



POLICY P.018.GOV

TITLE: ELECTRONIC MEETINGS OF THE BOARD AND COMMITTEES AND MEETING ATTENDANCE

Date Authorized: 12 March 1998
Last Revised: 24 September 2024
Last Reviewed: 24 September 2024

COMMITMENT TO INDIGENOUS RIGHTS, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND EQUITY

The Board recognizes its responsibility to ensure that OCDSB policies and procedures promote and protect Indigenous, equity, and human rights and to seek to address and eliminate racism and structural and systemic barriers for students, staff, and community.

1.0 RATIONALE

To govern the participation in meetings of the Board and its committees, including electronic participation and meeting attendance, in accordance with the *Education Act* and *Ontario Regulation 463/97*.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

Please refer to Appendix A for a list of definitions of terms used in this policy.

3.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

3.1 The Board Shall promote and enhance accountability and transparency and shall comply with the Ministry requirements with regards to participation in electronic meetings of the Board and all Board Committees.

4.0 POLICY

General

- 4.1 The District shall ensure that physical attendance by members of the public is permitted for all regular meetings of the Board and committees of the Board, except where the meeting is closed to the public in accordance with *the Education Act*.
- 4.2 At the request of any Board member or student trustee, and subject to the limitations set out in this policy, the District shall provide the member or student trustee with electronic means for participation in a meeting of the Board or a Board committee, including a Committee of the Whole.

- 4.3 The District shall provide electronic means for the public to participate in all meetings of the Board and committees of the Board, including Committee of the Whole. The same rights and limitations will apply to members of the public participating by electronic means as apply to those attending in person, including with respect to delegations, questions and expectations related to conduct.
- 4.4 The District shall ensure that all meeting participants, whether attending in person or electronically, are able to communicate with each other simultaneously and instantaneously.
- 4.5 Appropriate measures shall be put in place to protect the security and confidentiality of closed (in camera meetings), including:
 - a) ensuring that members of the public who are participating through electronic means are not able to participate in closed (in camera) meetings; and
 - b) ensuring participants in closed (in camera) meetings are taking necessary steps to safeguard confidential information, such as wearing headsets and keeping their cameras on.
- 4.6 Available webcasts of public meetings of the Board and its committees will be posted for public access on the OCDSB's website.

Attendance and Participation at Board and Committee Meetings

- 4.7 All members of the Board must be physically present in the meeting room at every regular meeting of the Board and every regular meeting of a Committee of the Whole unless they have requested and received approval from the Chair to participate in the meeting by electronic means prior to the beginning of the meeting.
 - a) Requests to participate electronically must be submitted to the Chair and Board Services in writing and include reasons for the request.
 - b) Trustees are encouraged to submit their requests by 5:00 pm the preceding days, where possible.
 - c) Requests from the Chair will be submitted to the Vice Chair for approval.
- 4.8 The Chair of a committee of the Board or their designate must be physically present in the meeting room at every regular meeting of the committee, except a Committee of the Whole, unless they have confirmed that at least one member of the committee who is also a Board member will be attending in person.
- 4.9 The Director of Education or their designate must be physically present in the meeting room for each meeting of the Board and each meeting of a committee of the Board, including a Committee of the Whole.
- 4.10 Paragraphs 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9 do not apply in the event of a Mandatory School Closure Order for the period that starts on the day the order is made and ends 60 days after the order ceases to exist.
- 4.11 The Chair, or Vice-Chair, where applicable, may only approve requests to participate in

a meeting by electronic means if

- a) the distance from the Board member's primary-residence to the meeting location is 125 kilometres or more;
- b) weather conditions do not allow the Board member to travel to the meeting location safely;
- c) the Board member cannot be physically present at a meeting due to health-related issues;
- d) the Board member has a disability that makes attending meetings in person more challenging; or
- e) the Board member is unable to attend in person due to family responsibilities in respect of,
 - i) their spouse;
 - ii) their or their spouse's parent, step parent, or foster parent;
 - iii) their child step-child, foster child, or a child who is under legal guardianship of the member or the member's spouse;
 - iv) a relative who is dependent on the member for care or assistance; or
 - v) a person who is dependent on the member for care or assistance and who considers the member to be like a family member.

4.12 The Chair shall not approve a request for electronic participation if approving the request would result in no Board members, other than the Chair of the Board or their delegate, being physically present in the meeting room.

4.13 A Board member who participates in a meeting electronically shall be treated no differently than those present, in person, at the meeting.

