



National School Boards Association
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Statement Urging Broad Participation in Governance of Public Schools

The public school is both a cherished tradition, as well as a critical underpinning, to the democracies of both Canada and the United States. It is an essential means of ensuring that citizens are well prepared to elect their leaders and to make important decisions about shaping the future. That is why, in both of our countries, education is deeply rooted in the community and why leadership of it must be, too.

This mission of public schools is one that impacts not only students and their parents, but many other stakeholders – including senior citizens and other adults without children in school, and the business community, for instance – who pay taxes to fund education and have a direct interest in its success. All those voices must not only be heard, they need to be directly represented in the governance of the schools.

The best and time-tested way to ensure this happens is through locally-elected school boards, comprised of a cross section of a community. Here, concerns are raised and addressed, and broad consensus reached. This is possible only when the governance of the system is specifically designed to enable everyone impacted by the schools to be at the table and to participate equally in leading them.

School boards have demonstrated over many years their effectiveness in achieving this goal. They reflect all interests and provide an essential forum for competing views and expectations to be considered, and resolved. Public schools are a community's greatest asset. Everyone in the community should play a role in contributing to their success. Efforts therefore should be focused on strengthening the role of school boards. Proposals to abolish them are a big step in the wrong direction.

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