



# The Sentinel



Labour Day Parade 2022

## Change for a Better YCDSB

Mike Toffen, President, CEO of Elementary

Now is the time. There is a window of opportunity that is presenting itself to you the membership to create a necessary change for the better with our Board of Trustees. Educate yourself. Know who is running and on what platform they stand for in the upcoming Trustee Elections on October 24th. Do the candidates' visions align with the visions you would like to see for the York Catholic District School Board? What have we all lived these past 4 years that education needs to recover from? While we have not endorsed any candidates in this next election as a result of the enforcement of Hybrid Learning on our teachers, we do recognize there are candidates whose visions for the most part would align with the visions we have as teachers. Our political action committee sent surveys to the candidates and many of them filled them out. Those that did not, is a response in and of itself that you should consider. Read the responses to those surveys and then you can decide if this is an individual you want making decisions that will affect your career moving forward. You cannot sit by idly and choose not to cast your vote....we have Doug Ford as a result of that type of thinking and we certainly don't want that type of character on our Board of Trustees.

*Be the Change That You  
Want To See In the World*

## Putting Our Trust in the New YCDSB Trustees: Why Voting in Trustee Elections Matters

Vito Totino, Councillor & Co-Chair of Political Action Committee

Well, it is that time for us to perform our most sacred of civic duties again and cast our ballot on October 24th. We get to decide who will represent us, our children, our students, and perhaps most importantly who will be steering the decision making process at the YCDSB for the next four years. While the races for Mayor and Council are important for our local democracies, the races that matter most for educators and the well being of our schools are the elections for Catholic School Board Trustees. For the YCDSB that means ten elected trustees from the following areas: one from Aurora, one from Newmarket/Georgina, two from Markham, two from Richmond Hill, and four from Vaughan. But what exactly do Trustees do and why should educators care about who gets elected to those posts?

School Board Trustees are elected by the general public every four years during the local municipal elections. The expectation is that Trustees act as nonpartisan advocates for publicly-funded education and are obligated to fulfill their duties as outlined in the *Education Act*. Those responsibilities include bringing forward any concerns of parents, students, and community groups in support of the school board. They must also work collaboratively and in conjunction with senior administration to steer the decision making process regarding policy decisions that are supposed to benefit the

entire school board community. While they are not mandated to wade into board operational issues, they do have jurisdiction over policy regarding the overall strategic plan, accountability throughout the board, stewardship over board funding and budgeting, as well as student achievement, well being, and equity. They are accountable only to the Ministry of Education and of course the electorate. While we cannot count on the current Minister of Education to do what is right for our schools, we should be able to count on each other to go out and vote for a candidate that will serve the best interest of our schools and not their own agendas.

As a board, we have seen what happens when those who are supposed to have students' best interests in mind make decisions based on their own beliefs and not necessarily the wants of their constituents. In terms of student achievement, one need not look further than the decision to extend hybrid fractured learning. Instead of making the decision to run a virtual school from the start, Trustees chose to adversely affect the learning of all students and the working conditions of all educators far longer than was ever necessary. That decision also negatively impacted the well being and mental health of students, parents, and educators. When it comes to equity, the last group of YCDSB Trustees left a lot to be desired especially when it came to acknowledging the need for more work around issues involving anti-

Black racism and better supporting those students with the highest of needs in our special education system. Furthermore, the decision to not fly the Pride Flag in June, even when other Catholic boards in the province (including the largest) did just that, did nothing for promoting equity in our schools. In fact decisions around those specific equity areas had the result of further isolation and systemic discrimination in our schools. These are all prime examples of why it is important to have Trustees that will advocate for what is right for our students and make decisions that will continue to improve our school system.

