ONTARIO ENGLISH
Catholic Teachers
ASSOCIATION

Proposed New Regulation Under the *Education Act*, Related to School Board Estimates

Submission to the Ministry of Education

May 2026

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The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) represents the 45,000 passionate and qualified teachers in Ontario's publicly funded English Catholic schools, from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

René Jansen in de Wal
President

David Church
General Secretary

Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association
65 St. Clair Avenue East, Suite 400
Toronto, ON M4T 2Y8
416.925.2493 or 1.800.268.7230
Fax: 416.925.7764
catholicteachers.ca

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INTRODUCTION

The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) welcomes the opportunity to provide input on behalf of 45,000 teachers working in publicly funded Catholic schools in Ontario, regarding the Ministry of Education's proposed regulation under the *Education Act* concerning school board estimates and budget approval processes.

While the government has framed the proposed regulation as a measure intended to strengthen financial stewardship and governance, the proposal represents a significant restructuring of school board budget authority and decision-making processes.

In particular, the regulation would centralize authority within a school board's Chief Executive Officer (CEO – formerly, Director of Education) and the Ministry of Education, while substantively diminishing the role of locally elected trustees in one of their core longstanding statutory responsibilities: the oversight and approval of school board budgets. The proposed regulation must also be understood within the broader context of Bill 101, the *Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026*, which introduced sweeping changes to governance structures across Ontario's publicly funded education system.

As noted in the Association's previous submission on Bill 101, the government's legislative and regulatory approach increasingly concentrates decision-making authority within Queen's Park while weakening local democratic accountability, reducing transparency, and limiting meaningful collaboration with education partners.

Equally concerning is the process through which these regulations have been introduced. The government has provided only three business days for stakeholders to review and respond to regulatory changes that will carry significant operational and governance consequences.

Catholic teachers believe that governance structures within publicly funded education must continue to reflect the principles of democratic accountability, professional expertise, transparency, and responsiveness to local communities. The proposed regulation raises significant concerns in each of these areas.

This submission outlines the Association's concerns regarding:

- the consultation process;
- the proposed restructuring of school board governance and budget authority;
- the expansion of ministerial intervention powers; and
- the broader implications for accountability and democratic oversight within Ontario's publicly funded education system.

CONCERNS REGARDING PROCESS AND CONSULTATION

OECTA is deeply concerned by the extraordinarily limited consultation period provided by the government for this proposed regulation.

The proposal was posted on May 22, 2026, with comments due by May 27, 2026. This allows education stakeholders only three business days to review, analyze, and respond to regulatory changes that carry significant governance, financial, and operational implications for Ontario's publicly funded education system.

This timeline is unreasonable given the scope and significance of the proposed changes, as the regulation would fundamentally alter long-established relationships between trustees, senior administration, and the Ministry of Education.

Meaningful consultation requires sufficient opportunity for organizations such as OECTA, as well as school boards, trustees, teachers and education workers, and communities to assess proposed changes and provide informed feedback. A consultation period of only several days does not permit this process to occur in any meaningful way.

Lack of Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement

Similar to the experience surrounding Bill 101, the government has introduced this regulation without broader consultation with OECTA or other education partners, and without providing any advanced notice.

The success of Ontario's publicly funded education system has historically been predicated on collaborative policy making that includes meaningful engagement with teacher and education worker representatives, trustees, school boards, parents, and other sector stakeholders.

Time and again, this government has opted to ignore the voices of frontline workers who know our students best, and could contribute to the effectiveness of policy design and implementation.

As a result, the process surrounding this proposed regulation risks undermining confidence in both the consultation process and the resulting policy framework itself.

The compressed timeline for consultation further reinforces concerns that education stakeholders are denied opportunity to meaningfully participate in decisions that will substantially affect governance structures within publicly funded education – and ultimately will impact students, teachers, and education workers.

Catholic teachers urge the government to extend the consultation period for the proposed regulation and engage in broader, meaningful consultations with education stakeholders prior to implementation.

STRUCTURAL CHANGES TO EDUCATION GOVERNANCE

Centralization of Financial Authority

The proposed regulation fundamentally alters the relationship between elected trustees and senior administration with respect to school board budgeting and financial oversight.

Under the proposed framework, the CEO would become primarily responsible for developing the school board budget and determining its contents, while trustees would be limited largely to reviewing and approving the budget recommended by the CEO. Although trustees may request modifications, the regulation explicitly provides that acceptance of any requested changes would remain at the discretion of the CEO.

This represents a significant departure from the traditional governance model, where elected trustees exercise meaningful authority over budgetary priorities and resource allocation decisions on behalf of their local communities.

As noted in our Association's submission on Bill 101, the government's broader legislative approach increasingly centralizes authority within senior administration and the Ministry of Education while reducing the independence and decision-making capacity of locally elected school boards. The proposed regulation operationalizes this shift directly within the budget approval process.

Diminishing the role of elected trustees weakens democratic accountability and reduces the ability of local communities to meaningfully influence education priorities within their schools and boards on vital issues such as student supports, programming, infrastructure priorities, the allocation of resources, and staffing.

