

**YORK CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD  
MINUTES  
of the Regular Board Meeting**

Tuesday, December 17, 2024

**PRESENT:**

Members: In Person: F. Alexander, C. Cotton, E. Crowe, J. DiMeo, M. Iafrate, A. Grella,  
A. Saggese, J. Wigston  
Student Trustees M. Galstyan, S. Cuesta  
Virtual: M. Barbieri

Administration: In Person: J. De Faveri, J. Sarna, A. Battick, M. Brosens, J. Chiutsi, G. De Girolamo,  
A. Iafrate, T. Laliberte, C. McNeil, S. Morrow, L. Paonessa, J. Powers,  
L. Sawicky, S. Wright, J. Tsui  
Virtual: N/A

Absent with Notice: Nil

Approved Absence: Trustee T. McNicol

Recording Officer: S. Greco (In Person)

Presiding: E. Crowe, Chair of the Board

**2025:055 OPENING PRAYER AND CALL TO ORDER**

Chair of the Board, Elizabeth Crowe, welcomed everyone to the Regular Board meeting at 7:30 pm and welcomed the Faith Ambassadors to lead the prayer followed by the Land Acknowledgement.

**2025:056 ROLL CALL:** Trustee T. McNicol - Approved Absence

**2025:057 APPROVAL OF NEW MATERIAL:**

*Delegation: Policy 203 Student Transportation Services*

*Approval of YCDSB's Honorary Chair Titles*

**MOTION: Iafrate/Wigston**

**THAT** the new material be approved as presented.

**– MOTION CARRIED –**

**2025:058 APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

*Remove: 16g: Policy 413 Attendance Support Program (to January 2025)*

**MOTION: Saggese/Wigston**

**THAT** the agenda be approved as amended.

**– MOTION CARRIED –**

**2025:059 DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST FOR CURRENT MEETING: NIL**

**2025:060 DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST FOR PREVIOUS MEETING: NIL**

**2025:061 a) APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:**

Regular Board Meeting of November 26, 2024

Special Board Meeting of December 12, 2024

**MOTION: Alexander/DiMeo**

**THAT** the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of November 26, 2024 and Special Board Meeting of December 12, 2024 be approved as presented.

**– MOTION CARRIED –**

**2025:062 BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: NIL****2025:063 CHAIR'S REPORT / UPDATE / INSPIRATIONAL MESSAGES:**

Elizabeth Crowe, Chair of the Board, provided the Chair's Report as part of the December 17, 2024 Regular Board Agenda. Chair Crowe expressed her gratitude to all staff and students for all their work in putting Christ in Christmas.

**2025:064 OCSTA BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S UPDATE:**

Trustee Jennifer Wigston OCSTA Regional Director, representing York Catholic District School Board, provided her OCSTA Report to Board. Topics included: Short Video Contest for Catholic Students, OCSTA Resolutions, Catholic Trustee Seminar taking place on January 17-18, 2025 and Catholic Education Theme - Advance Kit. On behalf of the OCSTA, Trustee Wigston wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

**2025:065 DIRECTOR'S REPORT/ UPDATE:**

Interim Director of Education, J. De Faveri, provided his Director's Report in the December 17, 2024 Regular Board Agenda package. Interim Director De Faveri's topics included Advent in Our Schools, Protecting Our Youth: Human Trafficking and Internet Safety Information Evenings, Blessed Invitation: Consistory in Rome, Frost & Fire Games: Celebrating Indigenous Heritage, Exiting X (formerly Twitter), Employment Equity Audit Presentation and School Visits.

Interim Director De Faveri clarified that the Trustees (and himself) that attended the Consistory in Rome used their personal money and not Board funds. Appreciation was extended to Mark Brosens, Senior Manager Brand, Marketing & Communications for facilitating the invitation.

**2025:066 STUDENT TRUSTEES' REPORT:**

Student Trustees Monica Galstyan and Sabine Cuesta provided their Student Trustee Report to Board in the December 17, 2024 Regular Board Agenda package. Topics included YSCPC Christmas Dinner, Christmas Concerts and OSSLT Semester 1.

**2025:067 RECOGNITIONS / OUTSIDE PRESENTATIONS:****a) Rose of Sharon**

Interim Director, John De Faveri introduced a video produced by Gr 12 Co-Op student, Fernanda. The Board of Trustees presented Rose of Sharon teacher Melissa Frolio and Rose of Sharon Board Chair, Susan LaRosa funds raised at a bake sale held at the Catholic Education Centre. The Board of Trustees were invited to tour the facility at their disposal.