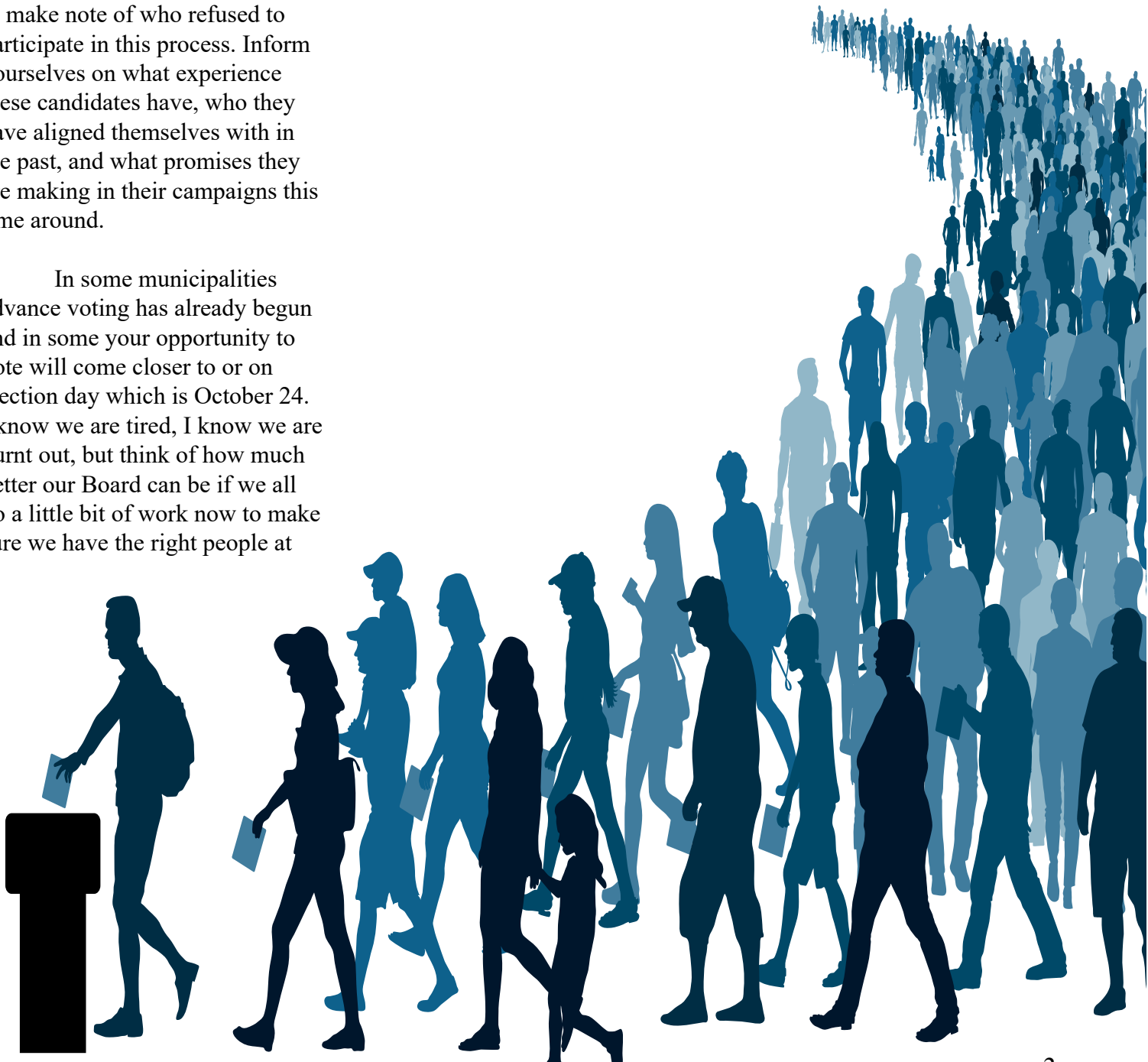
While those are all important examples that affected our Board, its students, and its educators, a significant aspect of a Trustee's role, when it comes to educators, is their seat at the local bargaining table. As our collective agreement expired more than a month ago, it is of absolute critical importance that we do our best to elect Trustees to the YCDSB that would be willing to work with educators to provide the best learning environment for our students. Some may argue that the collective agreement bargaining process has little to do with student success and well being. However, the truth is that better educator working conditions result in better student learning conditions. To that end, it is important that educators make every effort to really make an informed decision this election. The YCT OECTA

Political Action Committee has given all candidates running for YCDSB Trustee the opportunity to answer our questionnaire which attempted to reveal what each candidate would do regarding key issues. Please be sure to review the answers/analysis to those questions that were provided to you, but more importantly be sure to make note of who refused to participate in this process. Inform yourselves on what experience these candidates have, who they have aligned themselves with in the past, and what promises they are making in their campaigns this time around.

In some municipalities advance voting has already begun and in some your opportunity to vote will come closer to or on election day which is October 24. I know we are tired, I know we are burnt out, but think of how much better our Board can be if we all do a little bit of work now to make sure we have the right people at

the table. The alternative is expending a significant amount of effort and stress if the wrong people are there for the next four years. Please, I implore you, again, do your colleagues, your children, your students, and yourselves a favour and inform yourself on who

the best candidate would be to improve our Board over the next four years, and then make sure you go out and VOTE!



## Trustee Elections: Why Should I Care?

*Karen Ebanks, Recording Secretary & Co-Chair of Political Action*

Coming off the disastrous turnout of the provincial elections has been a tough road. Everyone is exhausted. Everyone is spent. Fatigue and apathy have given Doug Ford's PC government a resounding 4 more years with a terrifying majority. Every teacher working in publicly-funded education understands the implications of underfunding education in Ontario. While the municipal elections may be the last thing on everyone's mind, it is important that every teacher understands how Ontario funding intersects with local school board budgets.

