



School Board Trustees: Your Community's Voice in Public Education

The Role of School Board Trustees

Each public school board in Ontario is governed by a board of trustees. School board trustees are locally elected representatives of the public who are responsible for the operation of the public school system.

Trustees play a critical role in advocating for public schools and students in their communities. They help set the local vision and priorities for student achievement, well-being and equity. They create policies that directly impact public schools, from ensuring safe and inclusive environments to supporting special education needs.

Importantly, school board trustees bring the concerns of students, parents/guardians, educators and community members to the board table, ensuring local voices are heard. They are a critical link between the public school system and the communities they serve.

Locally elected school board trustees in Ontario predate Confederation. Since the first Common School Act was passed in 1816, the role of independent elected school board trustees has been a central tenet of public education.

Ford Government's Attack on School Board Independence

At the end of the 2024-25 school year, the Ford government placed several school boards under Ministry of Education supervision. This action means the democratically elected trustees of these boards were stripped of their authority over budgets and senior staffing decisions, as well as their power to advocate for local schools and students. These powers were transferred to a provincially appointed supervisor who reports directly to the Minister of Education.

In May 2025, the government tabled Bill 33, *Supporting Children and Students Act*, which would grant the Minister of Education unprecedented powers to intervene in school board operations under the broad pretext of addressing 'matters of public interest' opening the door to highly subjective, arbitrary, and politically motivated interventions by the Ministry.

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What Is at Stake?

Erosion of Local Democracy: School board trustees are democratically elected by local communities to represent their community's interests and values in public education. By removing their power, the government has undermined the democratic process by centralizing the control of boards in different parts of the province in the hands of a single, unelected official appointed by the province and located in Toronto.

Lack of Local Accountability: The provincially appointed supervisor is accountable to the Minister of Education, not to the local community. This means parents and community members have no direct say or recourse in major decisions affecting their children's public schools.

Underfunding is the Root Cause: The reality is that the crisis in public education is the result of years of underfunding. Since the Ford government came to power seven years ago, \$6.35 billion has been cut from Ontario public schools. The Ford Conservative government has created the problem by not providing adequate funding to cover rising costs and then used the resulting deficits as a pretext to blame school boards and seize control.

Political Motive: By taking control of school boards the government effectively silence dissenting voices and push through an agenda, particularly in boards that have been critical of government policy.

Precedent: There is concern that this sets a dangerous precedent where the province can dismiss locally elected officials any time there is a political or financial disagreement.

Why Local Governance Matters Now More Than Ever

In an era of increasing provincial centralization, your local school board trustee's role as a community advocate is essential. Trustees provide a counterbalance to government priorities and agendas. As local representatives, they know local school needs and priorities. Trustees play an important role in protecting equity, advocating for funding and programs to address the specific challenges faced by students in their communities.

Unlike the Minister of Education or an appointed supervisor, trustees are democratically elected and accountable to voters in their local communities. They answer for how provincial directives are implemented locally and can be voted out if they don't represent their community's values.

Take Action



Send an email to the Premier, the Minister of Education and your local MPP at BuildingBetterSchools.ca/Bill33

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