**b) Recipient of ESRI Making a Difference Award**

Cynthia Bettio, Head of Canadian and World Studies, English, Guidance, and Art at St. Katharine Drexel CHS, has been awarded the prestigious ESRI Making a Difference Award - an accolade that is rarely bestowed upon educators. Ms. Bettio has an extraordinary ability to bring her geography and history courses to life, using GIS technology and real-world data to foster critical thinking and engagement in her students.

**2025:068 DELEGATIONS: (Chair Crowe read an introductory statement)****a) Policy 203 Student Transportation Services**

Liezl Sebial, YCDSB parent shared challenges families are facing with the kilometres distances stipulated in Policy 203 Student Transportation Services. (See Appendix A)

**2025:069 JOURNEY TOWARDS OUR VISION:****a) 2023-2024 Director's Annual Report**

J. De Faveri, Interim Director of Education provided an overview of the 2023-2024 Director's Annual Report and highlighted the Board's achievements under the MYSP Strategic Commitments. This report will be sent to the Ministry, as required by the Education Act, and will be posted on the Board's website. The Board of Trustees acknowledged the great work of staff under the direction of Interim Director De Faveri.

**b) Multi-Year Strategic Plan Update**

J. Sarna, Associate Director provided the first (of three) status report on the Year Two (2024-2025) MYSP update and achievement of the SMART goals. The next status reports will be provided in March 2025 and June 2025. The Board of Trustees congratulated Associate Director Sarna and her Team on refining the template to make the report easily measurable and consistent.

2025:070

**ACTION ITEM(S) (including Committee Reports)****a) TRUSTEE MOTION: Explore Air Conditioning in All Elementary YCDSB Classrooms (J. Wigston)**

- Whereas** *not all elementary YCDSB schools are equipped with air-conditioning in classrooms;*  
**Whereas** *students attending schools without air-conditioned classrooms are reliant on rotation through common cooling areas to mitigate the effects of high temperatures;*  
**Whereas** *rotation through common cooling areas is not a permanent solution for heat mitigation;*  
**Whereas** *rising temperatures in late spring, summer and early autumn inequitably affects the learning environments for students attending schools without air-conditioned classrooms;*  
**Whereas** *an optimal learning environment should be provided to all students regardless of geographical location;*  
**Whereas** *multiple school boards have completed multi-year projects to install air conditioning in every classroom.*

**MOTION: Wigston/Grella**

**THAT** staff investigate and report back to the Board of Trustees with an estimated financial outlay and timeframe required to equip all elementary YCDSB classrooms with air-conditioning.

**- MOTION CARRIED -**

It was noted that the staff's report will start with the internal data that is already available and investigate costing to present to the Board of Trustees. It was suggested that staff reach out to GTA Boards who have recently completed their multi-year plan to air condition all their classrooms. An update will be provided when completed.

**b) TRUSTEE MOTION: Audit of YCDSB Purchasing Credit Cards (PCards) (E. Crowe, M. lafrate)**

- Whereas** *the York Catholic District School Board is in a deficit and controls need to be in place to ensure that spending is focussed on the classroom while at the same time getting the best value for money;*  
**Whereas** *spending of Trustees and the Senior Team is being reviewed by RIAT, including the use of PCards;*  
**Whereas** *transparency and accountability is of paramount importance and an external review of all remaining PCards in the system would help to ensure proper usage and provide additional systemic recommendations for improvement, including the enforcement of spending limits.*

**LET IT BE RESOLVED:**

**THAT** *an outside accounting firm be hired to perform a full audit of PCards not included in the RIAT audit, including a review of any controls currently in place;*

**THAT** *the review include recommendations for any changes in policy and/or procedure needed to ensure transparency, accountability and compliance;*

**THAT** *the review include a recommendation on whether or not the number of PCards in the system should be reduced;*

**THAT** *once the recommendations are implemented, training for proper usage of PCards take place once a year with all holders.*

Chair Crowe opened the floor to questions of clarification before the motion got put on the floor. Concerns were brought forward with approving the motion without knowing the cost of hiring an outside accounting firm to perform the audit and questions were asked regarding the scope of the audit. C. McNeil, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer of the Board said he can prepare a draft scope and bring it back to the next Board meeting along with an estimated cost.

Chair Crowe put the discussion on hold so as to move through the rest of the action items.

*\*\* Please refer to page five (5) of these minutes for final outcome\*\**

**c) REPORT NO. 2025:03 COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE - DECEMBER 17, 2024**

Vice-Chair Maria Iafrate presented, for approval, Report No. 2025:03 of the Committee of the Whole private session held on December 17, 2024.