When funding from the province is insufficient, the burden falls on the local school board to make up the difference. Every year the Board of Trustees is tasked with passing a budget for the school board. Teachers will remember that the Ontario government required all school boards to offer a virtual learning option when the COVID-19 pandemic began; however, there was no funding provided by the government to make that happen. School boards had to have difficult conversations and make tough decisions.

If the government did not provide the funding for a virtual learning school, it was within the power of the Board of Trustees to approve the spending of funds to make this happen. While the decision to enforce hybrid learning is a day-to-day operation outside of the Board of Trustees, the Board of Trustees controls the budget. We all know how that turned out at the York

Catholic District School Board. It was cheaper to force teachers to teach in-person and online students at the same time than it was to have a dedicated teacher for in-person students and a dedicated teacher for virtual students - and the hybrid model was imposed on teachers at our board. It was a brutal time in education of which we are just now beginning to understand the effects.

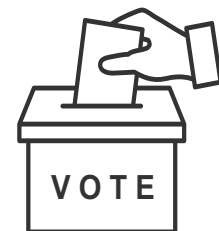
Some boards made different decisions. In order to fund a dedicated virtual school, they chose to go deep into board reserves or chose to run a deficit and passed a budget that put student and teacher needs first regardless of the financial cost. When thinking about trustee elections, teachers need to be aware of how much power an elected trustee holds over the school board budget.

The effects of the pandemic on student and teacher well-being are real. Teachers are reporting record numbers of burnout as they attempt to support students with high needs. Many teachers say that support is often inadequate, which could be due to underfunding. Teachers acutely feel the impact of these decisions when it comes to supporting students with special needs. This year, teachers may be feeling the effects of a tighter than usual Special Education budget. Supports offered feel a little less. Calls for help may go unanswered, taking a significant toll on the mental health of teachers.

Difficult decisions are required to be made around balancing board budgets with increasing student

needs. We want a Board of Trustees that is going to recognize that sometimes a deficit must be run in order to meet the needs of the school board. Running a deficit sends a strong message to the provincial government that education is grossly underfunded. Some Boards of Trustees consistently send this message to the Provincial Government. If you are a resident of York Region, on October 24 or in advance polls, vote to elect a Board of Trustees at the YCDSB who will not hesitate to spend the funds required to support our students and teachers.

Trustee candidates were offered an opportunity to share who they are directly with members. Get to know their positions on how balancing the board budget intersects with student needs that continue to increase. Get to know what lessons they have learned during the pandemic. Get to know where they stand on drafting and supporting a policy on reporting and responding to incidents of racism. Know who deserves your vote. Then vote accordingly.





# WHO IS RUNNING?

AREA	WARD	RE-ELECTION	NEW CANDIDATES
AURORA		Elizabeth Crowe	Al Itwar
MARKHAM	1 2 3 6	Carol Cotton	Luca Mele Frances Tan
MARKHAM	4 5 7 8	Frank Alexander	James Bush Euphrashia Rajindra
NEWMARKET		Theresa McNicol	Peter Fracassi

RICHMOND HILL <b>2 seats</b>		Maria Iafrate	Glencia Brookes-Dos Santos Gina De Caires Joe DiMeo
VAUGHAN	1		Teresa Ciaravella Angela Saggese
VAUGHAN	2		Micaela Sonya Barbieri Gianna Fracassi
VAUGHAN <b>2 seats</b>	3 4 5	Jennifer Wigston	Matt Cila Peter De Quintal Angela Grella

The Political Action Committee sent each candidate a list of 10 questions about topics including: Budget Allocations, Hybrid Learning/Mandatory Online Learning, Raising the Pride Flag, Reciting the Land Acknowledgement, and Reporting and Responding to Incidents of Racism.

The following slides are a summary of the response by candidates. To see the full details please go to our website link found here:

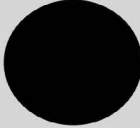
<https://www.yctoecta.com/member-resources-2>

(You will be prompted to login to view the full document)



**Elizabeth Crowe**  
**AURORA**

Re-election



New Candidate

**BUDGET VS. STUDENT NEEDS**

It will be difficult to balance the budget as our enrolment declines and our needs grow. I will follow the recommendations of staff as they are the educators and accountants.

**PANDEMIC LEARNING**

The hybrid model did not work. What did work was investments in ventilation and technology.

**EQUITY**

The Land Acknowledgment: school boards are divided on this issue and thus, I refused to vote in December. We need clear direction from the Archdiocese so that everyone approaches this consistently. We need to develop a policy and consultation with all our stakeholders. I will follow the direction of our HREA on policy development. I agree that we need to get better at data collection because how do we know how big the problem is without collecting data.

**HOW MOTIONS IMPACT TEACHERS**

I put forward the motion to end the hybrid model in elementary. I wish we had the funds to do the same in secondary. Glad we restored Chaplaincy to full complement. Would support bringing back Guidance to the previous complement.

