



FEDERATION OF CANADIAN SECONDARY STUDENTS
FÉDÉRATION DES ÉLÈVES DU SECONDAIRE AU CANADA

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2023-24 ONTARIO EDUCATION FUNDING CONSULTATION

15 November 2022

Ministry of Education
315 Front Street West, 14th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M7A 0B8

Dear Ministry of Education finance staff:

Please see enclosed the submission of the Federation of Canadian Secondary Students regarding education funding for the 2023-2024 school year. Our recommendations focus on education governance and also address the efficiencies and reducing administrative burden priority outlined in the consultation guide.

Founded in 2012, the Federation of Canadian Secondary Students / Fédération des élèves du secondaire au Canada (FCSS-FESC) is an entirely non-partisan youth-led charity that strives to advocate for students in secondary schools and CÉGEPs across Canada.

We would sincerely value the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Ministry to further discuss our recommendations.

Sincerely,

Bruce Yu
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cc: President, Ontario Student Trustees' Association
Ontario Public School Boards' Association

Summary of Recommendations

- (1) That the Ministry of Education increase student trustee honorarium from \$2,500 to \$5,000.
- (2) That the Ministry of Education increase trustee honorarium base funding from \$5,900 to \$12,000 and commit to paying the entire honorarium calculated under the post-2006 formula.
- (3) That the Ministry of Education create a new funding allocation for student senates within the School Board Administration and Governance Grant at a rate of \$0.50 x ADE.
- (4) That the Ministry of Education restrict the use of funds for leadership conferences and guest speakers with no tangible outcomes.

Student Trustee Honorarium

O. Reg. 7/07, Student Trustees¹ dictates that student trustees receive a flat honorarium of \$2,500 per annum. This amount has not been modified since the first version of the Regulation was introduced on January 15, 2007.²

The honorarium should be increased to:

- a) reflect the substantive workload of student trustees;
- b) address inflationary pressures experienced since 2007; and
- c) reduce barriers for students from low-income or marginalized backgrounds that wish to seek out this leadership opportunity.

Student trustees are required to attend meetings of the board and participate in committee meetings. The majority of student trustees also have additional *de facto* responsibilities in their board's student leadership frameworks, including but not limited to chairing student senates and meeting with student councils. Many student trustees are also involved at the provincial level with the Ontario Student Trustees' Association, which is an additional level of responsibility.

Low financial compensation creates a barrier for potential student trustee candidates from low-income backgrounds who are not able to sacrifice their part-time job income. The current \$2,500 honorarium pales in comparison to a student working a part-time minimum-wage job. At a rate of \$14.60/hour for 15 hours for 40 weeks, a student working part-time would make \$8,760 – more than three times the student trustee honorarium.

The minimum wage in 2007 (when the \$2,500 honorarium was originally introduced) was \$8.00,³ and the minimum wage as of the time of writing is \$15.50,⁴ roughly double the rate in 2007, yet the honorarium has not seen any increase over 14 years.

To that end, FCSS-FESC recommends that the Ministry of Education **increase the student trustee honorarium to \$5,000** for student trustees with terms commencing on August 1, 2023 and make necessary legislative amendments to O. Reg. 7/07: Student Trustees.

¹ O Reg 7/07, s 9(1).

² O Reg 7/07, s 9(a) as of January 15, 2007.

³ <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/3541/ontario-increases-minimum-wage>.

⁴ <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1001954/ontario-working-for-workers-by-raising-the-minimum-wage>.

Trustee Honorarium

The Ministry of Education funds trustee honoraria through the Trustee Allocation.⁵ The current level of funding (which has not been changed since 2006) provides a base amount of \$5,900 in addition to per-pupil enrollment funding. There are additional base top-ups and enrolment top-ups for the chair and vice-chair of the board.

The total trustee honorarium does not accurately reflect the workload of the position. Trustees regularly report working in excess of 20 hours a week, in addition to board or board committee meetings that can extend late into the night. Trustees are also expected to be responsive to parent and community concerns through email and phone at all times.

The Ministry of Education only funds 100% of the trustee honoraria calculated using the pre-2006 formula and 50% of the difference between the post-2006 formula and pre-2006 formula.⁶ This means that school boards are required to fund the difference, creating additional cost pressures.

To that end, FCSS-FESC is recommending that the Ministry of Education **increase the maximum base honorarium for trustees to \$12,000 from \$5,900**, commit to funding the entire trustee honorarium calculated under the post-2006 formula and make necessary legislative amendments to O. Reg. 357/06: Honoraria for Board Members.

Student Senate Funding

Many Ontario school boards have established student senates – which are akin to student councils that operate at the school board level.⁷ Their mandate is to support and elevate student voice within the entire board. However, these institutions do not receive consistent funding from school boards. Further, tying student senate funding to school board operating budgets impedes the ability of student senates to truly be an independent advisory committee for the board.

Student senates are a crucial liaison between student voice and the student body. Funding can be used to subsidize transportation from student homes and a student senate meeting, ensuring that students from low-income backgrounds and students that live in rural areas are able to fully engage in the work of the student senate. Funding is crucial to help the student senate meet its mandate of effectively collecting the voices of all students within the board.

To that end, FCSS-FESC recommends that the Ministry of Education allocate funding for student senates through the *School Board Administration and Governance Grant*, under a new “Student Senate Allocation” at a **rate of \$0.50 x ADE (average daily enrollment)**.

⁵ <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-2022-23-technical-paper-en-2022-03-15.pdf> at page 130.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ <https://www.hdsb.ca/students/Pages/Student-Senate.aspx>.

Leadership Conferences and Guest Speakers

School boards organize “leadership conferences” (at the board level) or guest speakers (at the school level). Conferences at the board level are taxpayer-funded, while guest speakers at the school level are funded through a combination of school board funds and school-generated funds.

In contrast to conferences hosted by professional associations (e.g., OPSBA) that focus on professional development and provide tangible orientation for trustees, these conferences or speakers rarely involve clearly defined learning goals, and there is no evidence of tangible outcomes.

The reckless expenditure of taxpayer funds on leadership conferences and guest speakers without clearly defined ends is a symptom of deteriorating accountability and transparency at the school board level.

To that end, FCSS-FESC recommends that the Ministry of Education **place restrictions on the ability of school boards to expend funds on conferences or guest speakers that lack clearly defined learning outcomes** not aligned with a board’s Multi-Year Strategic Plan.