Impact on Democratic School Board Governance

The proposed regulation risks repositioning school boards from democratically accountable governing bodies to administrative entities primarily responsible for implementing provincially determined priorities.

Under the proposed framework, trustees may express concerns or request revisions to the proposed budget, but the CEO ultimately retains discretion over whether such changes are accepted. Where disagreements persist, the matter may then be escalated directly to the Minister for approval.

The effect of this structure would be to substantially reduce the practical authority of trustees within the budget process – weakening accountability and reducing responsiveness to local community needs.

As Catholic teachers have pointed out on numerous occasions, meaningful collaboration and shared accountability have historically been among the defining strengths of Ontario's publicly funded education system. The proposed regulation moves the system toward a more centralized governance model in which local democratic participation plays a substantially diminished role.

Corporatization of Education Governance

The proposed regulation also reinforces broader concerns regarding the corporatization of education governance that were identified in the Association's Bill 101 submission.
While sound financial stewardship is essential, publicly funded education should not be considered analogous to a corporate enterprise. School boards are democratic public institutions whose responsibilities extend beyond operational management to include community representation, public accountability, and responsiveness to student and local needs.

By establishing the CEO as the central authority responsible for budget development and by limiting trustees' ability to direct or amend proposed budgets, the regulation adopts a governance model more closely aligned with corporate management structures than with traditional models of effective and publicly accountable leadership.

Catholic teachers believe that governance structures within publicly funded education must continue to reflect the public, democratic, and community-based nature of Ontario's education system. Financial oversight and accountability are important, but must not come at the expense of meaningful democratic governance and local accountability.

EXPANSION OF MINISTERIAL INTERVENTION POWERS

Expansion of Ministerial Intervention and Authority

The proposed regulation would operationalize one of the more troublesome aspects of Bill 101 – the significant expansion of the role of the Minister of Education in school board financial governance.

Under the proposed framework, when trustees are unable or unwilling to approve a budget after considering the recommendations of the CEO, the matter would be escalated to the Minister for approval. The regulation further articulates that, once approved by the Minister, the budget is deemed to have been adopted by the school board.

This represents a substantial shift in authority away from locally elected school boards and toward centralized control.

Reduction of Trustee Oversight and Authority

At the same time, the proposed regulation substantially weakens the role of trustees in the budget approval process – rendering their role in financial governance as almost obsolete. Although trustees retain the ability to review proposed budgets and request revisions, the CEO ultimately maintains discretion over whether those requests are accepted. If disagreements remain unresolved, trustees may effectively be bypassed through ministerial approval of the budget.

Locally elected trustees serve an important accountability function within Ontario's publicly funded education system. They provide community oversight of public expenditures, represent local priorities, and ensure public transparency in decision-making. A governance framework that severely limits trustees' practical authority correspondingly weakens these democratic safeguards.

In addition, the proposed regulation may create a chilling effect within school board governance. Trustees may become increasingly reluctant to challenge proposed budgets or advocate for local priorities where disagreement may ultimately trigger ministerial intervention and override.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY CONCERNS

The proposed regulation raises significant concerns regarding transparency and accountability within the school board budget approval process. This lack of clarity is particularly problematic given the significant authority the regulation would confer upon CEOs and the Ministry of Education.

Under the proposed framework, CEOs would retain broad discretion regarding the content of budgets and whether trustee-requested amendments will be accepted, and the Minister would have the authority to approve budgets on behalf of school boards and impose additional conditions or directions.

Despite these far-reaching areas of expanded and concentrated authority, the proposed regulation does not establish any corresponding transparency requirements or procedural safeguards.

For example, the proposed regulation leaves unanswered:

- the threshold for determining when trustee disagreement warrants escalation;
- the standards the Minister will apply when approving or modifying a budget;
- whether school boards or trustees will have any opportunity for independent review or appeal;
- what accountability mechanisms will govern the exercise of these expanded powers; or
- how (if at all) stakeholders and the public will be informed of the rationale underlying ministerial decisions.

Public confidence in education governance depends upon transparent decision-making processes and clear accountability structures. Where authority is expanded, transparency and oversight become increasingly important.

As the Association has previously recommended, any alteration to intervention powers must be narrow in scope, transparent, and accompanied by appropriate oversight and accountability mechanisms.

CONCLUSION

The proposed regulation represents a significant shift in how school board budgets are developed, approved, and overseen within Ontario's publicly funded education system. By concentrating authority within CEOs and the Ministry of Education, the proposal risks diminishing the role of locally elected trustees and weakening the collaborative governance structures that help ensure school boards remain responsive to students and local communities.

Equally concerning is the government's decision to provide only three business days for consultation on changes of this significance. Effective education policy requires meaningful engagement with those responsible for supporting students in schools and communities across Ontario.

Catholic teachers urge the government to pause the current regulatory timelines, extend the consultation period, and engage in broader consultations with education stakeholders before proceeding further.

Any reforms to school board financial governance must maintain transparent accountability structures, preserve meaningful local oversight, and remain focused on what best supports student learning, well-being, and success.