(i) **DECLASSIFIED (Action Items for Approval): N/A**

(ii) **CLASSIFIED:**

**MOTION: Iafrate/Cotton**

**THAT** the confidential action items from the Private Session held December 17, 2024, be approved as presented.

**– MOTION CARRIED –**

**d) APPROVAL OF REPORT NO. 2025:01 POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE**

Committee Chair, A. Saggese, presented for approval, Report No. 2025:01 of the Policy Review Committee meeting held on December 2, 2024.

**MOTION: Saggese/DiMeo**

**THAT** the Board approve the Terms of Reference for the Policy Review Committee

**THAT** the Board approve the following revised policies:

Policy 102 Respecting Sacred Time: Ash Wednesday, Holy Week and Easter Monday

Policy 114 Trustee Honorarium effective January 1, 2025

Policy 203 Student Transportation Services

Policy 221 Extreme Temperature

Policy 307 Opening Exercises

Policy 311 Digital Discipleship (Student Use of Technology)

Policy 319 Supplementary Learning Resources & Supplementary Learning Resources Procedure

**THAT** the Board approve the following NEW policy:

Policy 230 Guest Speakers / External Presentations

**THAT** the Board approve the following revised independent procedure:

Independent Procedure: Distribution of Materials

**- MOTION CARRIED -**

**e) RECEIPT OF REPORT NO. 2025:01 SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Committee Chair, A. Grella, presented for receipt, Report No. 2025:01 of the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting held on December 9, 2024.

**MOTION: Grella/Wigston**

**THAT** Report No. 2025:01 of the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting held on December 9, 2024, be received as presented.

**– MOTION CARRIED –**

**f) POLICY 118 TRUSTEE CODE OF CONDUCT**

J. Sarna, Associate Director, presented for approval, a revised Policy 118 Trustee Code of Conduct, effective January 1, 2025.

**MOTION: Iafrate/Saggese**

**THAT** the Board approve the revised Policy 118 Trustee Code of Conduct effective January 1, 2025.

**– MOTION CARRIED –**

**g) APPROVAL OF YCDSB'S HONORARY CHAIR TITLES**

E. Crowe, Board Chair and J. De Faveri, Interim Director presented for approval, the appointment of the Honorary Chair and Honorary Chair Emeritus for the York Catholic District School Board.

**MOTION: lafrate/Saggese**

**THAT** Frank Cardinal Leo be named Honorary Chair of the York Catholic District School Board for the term ending November 14, 2026.

**THAT** Archbishop Emeritus Thomas Cardinal Collins be named Honorary Chair Emeritus for the term ending November 14, 2026.

**– MOTION CARRIED –**

**RECESS AT 8:57 PM****RESUME REGULAR BOARD MEETING AT 9:00 PM**

Board Chair, Elizabeth Crowe asked for a Motion to amend the Regular Board Agenda for December 17, 2024 to move 16b TRUSTEE MOTION: Audit of YCDSB Purchasing Credit Cards to Discussion 17a instead of Action.

**MOTION: lafrate/Cotton**

**THAT** Item 16b be moved to Item 17a for Discussion.

**- MOTION CARRIED -**

**2025:071 DISCUSSION ITEM(S):****a) TRUSTEE MOTION: Audit of YCDSB Purchasing Credit Cards (PCards)**

Chair Crowe stated that there had been a lot of discussion and direction was given to CFO McNeil to put together a draft RFP and an estimated cost. Trustees Crowe and lafrate will work with CFO McNeil to ensure the scope captures the intent of their Notice of Motion. If needed the motion will be edited to reflect the scope of the proposed audit.

This Motion will be a Discussion Item on the January 28, 2025 Regular Board Agenda.

**2025:072 INFORMATION ITEM(S):****a) Student Trustees Expenditures Report (2023-2024)**

C. McNeil, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer of the Board presented the expenditures report for each Student Trustee for the time period from September 1, 2023 to August 31, 2024.

**b) January 2025 Calendar**

The January 2025 calendar was provided.