**BUDGET VS. STUDENT NEEDS**

Have served on the finance committee of private organizations for five years, currently sit on the board of directors of a publically funded housing and health agency. Budgeting for increasing need will be a challenge, but is necessary.

**PANDEMIC LEARNING**

Having a special needs child, it is readily obvious that in-class learning is most beneficial for the majority of students due to the socialization aspect.

**EQUITY**

In response to all three, all people should be treated fairly, reasonably, and equally, so long as to do so does not infringe upon the rights of anyone else, nor treat a particular person more favourably.

**HOW MOTIONS IMPACT TEACHERS**

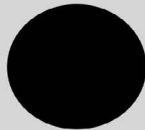
From professional experience, I would like to ensure improved safety for students and staff. I am not aware of any issues I would address that would harm teachers.



**Al Itwar**  
**AURORA**

Re-election

New Candidate





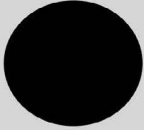
**Carol Cotton**

**MARKHAM**

**Wards 1, 2, 3 & 6**

Re-election

New Candidate



**BUDGET VS. STUDENT NEEDS**

Believes that before making cutbacks, areas of priority must be determined and minimally impacted. Proposals to special education need to impact students as positively as possible.

**PANDEMIC LEARNING**

Mandatory online learning should be reduced to one course in order to provide all students with the experience of online learning. Regarding hybrid, acknowledges that not all potential impacts were adequately explored and that stakeholders (staff and families) should have been consulted more widely.

**EQUITY**

Believes that current Board Policy adequately addresses incidents of racism and/or discrimination, but agrees that more work needs to be done in regards to gathering accurate data board wide and implementing racism education/training. Refused to vote on motion that was brought forth to recite the land acknowledgement before the prayer. In favour of current practice to recite the land acknowledgement after prayers.

**HOW MOTIONS IMPACT TEACHERS**

Strives to consider the impacts of motions on teachers, students, and families. Strongly supported creation and budgetary requirements for STREAM centres.



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**Luca Mele**

**MARKHAM**

**Wards 1, 2, 3 & 6**

Re-election

New Candidate



**NO RESPONSE**



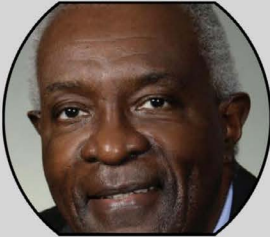
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**Frances  
Tan  
MARKHAM**

Wards 1, 2, 3 & 6

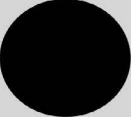

Re-election	New Candidate
	

**NO RESPONSE**

**Frank Alexander  
MARKHAM**

Wards 4, 5, 7 & 8

Re-election	New Candidate
	

**BUDGET VS. STUDENT NEEDS**

Believes if you work backwards from student needs to the budgetary requirements for those needs, you will find the most cost-effective and efficient ways to satisfy those needs.

**PANDEMIC LEARNING**

Pandemic was a painful experience. Received from stakeholders: hybrid did not work, online learning when used should be strictly that and in real-time, and teachers were not properly trained to handle the complexities of online learning.

**EQUITY**

I believe in the only true God, who created the whole world and everything in it. He is first in everything I do. As the current Chair of the Policy Review Committee, I am a staunch proponent of policies that govern reporting and responding to incidents of racism.

**HOW MOTIONS IMPACT TEACHERS**

My motion on “Annual Day of Reconciliation” has benefitted the entire system, including Teachers. No motions I have moved or supported have harmed Teachers.



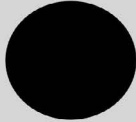




**James Bush**  
**MARKHAM**  
Wards 4, 5, 7 & 8

Re-election

New Candidate



**BUDGET VS. STUDENT NEEDS**

I have dealt with finances and accounts, reviewing requests for funding and donations. I have a unique interest in all special needs of students in attempting to ensure they have the ability to excel and be the best member of society they can.

**PANDEMIC LEARNING**

My position on hybrid is that everyone learns in different ways, and I would support that each student does not learn in the same way, and the needs of the students should be a focus on preferred methods of learning. I do not agree with mandatory online learning.

**EQUITY**

I do not agree with raising any pride flags on any Catholic School Board property or land. I am inclined to say I would not support this policy (reciting the Land Acknowledgement) first as I do not see this as something that would have a positive effect on York Catholic students. I would support giving thanks and praying.

**HOW MOTIONS IMPACT TEACHERS**

I do not believe the trustee is meant to benefit teachers but do agree teachers and educators should be supported and given the resources to see each student is provided with a Christ-centered education which keeps their individual needs in mind.



