

Ministry of Education



Annual Report

2023-2024

Provincial Schools Authority

About the Provincial Schools Authority (PSA)

The Provincial Schools Authority (PSA) was established as an agency of the Ministry of Education in 1975 under the *Provincial Schools Negotiations Act* (now the *Provincial Schools Authority Act*). The PSA is the employer of record for teachers employed in provincially operated schools, which includes schools operated by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of the Solicitor General (SolGen). These teachers are represented by the Provincial Schools Authority Teachers (PSAT), which is a district of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF). The PSA is also the employer of record for principals and vice principals in provincially operated schools. The principals and vice principals are not represented by a union and do not have a collective agreement. The principals and vice principals do have Terms and Conditions of employment which are negotiated.

As the employer of record, the PSA is responsible for ratifying the PSAT collective agreement, which includes Part A – OSSTF Central Agreement and Part B – PSAT Local Agreement. The PSA ratifies the collective agreements in accordance with the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Act 2014 (SBCBA)*. The SBCBA governs collective bargaining for teachers in the education sector. It identifies union and management representatives and their roles and responsibilities, including the role of the PSA and the Ministry of Education during bargaining with provincial school employees.

The Deputy Minister of Education via the Executive Director of the Provincial and Demonstration Schools Branch (PDSB), is responsible for all matters relating to the administration of the branch, including oversight and responsibility for day to day school operations and administration in respect of teachers, principals and vice principals. The Executive Director of PDSB oversees and is responsible for the day to day operations including all issues related to teachers and students. The Executive Director works in cooperation with the PSA Chair to ensure effective and efficient fulfillment of the PSA's mandate.

The PSA meets as needed and makes decisions with respect to terms and conditions of employment of teachers, principals and vice principals, leave provisions of the Provincial Schools Authority Teachers (PSAT) Collective Agreement and grievance resolution.

The PSA and Provincial and Demonstration Schools

Provincial and demonstration schools offer the Ontario curriculum at the elementary and secondary levels as well as specialised integrated programming for students who are Deaf, hard of hearing, blind, low vision, Deafblind and students who have severe learning disabilities. The schools also provide outreach services and teacher in-service for school boards. Provincial and demonstration schools are located at four sites: Belleville, Brantford, London and Milton.

In 2023-24, there were approximately 171.60 FTE teachers and 11 principals and vice-principals working in provincial schools and outreach programs. These teachers are employed in schools and outreach programs directly operated by the Ministry of Education, PDSB, or at the Ontario Correctional Institute operated by the Ministry of the Solicitor General. Teachers, principals and vice-principals in these schools are classified as employees of the PSA. Their salaries are paid directly by the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of the Solicitor General.

Members of the PSA

Historically, the PSA members have been Ontario Public Service employees and do not receive remuneration for their PSA services. In March 2024, a PSA Chair, who is external to the OPS, was appointed. The Chair will receive remuneration for work with the PSA at a per diem rate of \$350.00.

Membership as of June 2024 is as follows:

Position	Incumbent	Term
Chair	Mr. Scott Sincerbox	March 14, 2024 to March 13, 2027
Vice Chair	<i>Vacant</i>	
Member	Mr. Stephen Simard	January 19, 2023 to January 18, 2025
Member	Ms. Carol Castello	November 16, 2023 to November 15, 2025
Member	<i>Vacant</i>	

PSA Activities

The PSA addresses issues related to the terms and conditions of employment of teachers, principals and vice-principals employed in provincially operated schools.

In January 2023, the Minister provided the PSA Chair with a letter of direction outlining the expectations for the 2023-24 fiscal year. In addition to government-wide priorities (which are explored further below), the PSA met the direction set out in the agency's letter of direction in relation to the specific activities for the agency including:

- Delivering quality educational services and ensuring the educational needs of the students are met.