**2025:073 NOTICES OF MOTION: NIL****2025:074 FUTURE AGENDA ITEM(S) / REQUEST FOR INFORMATION****2025:075 PRAYER TO ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL**

**2025:076 ADJOURNMENT – 9:03 PM**  
**ON MOTION: Saggese/Grella and CARRIED**

**December 17, 2024,**

*Good evening, Trustees, Chairperson, and members of the Board,*

*Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you tonight. My name is Liezl Sebial, and I come to you as a concerned parent, a working professional in Child Protection, and as someone deeply invested in the safety and well-being of our children. I am presenting to you this evening not just to capture my own child's experience, but especially, to advocate on behalf of parent's who may not have the ability or time to present to you folks at the time provided or may not be able to make adjustments due to their employment and/or considerations for each of their children. I understand and respect that the current bussing policy is driven by the Board's guidelines, specifically the 1.6-kilometer distance requirement. However, I must bring to your attention the challenges families face due to this policy and the very real risks it presents to children's safety and their education.*

### **Safety Risks and Child Well-being**

*My son is in Grade x, and we live 1.5 kilometers away from his school which is a 21-minute walk. Every day, he is expected to walk 3 kilometers total, to and from school. During the winter months, this distance is not only difficult but problematic. Dependent on the weather, the cold, icy conditions make walking a safety hazard, especially for children who may not have access to proper winter gear or who are simply not equipped to endure the long trek in harsh weather. For example, my son's experience is one where this routine has taken a significant toll. By the time he arrives at school, he is exhausted—physically and mentally—impacting his ability to focus, participate in class, and engage fully in learning. When he gets home, he's too tired to complete homework, which affects his academic progress and overall morale. This experience can be augmented for families that due to different socio-economic status may not be able to make constant alternate arrangement for their children or may not be able to provide appropriate winter gear that can sustain long walks in winter weather, or for children who may have different physical and cognitive needs that require more breaks, or different supports to engage them in learning.*

*In addition, I am deeply concerned for my daughter, who is currently in Grade x. When she reaches Grade x, she will be expected to walk the same distance—1.5 kilometers to and from school every day. At just x years old, she will have to navigate the same safety risks and challenges., I would have to make alternate arrangements that can ensure she does not walk alone, and I do not have the answer to that yet, I am hoping that by then, significant change in bussing policy would have happened already. Other parents, due to factors like immigration may not have community supports that can accommodate their children not walking by themselves and may not have employment flexibility to accompany them themselves. I ask you to imagine your own children at x years old walking alone on busy roads, in cold winters, or through poorly supervised areas. Given your own positionality, you may not also allow your children to walk alone as you may have the supports required, flexible employment, or the financial means to make alternate arrangements. Whereas many parents do not have those privileges. The dangers children could face walking alone—whether from traffic, harsh weather, or strangers—are enough to strike fear into the heart of any parent. Every day, I would live with the worry of whether my daughter will make it home safely.*

**A Growing Safety Concern: Child Trafficking**

*As someone working in Child Protection, I cannot ignore the risks in our society today. The rise in child trafficking and exploitation is a reality that we must not overlook. Those who prey on our children take opportunities like these to lure or take our children away. Vulnerable children walking alone, especially in early mornings or late afternoons where in winter months it gets darker earlier, can become easy targets for traffickers or predators. Prevention is better than reaction. It is our responsibility to be proactive and ensure policies prioritize the safety of children, rather than waiting for an incident to happen.*

**Impact on Families and Working Parents**

*Many families share this struggle. As a working parent, I do not always have access to a vehicle, nor can I consistently take time off work to drive my son. Other families face similar or more complex challenges—they rely on public transit, juggle demanding schedules, and do everything they can to ensure their children's safety. But the current policy adds unnecessary pressure, forcing children to walk distances that may be unsafe and unreasonable, particularly in winter.*

**A Call to Action: Review the Policy**

*I respectfully appeal to this Board to conduct a thorough review of the school bussing policy to ensure it is equitable, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of families affected by these policies. Some considerations include using discretionary power on a case-by-case basis reviewing all the safety concerns outlined by the parent and mitigating factors if any. These may include, adjusting policies that consider the overall health of the child, ages and stages of the child, for example 9-10 is still too young to walk on their own, as well as whether the children have older siblings accompanying them to school, or perhaps making exceptions for winter months. Policies should be flexible enough to address legitimate safety concerns and exceptional circumstances—like those faced by working parents, families with limited supports, limited transportations and other considerations for their children. The safety of children must always come first. I ask you to consider whether this policy truly serves the best interests of our children or whether it prioritizes budgetary constraints over their well-being.*

**Conclusion**

*As Trustees, you have a duty to prioritize the safety, education, and overall well-being of every child in the York Catholic District School Board. Every parent's greatest wish is for their children to arrive home safe and sound. I trust you will listen to the voices of families you serve, and I urge you to revisit this policy before winter conditions worsen and school resumes in January.*

*Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you and to seeing meaningful steps taken to protect the safety and well-being of all children in York Region.*

*Respectfully submitted by:*

*Liezl Sebial*