**Euphrashia Rajindra**  
**MARKHAM**  
Wards 4, 5, 7 & 8

Re-election

New Candidate



**BUDGET VS. STUDENT NEEDS**

Balancing budgets given the increasing student needs in Special Education and Guidance will be a focus on short-term and long-term goals by prioritizing the most urgent needs.

**PANDEMIC LEARNING**

Believes a healthy balance of online and in-person education is necessary for optimizing learning and development. Is in favour of mandatory online learning in certain circumstances that prevent in person learning.

**EQUITY**

Strongly supports the reciting of the Land Acknowledgement first, at all YCDSB gatherings. Strongly supports drafting of a policy on reporting and responding to incidents of racism.

**HOW MOTIONS IMPACT TEACHERS**

Capping class sizes to better support students and provide individual attention will be beneficial to teachers. Provide professional development for teachers to address Special Education needs of students through gradual implementation for current teachers and contained in the job description for new hires.





**Peter Fracassi**  
**NEWMARKET**

Re-election

New Candidate



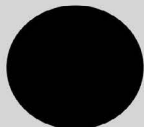
**RESPONDED VIA PHONE CALL,  
BUT DECLINED QUESTIONNAIRE**



**Theresa McNicol**  
**NEWMARKET**

Re-election

New Candidate



**BUDGET VS. STUDENT NEEDS**

Major cuts needed at most senior levels of the board. Taxpayers' dollars wasted on legal opinions could be directed to Guidance and Special Education.

**PANDEMIC LEARNING**

Hybrid model was the biggest failure in our board, with an awful impact on teachers.

**EQUITY**

On the Land Acknowledgement being recited first, I tried by moving a motion last fall. I support a policy on reporting the number of incidents of racism in order to stop them from occurring.

**HOW MOTIONS IMPACT TEACHERS**

Senior Staff wanted to cut 26 staff members from the Special Education budget, I was the only Trustee to stand up and vote against it and I would do it again.

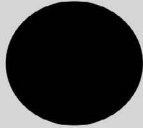
The one motion that I supported that harmed teachers was supporting the hybrid model, which knowing what I do now, I should not have supported it from the beginning.



**Glencia  
Brookes-Dos Santos  
RICHMOND HILL**

Re-election

New Candidate



**BUDGET VS. STUDENT NEEDS**

In process, fiscal responsibility, accountability and needs must be considered. Working within limitations of budget lines which involves analysis and prioritization of needs in order to implement the best strategies moving forward.

**PANDEMIC LEARNING**

Hybrid model is burdensome to teachers, cumbersome to students, & the model does not fit the criteria of something that would offer quality public education. Mandatory online learning model allowed for continuing education during crisis, however some students had no parental assistance and no resources.

**EQUITY**

Raising the pride flag does not suggest a movement of the values and benefit of Catholic schools. Speaks to the principles of respect and inclusivity that must be shown to everyone. Having a policy on reporting and responding to incidents of racism is integral, however, a written policy on its own is not enough to change minds nor prevent acts of racism.

**HOW MOTIONS IMPACT TEACHERS**

Teachers would benefit from having attentive students ready to learn if there was a funded breakfast program. Teachers could potentially be harmed by larger class sizes due to budgetary constraints.



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**Gina De Caires  
RICHMOND HILL**

Re-election

New Candidate



**NO EMAIL AVAILABLE**

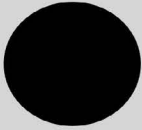




**Maria Iafrate**  
**RICHMOND HILL**

Re-election

New Candidate



**RESPONDED,  
BUT DECLINED QUESTIONNAIRE**

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**Joe DiMeo**  
**RICHMOND HILL**

Re-election

New Candidate



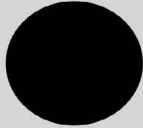
**NO RESPONSE**



**Teresa Ciaravella**  
**VAUGHAN**  
Ward  
1

Re-election

New Candidate



**BUDGET VS. STUDENT NEEDS**

Former member of the YCDSB’s Business and Finance Committee who understands the budgetary challenges facing the Board and will make it a priority to adequately fund both Special Education and Guidance.

**PANDEMIC LEARNING**

The hybrid model is not beneficial to students or educators and it negatively affects mental health and social development while creating learning gaps. Do not agree with mandatory online learning as students benefit from face-to-face interactions with teachers and peers.

**EQUITY**

The Land Acknowledgement should be cited prior to all YCDSB gatherings so as to recognize the need to reconcile the decisions made in our country’s and faith’s past. Supporting a policy on responding to incidents of racism must be a mandatory movement in the Board so that we can help ensure that all students feel that they are supported by their educators and that racism will not be tolerated in our Board.

**HOW MOTIONS IMPACT TEACHERS**

Teachers would benefit from more time to prepare in order to help them deal with larger class sizes and evolving curriculums. They could also potentially harm teachers by shifting funding & could negatively affect teachers schedules & hiring.



