



Ontario Catholic School
Trustees' Association

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November 21, 2019

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chairpersons and Directors of Education
- All Catholic District School Boards
OCSTA Directors

FROM: Stephen Andrews, Director of Legislative and Political Affairs

SUBJECT: Education Accessibility Standards Working Group Update

As you are aware, in 2017 the previous government established a working group to assist in the development of an accessibility regulation under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (“AODA”). The group is called “K-12 Education Standards Development Committee” (“Working Group”). In the summer of 2019 the new government, under the direction of the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility, relaunched the working group with a shortened timeframe to make recommendations by June 2020.

The mandate of the Working Group is to develop recommendations for an education accessibility standard that would apply to every school board in the province. Specifically, the committee will develop recommendations that address barriers to accessible education for all students in publicly funded schools, considering all grades from kindergarten through secondary school. The following are priority areas for the committee:

- Attitudes, behaviours, perceptions and assumptions in respect of students with disabilities;
- Awareness and training;
- Assessment, curriculum and instruction;
- Digital learning and technology;
- Organizational barriers;
- Social barriers;
- Physical and architectural barriers.

The committee could recommend, for example, that all boards ensure students have access to adaptive technology and specialized supports for their learning needs. In addition, the exclusion of students with behavioural disabilities may be subject to new rules. Teacher professional development in the use of accessibility technologies may also form part of the committee’s recommendations.

Chair and Participants of the Working Group

The working group is comprised of several groups of education and disability rights stakeholders and is Chaired by Lynn Ziraldo, former Executive Director of the Learning Disabilities Association of York Region. I was appointed to this Working Group by the Minister to represent OCSTA. In addition, recently retired Dufferin Peel CDSB Associate Director Sheila McWatters and retired Huron Superior CDSB Director Jack Stadnyk were also appointed to the Working Group as well as Ben Smith, a former Student Trustee with the York Catholic District School Board (a full list is included in the attached appendix).

Several staff from the Accessibility Directorate and the Ministry of Education support the working group.

Mandate and Deliverables

The Working Group held its first meeting on November 12, 2019 to discuss the mandate, revised process and work plan of the group. The Working Group will meet every two months to debate and vote on recommendations in the priority barrier areas listed above. The group is then to prepare preliminary recommendations for an education accessibility standard or regulation for consideration by the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility by June 2020.

Next Steps

The next meeting of the Working Group is scheduled for early January 2020 where OCSTA will be present to participate in committee discussions and voting on the recommendations tabled. Once a draft report is completed, OCSTA will share it with our membership for feedback.

We would encourage boards to send any issues and concerns about an education accessibility standard to OCSTA.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at sandrews@ocsta.on.ca.

Attachment

K-12 Education Standards Development Committee:

Member Contact List

- Lynn Ziraldo (Chair), Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario
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