- Working collaboratively and maintaining open lines of communication with the PSA members, PSAT union executives and the PDSB worked to efficiently address issues raised by PSAT to help ensure a positive work environment, to resolve PSAT grievances in a fair and equitable manner, to ensure compliance with the PSAT Collective Agreement and, to promote transparency.
- Equipping board members to ensure the agency can carry out its mandate benefitting from the contributions and expertise of each member and helping it to maintain a full complement of members.

Fulfillment of Government-Wide Priorities:

1. Competitiveness, Sustainability & Expenditure Management

- The PSA budget is provided by the Provincial and Demonstration Schools Branch (PDSB) of the Ministry of Education from its base operating budget.
- In 2023-24, the PSA incurred \$37,425 in expenses which is 87% over the annual budget of \$20,000.
- There was an increase in spending due to the hiring of an external financial assurance services Vendor to comply with the PSA Mandate Review recommendations, and due to increases in grievance settlement costs.
- The PSA budget allocation may need to be reviewed due to the potential increases in PSA expenditures in out years.

2. Transparency & Accountability

- PSA is actively considering options for increasing interest in PSA board membership including broadening the applicant pool and continuing to match applicant skills to the requirements of the appointed position. Appointees who are external to the OPS receive remuneration for their work with the PSA. Members who are OPS employees do not receive remuneration for their work with the PSA since OPS employees cannot receive remuneration in respect of their government appointments, as per the Agencies and Appointments Directive.
- PSA abides by applicable government directives and policies and ensured that the newly appointed members receive orientation materials at the beginning of their terms regarding their role and responsibilities and applicable government directives.

3. Risk Management

- The PSA completed the annual agency risk assessment report assessing risks and managing action plans/mitigation strategies for all existing, potential, and emerging risks.
- The PSA continues to be committed to identifying and reporting on any high risks as per the Enterprise Risk Management process and did not have any high risks to report for 2023-24.

- The PSA members met during the year and discussed key issues, concerns and highlights within the branch. The PDSB Executive Director joined the meetings to keep the members apprised of the current work and areas of interest including details on the programs and services provided by the provincial schools, key accomplishments, facilities updates and details on the ongoing work at the sites.

4. Workforce Management

- The PSA requires a full or close to full complement of members to meet the mandate and directions.
- The vacant PSA Chair position and one membership position were filled during 2023-24. The PSA Chair is a new appointee who has been oriented to the PSA. The member position was a re-appointment, and the member is versed in the PSA roles and responsibilities.
- There are two vacant positions (Vice-chair and one member), and work is underway to ensure that members are replaced to fill these vacant positions as a full member complement provides a diverse range of skills and experience which is beneficial to the group.

5. Diversity & Inclusion

- The PSA continued to work with the Executive Director, PDSB, to implement and monitor actions to support and promote an equitable, inclusive, accessible, anti-racist and diverse workplace.
- In 2023, PDSB developed a Blind/Low Vision Awareness policy and updated the PDSB Anti-Audism policies to support respectful and inclusive schools, lodgings, and workplaces for Deaf or hard of hearing or Deafblind persons.

6. Data Collection

- The PSA monitored the number of grievances filed and tracked the number of resolutions.
- Data has been reviewed related to the types of grievances received and similar grievances have been bundled together which has identified similarities and areas of interest for PSA and PDSB to focus on.

7. Digital Delivery & Customer Service

- PSA used a variety of digital methods to correspond with PSA members and PSAT including MS Teams and Zoom, which was beneficial for staff who are spread out over a number of regions.
- Being able to connect virtually in a timely manner in a format that is inclusive for the members participating maintains the service delivery standards and addresses items efficiently.

Performance Measures and Targets

Output-based Performance Measures:

The PSA aims to meet two to three times a year during a normal operating cycle to discuss issues of importance to the schools and issues raised by PSAT.

The PSA meets to share information and discuss items of concern in a timely manner. PSA held two meetings during the 2023-24 school year. The PSA will propose a meeting schedule for the 2024-25 school year to ensure that meetings take place to maintain positive relationships with the members and with the labour organization.