**Angela Saggese**  
**VAUGHAN**  
Ward 1

Re-election

New Candidate



**RESPONDED,  
BUT DECLINED QUESTIONNAIRE**

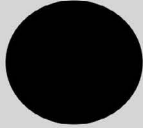




**Micaela Sonya  
Barbieri  
VAUGHAN  
Ward 2**

Re-election

New Candidate



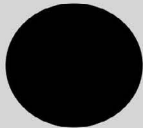
**NO RESPONSE**



**Gianna Fracassi  
VAUGHAN  
Ward 2**

Re-election

New Candidate



**RESPONDED,  
BUT DECLINED QUESTIONNAIRE**



Image  
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Available

**Peter De Quintal**  
**VAUGHAN**  
Wards 3, 4, & 5

Re-election	New Candidate
	

**NO EMAIL AVAILABLE**



Image  
not  
Available

**Matt Cila**  
**VAUGHAN**  
Wards 3, 4, & 5

Re-election	New Candidate
	

**NO EMAIL AVAILABLE**





**Angela Grella**  
**VAUGHAN**  
Wards 3, 4, & 5

Re-election

New Candidate



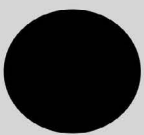
**NO RESPONSE**



**Jennifer Wigston**  
**VAUGHAN**  
Wards 3, 4, & 5

Re-election

New Candidate



**BUDGET VS. STUDENT NEEDS**

Recognizes that the number of students accessing support has increased and the challenges of the new funding formulae. Believes funding provided by the Ministry is inadequate. As Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee, she has advocated for additional funding for Special Education.

**PANDEMIC LEARNING**

Believes in-person, face-to-face learning is the best environment for teaching and learning. Supported motion to discontinue hybrid.

**EQUITY**

Recognizes that the determination for where and how the Land Acknowledgement is positioned relative to prayer is nuanced and complex and is open to either and see the value in both. Believes the Indigenous community and the Catholic community are not separate self-contained groups living in disparate bubbles - they are all part of an integrated community, all children of God.

**HOW MOTIONS IMPACT TEACHERS**

Supported Crowe's motion to eliminate hybrid learning. Voted to restore Chaplaincy to previously staffed levels.



# York Pride Parade - June 18, 2022





# Labour Day Parade - September 5, 2022





# How **YOU** Can Make a Difference

Anna Polisco, Occasional Teacher Release Officer



*“Occasional teaching is very rewarding but also very challenging. At every turn, the occasional teacher is tested, pushed, strained and stressed by many factors. These factors make getting through the day in one ‘professional’ piece, with sanity and a love of teaching intact, difficult, to say the least. To survive, occasional teachers have to be patient and tolerant, have a good sense of humour, have a thick skin and be very flexible.”*

From: An Open Letter from an Occasional Teacher in OTF Survive & Thrive.

If you have ever wondered about the role of your Association, the election of your Provincial Executive, how your collective agreement was negotiated, and what you can do as part of the planning process to effect positive change, then the March 2023 OECTA Annual General Meeting (AGM) is for you.

The AGM brings delegates from all over Ontario together. It provides the ability for delegates to discuss the functioning of the Association, promotes a mutual understanding and builds trust, relationships, and inclusivity. The AGM also provides the opportunity for delegates from all units to problem-solve together and set measurable goals that can be achieved to protect everyone's interests.

The objective of holding an AGM is to provide an opportunity for delegates to discuss the functioning of the Association, ask tough questions, get answers and challenge the leaders on the improvement and direction of the Association. Equally, an AGM is the time to recognize Association leadership for their hard work.

The ultimate control, direction and destiny of the Association is in the hands of its members. The AGM is important to the success of OECTA because it offers an opportunity for delegates to review the inner workings of the Association. It facilitates the pooling of ideas and opinions, provides increased engagement, transparency and accountability, a shared sense of purpose, as well as personal growth for delegates and leaders.

As an AGM delegate, you will represent and vote on behalf of 70+ occasional teachers of different backgrounds, values, viewpoints, and abilities. You have a chance to highlight the obstacles that Occasional Teachers face daily. You have the floor to voice your concerns, debate and clarify issues, present resolutions for consideration to overcome these obstacles, and solidify or change bylaws, policies and procedures in the Association handbook.

Be that change and exercise your right to vote! Submit a resolution with your rationale to your unit executive or at the unit general meeting for consideration. Most importantly, sign up as a delegate for the March 2023 AGM, and represent your fellow occasional teachers and your local York Unit.



Your insurance bill shouldn't scare you this Halloween – here's how to lower your insurance cost



With Halloween just around the corner and the 'spooky season' in full swing, there are many frights to behold. But your insurance bill shouldn't be one of them.