Electronic Participation Standards

- 4.14 All members of the Board participating in a meeting electronically shall abide by the following standards of participation
- a) Board members joining remotely shall connect to the meeting on the required platform and be clearly identifiable with their name;
 - b) Board members shall ensure that their equipment and technology are configured correctly in advance of the meeting;
 - c) with the understanding that internet connectivity and bandwidth may influence the ability to keep a camera operational, Board members shall have their cameras on;
 - d) Board members shall endeavour to ensure that background noise at their location does not interfere with the meeting and shall mute their devices when not speaking;
 - e) Board members shall indicate they wish to speak by physically raising their hand (if the camera is on) or by using a virtual 'raise the hand' feature;

- f) Board members participating electronically shall ensure that any need to step away from a virtual meeting before adjournment is noted and shall rejoin the virtual meeting when they can do so; and
- g) Board members shall ensure that any customization of their virtual profiles aligns with Policy P.073.GOV Board Member Code of Conduct and does not distract from their own or others' participation in the meeting.

In Person Meeting Attendance - Minimum Requirements

- 4.15 The Chair or designate must be physically present for at least half of the meetings of the Board during each 12-month period beginning beginning 15 November 2022.
- 4.16 A member of the Board shall be physically present in the meeting room of the Board for at least three regular meetings of the Board during each 12-month period beginning 15 November 2022.
- 4.17 Paragraphs 4.15 and 4.16 do not apply in the event a Mandatory School Closure Order results in all schools being closed for a total of two or more months during the 12 month period.
- 4.18 If a Board member is elected or appointed to fill a vacancy on or after November 15, 2022, the member shall be physically present in the meeting room of the Board for at least one regular meeting of the Board for each period of four full calendar months that occurs during the period beginning on the day the member is elected or appointed and ending the following November 14.
- 4.19 Paragraph 4.18 does not apply in the event of a Mandatory School Closure Order for the period that starts on the day the order is made to close schools and ends 60 days after the order ceases to apply.

Conflicts of Interest

- 4.20 All OCDSB policies and procedures regarding conflicts of interest will apply to electronic meetings of the Board and Committees. This means that Board members who declare a conflict of interest must withdraw from the closed (in camera) meeting, including from electronic participation, for the duration of the discussion of the matter about which they have declared a conflict.

5.0 APPENDICES

Appendix A: Policy Definitions

6.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

[*The Education Act, 1998, § 8 \(1\) para. 3.6, 208.1*](#)

[Ontario Regulation 463/97](#), Last revised 29 July 2024 (313/24)

OCDSB Policy [P.010.GOV: Community Involvement on Board and Standing Committees](#)

OCDSB Policy [P.025.GOV: Board Member Conflict of Interest](#)

OCDSB Policy [P.073.GOV Board Member Code of Conduct](#)

APPENDIX A: POLICY DEFINITIONS

Board means the Board of Trustees of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board.

Board Member means a member of the Board elected or appointed in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act* and the *Education Act*.

Disability means:

- a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
- b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- d) a mental disorder; or
- e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

The definition includes disabilities of different severity, visible as well as non-visible disabilities, and disabilities the effects of which may come and go.

District means the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board.

Family responsibilities means essential duties such as providing care, supervision, or emotional support to family members in situations involving illness, education, childcare, or other necessary family-related activities.

Health-related issues means physical or mental conditions, illnesses, or symptoms that may impair an individual's ability to attend or participate in meetings, or that could pose a risk to the health and safety of others.

Mandatory School Closure Order means the closure of all schools in the board under an order made by:

- a) the Minister under s. 5(1) of the *Education Act*;
- b) a medical officer of health or the Chief Medical Officer of Health under s. 22 or 77.1 of the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*;
- c) the Lieutenant Governor in Council under paragraph 5 of s. 7.0.2(4) of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*; or
- d) the Lieutenant Governor in Council under clause 4(1)(a) of the *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act*.

Student trustees means the three elected student representatives to the Board, including one Indigenous Student Trustee and two Student Trustees who represent all pupils of the District.

Term means the four year term of office for elected trustees.

Trustee means a member of the Board elected or appointed in accordance with the *Ontario Municipal Elections Act* and the *Ontario Education Act*.

Weather conditions means a variety of inclement weather occurrences and similar uncontrollable events, including extreme high or low temperatures, lightning, hail, heavy rain, flooding, tornado/hurricane warnings, blizzards, ice storms, and any weather that could create unsafe road conditions or significant driving delays.

Year means one calendar year from 15 November to 14 November.