The PSA will operate within the \$20,000 annual budget allocation.

In 2023-24, the PSA incurred \$37,425 in expenses which is 87% over the annual budget of \$20,000. The PSA budget is provided by the PDSB of the Ministry of Education from its base operating budget. PSA monitors spending on a monthly basis to try to remain within the allocated annual amount of \$20,000. There was an increase in spending due to the hiring of an external financial assurance services Vendor and grievance settlement costs. The PSA budget allocation may need to be reviewed due to the potential increases in PSA expenditures in outyears.

Outcome-based Performance Measures:

The PSA will continue to strive to maintain positive relationships with the PDSB and labour organizations.

The PSA worked collaboratively with PDSB to maintain open lines of communication to pro-actively address items raised by PSAT in a fair, equitable and timely manner to help ensure a positive environment for both staff and students. The PSA strives to improve relations with the representatives of its employee groups and continues to look for opportunities to proactively mitigate concerns.

PDSB will continue to work with the Union to re-establish monthly joint meetings between the senior management at PDSB and the PSAT executive members with the aim of working toward better resolution of issues of mutual concern.

In order to support employee engagement and promote a healthy, inclusive, and more accessible working environment, PDSB launched the American Sign Language (ASL) as a Second Language classes for PDSB staff. PDSB partnered with Canadian Hearing Services (CHS) (an external vendor) to provide fully funded ASL as a Second Language classes for interested employees in the PDSB. The program is voluntary and is open to all PDSB staff looking to improve or retain their language proficiency and to those who have expressed an interest in learning ASL. The cost of the course registration and course materials is covered by PDSB. The first offering was in spring

2024 with 59 staff taking the course. The second offering is for summer 2024 with 23 staff registered for the course.

PSA will work with PDSB to actively support the promotion of the provincial schools to increase awareness within district school boards and the community of the programs and services offered.

When the PSA members met this year, the PDSB Executive Director attended the meetings to provide current information and highlight the programs and services offered by the provincial schools, to give facilities updates on the work completed or underway at the sites and to promote the ongoing positive workplace culture. PDSB actively attended meetings with school board administrators and staff where information was provided on the programs that are offered and the benefits for the students who attend the provincial schools.

In September 2023, a new PDSB branch and schools' website went live and are actively being used to promote schools and programming across PDSB. The updated websites provide a consistent look for all the school sites and is a user-friendly platform for parents/guardians.

In June 2024, PDSB shared a memo with District Schools Boards with details on the programs and services provided by the provincial schools and resource services to increase awareness of the services offered.

Risks

There were vacant membership positions for the PSA Chair, Vice-Chair and two member positions expired during the FY2023-24 period which posed strategic/governance risks correlated to not having a full complement of members. These risks were rated low as the PSA maintained a quorum of three members and it did not impact the PSA's achieved results in meeting its mandate.

The Ministry mitigated these risks by filling two membership vacancies (Chair and member) in 2023-24 and work is underway to appoint members to fill the other two vacant positions (Vice Chair and member). A full member complement provides a diverse range of opinions and analysis which is beneficial to the group. The Ministry will continue to work with the Minister's Office and the Public Appointments Secretariat to identify candidates to fill vacancies and address potential vacancies ahead of term expiration dates.

PSA Expenses

PSA expenses are funded by the Provincial and Demonstration Schools Branch of the Ministry of Education. The allocation is \$20,000 annually.

These funds are intended for:

- Costs associated with the administration of the collective agreement including arbitration hearings.
- Travel expenses incurred by members hearing grievances.
- Payment for the hiring of an external financial assurance services Vendor.
- Per diem payment for PSA members who are external to the OPS.

In 2023-24, the PSA incurred \$37,425 in expenses which is 87% over the annual budget of \$20,000. The PSA budget allocation may need to be reviewed due to the potential increases in PSA expenditures in outyears.