million reduction in the foundation grant for classroom computers.

Recommendation 5

That, as part of the 2013-14 GSN, the Ministry of Education begins to address needs in administrative technology, including aging technological infrastructure, over a period of three to four years.

Bill 115 and OECTA MOU

The MOU signed with OECTA on July 5, and Bill 115 passed on September 14th, 2012, have serious financial impacts on Catholic school boards in the Province of Ontario. While the elimination of future retirement gratuities and sick leave banks reduces the unfunded liabilities of school boards, the impact on current operations of the new Sick Leave and Short Term Disability Plan will not be known for another year or two. The loss of retirement gratuities and future sick leave banks reduces the incentive to maintain sick “credits” and, therefore, could lead to increased sick leave utilization. In addition, there is now a cost for adjudicating sick leave claims beyond the first 10 sick days in a school year.

Further, WSIB and Maternity Leave top-up is no longer tied to sick leave and may increase the costs of those top-up provisions.

Recommendation 6

That a formal process be established to review the cost of sick leave for the period subsequent to September 1, 2012 compared to previous years, before the August 31, 2014.

Recommendation 7

That the grant for supply/occasional teachers be adjusted to recognize the full costs of replacement teachers.

Transportation

Over the last number of years the Ministry has required school boards to form transportation consortia. In addition, the Ministry has advised school boards that they should “implement a competitive procurement process for Bus Operators Contracts for school bus transportation services” through tender or requests for proposals (RFP). Some transportation service providers are challenging the right of school boards to competitive procurement of transportation services through the courts. These court challenges could result in significant legal costs.

Recommendation 8

That the Ministry provide a grant for the legal costs of defending the court challenge regarding competitive procurement for transportation services.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

OCSTA recommends that the Ministry develop a new funding strategy that provides for the actual costs of the needs for special education students.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

Recommendation 2

That the Ministry establish a working committee of school boards and Ministry personnel to review the requirements of the AODA with respect to school boards and make recommendations to the government to fully fund the additional costs associated with meeting any and all AODA standards.

Recommendation 3

That the Ministry of Education work together with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to ensure the following:

- a. That a standard tuition agreement, or some other funding mechanism, be developed that recognizes all of the costs associated with educating aboriginal students, including special education and other specialized services;

and

- b. That a system of payment for such services be implemented that avoids the undue burden of collecting tuition fees from Band Councils.

Recommendation 4

That the Ministry reinstate the \$25 million reduction in the foundation grant for classroom computers.

Recommendation 5

That, as part of the 2013-14 GSN, the Ministry of Education begins to address needs in administrative technology, including aging technological infrastructure, over a period of three to four years.

Recommendation 6

That a formal process be established to review the cost of sick leave for the period subsequent to September 1, 2012 compared to previous years, before the August 31, 2014.

Recommendation 7

That the grant for supply/occasional teachers be adjusted to recognize the true costs of replacement teachers.

Recommendation 8

That the Ministry provide a grant for the legal costs of defending the court challenge regarding competitive procurement for transportation services.

Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2012-2013

Marino Gazzola, President	Wellington Catholic District School Board
Kathy Burtnik, Vice President	Niagara Catholic District School Board
Nancy Kirby, Past President	Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario
Joyce Anderson	Waterloo Catholic District School Board
Andrew Bray	Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
Carol Cotton	York Catholic District School Board
Patrick Daly	Hamilton-Wentworth CDSB
Anna da Silva	Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board
Anne-Marie Fitzgerald	The Northwest Catholic District School Board
Arlene Iantomasi	Halton Catholic District School Board
Gordon Butler	Ottawa Catholic School Board
Colleen Landers	Northeastern Catholic District School Board
Paul Landry	Kenora Catholic District School Board
Sal Piccininni	Toronto Catholic District School Board
Maria Rizzo	Toronto Catholic District School Board
Thomas Thomas	Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board
Karen Valentine	Durham Catholic District School Board
Linda Ward	St. Clair Catholic District School Board
Bishop John Boissonneau	ACBO Liaison to OCSTA
Fr. Patrick Fitzpatrick	Chaplain
Kevin Kobus	Executive Director



Ontario Catholic School
Trustees' Association

P.O. Box 2064, Suite 1804, 20 Eglinton Avenue West, Toronto, Ontario M4R 1K8
Tel: 416-932-9460 Fax: 416-932-9459 Email: ocsta@ocsta.on.ca Website: www.ocsta.on.ca