While you need enough coverage to ensure you, your loved ones and your belongings are protected, there are ways to lower your insurance cost without reducing your coverage. We've put together a list of savings and discount options you may be eligible for in order to save on your home and auto insurance.

Read more at [www.otip.com/article153](http://www.otip.com/article153).



**YORK CATHOLIC**  
TEACHERS

## FEEL THE FEAR AND DO IT ANYWAYS ...

Mary Marcello, Councillor

I am writing from a heart and mind that lives with white privilege.

I have become aware of my privilege over time. Our journey through life takes us on an unpredictable path where there are many opportunities to grow. I embrace my desire to listen, to learn, to question, and to take action.

I am grateful to those who entertain my inquiries with patience. I am blessed to have met people who were willing to share their personal experiences with me. It is through these moments that I have nurtured my heart and mind.

Where am I going with this?

Well, my brain currently has multiple tabs open at any given time. Within each tab is a piece of my heart holding space for topics such as Truth and Reconciliation, Black Lives Matter and 2SLGBTQIA+, to highlight a few.

As I write this, I notice that OECTA Provincial has just posted on Instagram *“Every day we celebrate the diversity, beauty, perseverance of our 2SLGBTQIA+ members, students, and communities.”*

The question is: **Do we as educators in a Catholic board really celebrate diversity?**

We teach children who come from various households; some have parents and/or guardians that question or forbid topics of conversations within our classrooms that delve into the trauma experienced in residential schools, racism, and flying the pride flag.

When educators encounter opinionated parents/guardians on such topics, it often leads some teachers to question: Who am I to discuss any of these topics? These are not my lived experiences. Do I even have the right to comment? Why is my employer not taking a firm stance on such matters of importance? Why is our employer not invested in educating their employees on how to teach empathy and compassion with respect to all of these realities? Instead we put up a school sign that reads:

***We are diverse. We are one in Christ.***

Does everyone who walks through our schools feel

like they belong? Do we all feel like we are one in Christ? Like we are God’s children? Are we all holding safe spaces for the lived experiences that each community member walks into our schools with, on a daily basis?

Talking about it brings awareness. Awareness brings action... or so I thought. Instead what I am hearing is members are uncomfortable. They do not want to be confrontational. They want a script, they need vetted resources, they need to know where our employer stands. And until a firm statement or movement is presented, some teachers will close these tabs in their brain for now.

What happened to the posters that used to hang in classrooms that read *“Knowledge is Power”* or the promises we make as educators: *“I am a lifelong learner”*?

These last few years, I joined book clubs reading titles such as *Five Little Indians* and *How to be an Anti-racist* that sparked so many insightful discussions. I attended a protest where I heard Parents of Black Children and former students speak about the experiences that some of our Black students struggled with in our very own schools. I joined the LGBTQ+Alliance to listen and let others know that I am an ally. It is not possible to strive for equitable outcomes while maintaining the status quo. A seismic shift is unavoidable and so are the feelings of discomfort that come up along the way when power shifts and new balances emerge.

I do not have all the answers. It is OK to be uncomfortable. I do come from a place of privilege; but, I am willing to talk about it. I will make mistakes along the way. I will own them. I will learn from them and I will continue to take action. Please consider opening up those tabs with an open heart and mind. Seek answers when you do not have them. Form community with colleagues you trust. Don’t stop learning... keep asking ... don’t stop teaching.

