

Submission to

The Standing Committee  
on Finance & Economic Affairs

## **Pre-Budget Consultation**

January 16, 2009



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.

## INTRODUCTION

The Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA), founded in 1930, represents 29 English-language Catholic district school boards and five English-language Catholic school authorities. Collectively, these school boards educate over 550,000 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.

In December 2008 OCSTA submitted to the Minister of Education a comprehensive brief on education funding. A copy of this brief is attached and forms the basis of this submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs during the Pre-Budget Consultation.

OCSTA welcomes the actions taken by the government in 2008/09 to improve the funding of education in Ontario. Several of the government's initiatives reflect past recommendations made by OCSTA. There remains, however, an ongoing need to address the adequacy of some of the allocations in the funding formula. Details are reflected in the recommendations in the attached brief.

## **Preamble**

The structure of the funding formula is designed to ensure equitable allocation of resources for the education of all students in Ontario. There are indications, however, that the review of the funding model scheduled to occur by 2010 is urgently needed. The indicators would include the fact that several school boards were forced to use reserves in order to balance the budget, many boards are unable to meet the needs of special needs students within budget, and there was a removal of 61 million dollars provincially from the school renewal allocation for 2008-2009.

While the review of education funding by 2010 is welcome, OCSTA would encourage the appointment of an ongoing provincial advisory committee. It is the belief of OCSTA that such a committee could provide regular and appropriate feedback on both the allocation and expenditure side of funding within the education sector. This committee would be an asset to the Province as the input would be provided in a prompt and efficient manner without the necessity of waiting for the annual budget cycle.

The Government of Ontario has made education a priority in recent years and has made a significant investment in the sector. The current economic climate is a challenging one. The economic slowdown, however, is a normal phase of the economic cycle. Elementary and secondary education must continue to remain a priority as the benefits of this financial commitment last far into the future.

It is important to educate students who will become good adult citizens and valued members of society. Investment in education also ensures a pool of knowledgeable and skilled workers which adds to Canada's global competitiveness.

OCSTA acknowledges the challenge being faced in the current economic climate and has considered the Government's Fall Economic Statement. Since many boards balanced their 2008-09 budget by using some or all of their operating reserves, the fact is that the budgets are in deficit on an in-year basis. If fewer resources are available, boards may be forced to make cuts that would jeopardize the three stated objectives for education. The Government must also be cognizant of the fact that school boards typically fund major acquisitions or retrofit programs over multiple years. A budget reduction could impact a board's ability to meet financial obligations for work that is currently underway or already completed.

Because of the requirements of collective agreements and provincial legislation, the Province is encouraged to announce the 2009-2010 funding as early as possible. As school boards would normally start their budget-setting process in February, an early indication of grant levels would be of great assistance in allowing boards to best utilize resources to meet the needs of students.

The Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association would like to thank the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs for its consideration of the recommendations contained within this submission.

**Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**2008-2009**

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<b>Paula Peroni, President</b>	<b>Sudbury Catholic District School Board</b>
<b>Nancy Kirby, Vice President</b>	<b>Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario</b>
<b>Bernard Murray, Past President</b>	<b>Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board</b>
<b>Andrew Bray</b>	<b>Renfrew County Catholic District School Board</b>
<b>Kathy Burtnik</b>	<b>Niagara Catholic District School Board</b>
<b>John Caputo</b>	<b>Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board</b>
<b>Anthony da Silva</b>	<b>Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board</b>
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<b>Suzanne Youngs</b>	<b>Parry Sound Roman Catholic Separate School Board</b>
<b>Bishop Fred Colli</b>	<b>OCCB Liaison to OCSTA</b>
<b>Fr. Patrick Fitzpatrick</b>	<b>Chaplain</b>
<b>John Stunt</b>	<b>Executive Director</b>





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