## York Region Pride Parade

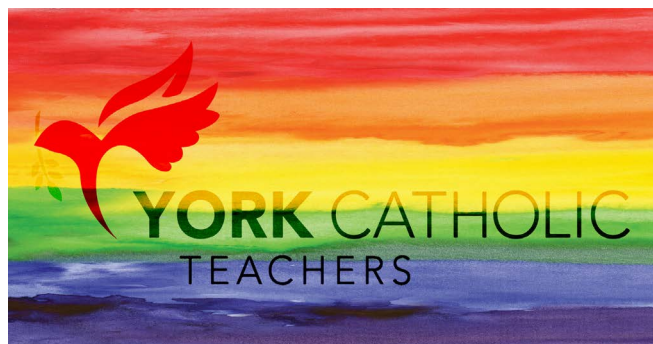
Michael Oyston, Councillor

This past June, I had the honour and privilege to march with members of York Unit OECTA in the York Region Pride Parade. This march marked the first time that the Unit entered the parade as its own contingent as in past years we have had a small group march with the Toronto and York Region Labour Council. Being the first year that the Unit entered the parade a callout was made to the membership and the call was answered with over 50 members and their families joining the Unit to walk through downtown Newmarket to celebrate Pride. While walking in the parade it is impossible not to gauge the reaction of the crowd as they notice the large YORK CATHOLIC TEACHERS banner pass by on Main Street. For some in the crowd, there is a sense of surprise. Many do not expect to see Catholic Teachers participating in a Pride Parade. However, if we look at our own board's Office of Human Rights, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, we see that employees of the board have a commitment to "ensure that *everyone* feels a sense of belonging, and is encouraged and supported to thrive and succeed to the best of their abilities. Moreover, we will foster equity in our learning communities through acts of sincerity and integrity and remember to see the face of Christ in every child, parent, and co-worker alike." If we are to take that commitment seriously, participating in a parade truly is an act of sincerity and integrity which supports encouragement and belonging to those in our community. Although there may have been an initial reaction of surprise in the crowd, that reaction quickly turned to nods of approval. Another reaction to seeing our YCT members participating in the parade was that of support. This year while walking in the parade, there was a comment from a parent in the crowd to their child of "Look, it's your teachers!" This simple comment reaffirmed to me the value of participating in the parade, knowing that our presence was one that was welcomed and, for many, needed. It reaffirmed to the community that

we support all of our learners who come through our doors each and every day. The overwhelming crowd reaction though, is one of appreciation. As the parade enters the core of downtown, the crowds get deeper and much louder. Within those crowds, the consistent message that those participating in the parade hear is "Thank you." There is a general sense of appreciation from families seeing their children's teachers openly supporting their students. Parents and the community know that their children attend schools where they are welcomed, supported and accepted with dignity and inclusion.

Our theme for the Parade this year was "Embrace Love, Teach with Pride." I cannot think of a more appropriate theme as Catholic teachers which shows a commitment to all students, families, colleagues and co-workers. However, the participation of members of the York Unit in the York Region Pride Parade is one step of many on a journey. This year our YCT OECTA Diversity Committee has started an LGBTQ+ Alliance which is yet another step on our journey. The Alliance is open to members who self-identify as LGBTQ+ and their allies. This alliance is intended to be a safe, affirming and inclusive space where members can discuss topics that affect the experience of belonging to a union and the experience of teaching for LGBTQ+ members. Our experiences as teacher-workers are an important part of our well-being, and it is vital to discuss these experiences in our safe union space.

The June 2022 York Region Pride Parade was the first of many that YCT OECTA will proudly march in. It is the right thing to do to show our students, their families and our communities that their teachers are supportive and caring. We truly embrace love and teach with pride. Please keep an eye on your YCT OECTA email around May 2023 for details about how to register to join York OECTA to participate in the next Pride Parade.



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

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## Births & Adoptions

Caitlin Arnold, LTO on the birth of her son Oliver.  
Caleigh Burke, teacher at All Saints on the birth of her son Rowan.  
Melanie Colacicco, teacher at St. Nicholas on the birth of her son Luke.  
Veronica D'Agostino, LTO on the birth of her daughter Emma.  
Anita Ellero, LTO on the birth of her daughter Katia.  
Francesca Iannello, teacher at St. Bernadette on the birth of her son Theodore.  
Freeda Kassai, LTO on the birth of her son Ezra.  
Enza Mazzone, teacher at Notre Dame on the birth of her daughter Isabella.  
Stephanie Morano, teacher at Canadian Martyrs on the birth of her son Matteo.  
Victor Odtuhan and Kirsten Cruz, teachers at St. Robert CHS on the birth of their daughter Maxine.  
Angelica Perpetua, LTO at St. Margaret Mary on the birth of her son Theo.  
Elisabetta Pileggi, LTO on the birth of her daughter Giulianna.  
Jessica Salituro, teacher at San Marco on the birth of her daughter Vienna.  
Angela Van Delft, LTO on the birth of her son Luca.  
Fontane Yu, teacher at St. Edward on the birth of her son Kinsley.



## Condolences & Sympathy

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Betty Berks, teacher at Notre Dame on the passing of her father  
Nancy Capozio, teacher at Good Shepherd on the passing of her father.  
Mary Louise Colantonio, teacher at St. Thomas Aquinas on the passing of her mother.  
Nadia D'Addario, LTO on the passing of her mother-in-law.  
Gianmarco D'Astoli, LTO on the passing of his grandfather.  
Tamar Jamjekian, teacher at St. Brigid on the passing of her grandmother.  
Daniela Marcina, teacher at St. Mary, Nobleton on the passing of her father.  
Carmela Paolozzi, teacher at St. Gabriel on the passing of her father and grandfather of Alida Paolozzi, LTO.  
Liliana Rodrigues, teacher at St. Gabriel on the passing of her mother-in-law.  
Teresa Romeo, teacher at Pope Francis on the passing of her mother.  
Maria Rozinka, OT on the passing of her husband.  
Rosalba Teti, teacher at St. Jean de Brebeuf CHS on the passing of her grandmother.  
Kayla Verney, OT on the passing of her grandfather.  
Alison Viaes, teacher at OLL CCS on the passing of her father.  
Daniela Vinci, teacher at St. Agnes of Assisi on the passing of her father.

### Sentinel Production Team:

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