

**YORK CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
AGENDA**

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, June 13, 2023

Immediately Following Special CTW

REVISED

Watch the Board Meeting
STREAM
event on our YCDSB TV Channel:
<http://bit.ly/YCDSB-TV>

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*We are gathered on the ancestral lands and waters of all Indigenous Peoples, who have left their footprints on Mother Earth before us.
We respectfully acknowledge, those who have walked on it, those who walk on it now, and future generations who have yet to walk upon it.
We pray to the Creator for strength and wisdom that all may continue to serve as stewards of the earth.*

1. OPENING PRAYER
2. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT F. Alexander
3. ROLL CALL D. Scuglia
4. APPROVAL OF NEW MATERIAL F. Alexander
5. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA F. Alexander
6. DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST FOR CURRENT MEETING F. Alexander
7. DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST FROM PREVIOUS MEETING F. Alexander
8. APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MINUTES: N/A
9. BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING
10. CHAIR'S REPORT / UPDATE / INSPIRATIONAL MESSAGES: N/A
11. OCSTA BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S UPDATE: N/A
12. DIRECTOR'S REPORT / UPDATE: N/A
13. STUDENT TRUSTEES' REPORT: N/A
14. RECOGNITIONS / OUTSIDE PRESENTATIONS: N/A
15. DELEGATIONS: N/A
16. JOURNEY TOWARDS OUR VISION – STAFF PRESENTATIONS
17. ACTION ITEM(S) (*including Committee Reports*)
a) Approval of Report No. 2023:17 Special Committee of the Whole (June 13) M. Iafrate
18. DISCUSSION ITEM (S)
19. INFORMATION ITEM(S)
a) Student-Led Walk-Out: June 8, 2023 D. Scuglia
20. NOTICES OF MOTION
(Notices of Motion are to be submitted in writing and will return to the subsequent meeting as Information, the following meeting as Discussion, and finally Action at the next Board Meeting.)
21. FUTURE AGENDA ITEM(S) / REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
22. ADJOURNMENT F. Alexander

**Lord, fill us with Your supernatural
power to overcome each obstacle
in our path.
With our eyes on You Lord, and You
walking beside us, we can make it.
Amen**

YORK CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Report To: Board of Trustees (Special Board)

From: Administration

Date: June 13, 2023

Report: Student-Led Walkout: June 8, 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report has been prepared in response to a request by the Board Chair, to provide the Board of Trustees with details about the student-led walkouts that occurred on Thursday June 8, 2023 at all York Catholic District School Board secondary schools.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

CHRONOLOGY

As the month of June approached, there were several rumours and social media posts indicating that protests and walkouts were possible:

1. May 31, 2023 a chalk drawing appeared on the sidewalk outside the CEC. The drawing referred to a possible protest at the CEC on June 1. As a precautionary measure, staff were alerted and the doors to the CEC were locked the following morning.

Outcome: No protest materialized, and the doors were unlocked at approximately 9:30 a.m.

2. On June 1, 2023 a Twitter post indicated a potential protest could occur on June 2. A media statement was prepared, and Trustees were informed.

Outcome: No protest materialized.

3. On May 31 an Instagram Post by a student group indicated a student walkout would be organized for June 8, 2023. The Instagram account was monitored. When it became apparent that protests were likely to take place, the administration took the following steps:

(a) On June 7, 2023, an email was sent to all secondary Principals. A copy is attached at Appendix A.

(b) A media statement was prepared, and subsequently released. A copy is attached at Appendix B.

Outcome: On June 8, 2023, student walkouts occurred at all YCDSB secondary schools, varying in size and scope.

IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

Attendance was taken on the afternoon of June 8. Students not in class or who left class were marked absent. Teachers remained in their classes teaching. Those teachers who did not have classes remained on school property and some assisted in monitoring safety.

Student participants included those involved in peaceful demonstration during the afternoon of June 8, 2023 and students who engaged in harassing or aggressive behavior towards students peacefully protesting. Most of the students involved in harassing or aggressive behaviours have been identified through video and/or witness accounts.

STUDENT SAFETY

As per the email to Principals copied at Appendix A, teachers were advised to continue with their instruction, and administrators were advised that students' have a right to engage in peaceful demonstration. Principals were asked to monitor activities for any student safety concerns.

Protests took place off school grounds. There have been no reports that protesting students engaged in harassing, aggressive or violent behavior, or vandalism.

Several YCDSB secondary schools reported instances of protesting students being subjected to bullying and harassment by students who had come to disrupt their protest. Examples include:

- at Cardinal Carter - protesting students called police to report that rocks were being thrown at them
- at St. Brother Andre - police were called by the school administration to support a student who had been escorted to the office after being assaulted with a projectile. Video evidence circulated on Global News [Global News Report June 8, 2023](#)
- at St. Elizabeth - police were called to investigate reports of taunting, name calling and hate speech

As mandated by the *Education Act* and Board policy, principals are investigating student behaviour to determine whether disciplinary consequences should be considered.

Police are also investigating incidents in which students were threatened or harmed.

CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* states as follows:

2 Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:

(a) freedom of conscience and religion;

(b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication;

(c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and

(d) freedom of association.

The right to assemble peacefully and express a belief or opinion or to protest government actions or decisions is enshrined in the *Charter*.

Section 29 of the Charter states that “*Nothing in this Charter abrogates or derogates from any rights or privileges guaranteed by or under the Constitution of Canada in respect of denominational, separate or dissentient schools.*”

Section 93 of the *Constitution* protects the rights of denominational schools which existed at the time of the union.

The right of YCDSB students to publicly express their opinion about a decision of the Board of Trustees does not “abrogate or derogate” from their right or the rights of other students to be provided with a Catholic education.

MINISTRY DIRECTION

On May 30, 2023, the Minister of Education emailed all public and Catholic school boards and stated:

“It is incumbent on all school boards to ensure all students – most especially 2SLGBTQ+ students – feel supported, reflected in their schools, and welcomed within our communities. That includes celebrating Pride in constructive, positive and meaningful ways to affirm that 2SLGBTQ+ students know that their educators and staff, school board administrators, and government stand with them.”

BOARD POLICY

At St. Brother Andre, in the central foyer, the Pride flags are hanging from the upper balcony at a distance of 3’8” and 4’ from the Crucifix.

This is consistent with the Board’s Flag Policy.

ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS CODE

The Ontario *Human Rights Code* provides that every person has the right to equal treatment with respect to the provision of services, including educational services, without discrimination because of a prohibited ground, such as race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Imposing disciplinary consequences on a student for peacefully protesting the decision of the Trustees not to fly a pride flag would likely result in an allegation that the Board violated that student’s right to freedom of expression pursuant to the *Charter*, as well as discriminated against the student pursuant to the *Code* by imposing discipline (a barrier to receiving educational services) for expressing support for a ground protected under the *Code*.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

The administration has not received any reports, nor is it aware of any incidence of a Principal, Vice Principal or teacher acting contrary to the direction received from the senior team.

ACTION PLAN

Numerous students have been identified as having participated in:

- taunting
- name calling
- deliberate destruction of property
- throwing of objects

These incidents have been investigated by police and school administrators. The reports of bullying and harassment of students who were engaged in peaceful protest must be addressed and remedied as we are required to uphold the Ontario *Human Rights Code* and make our Catholic schools safe and welcoming for all.

York Regional Police continue to be involved in the ongoing investigation of the above incidents and Progressive discipline, in accordance with our Policies and Procedures, has been applied to those individuals who participated and contributed in a negative fashion to the peaceful protest.

SUMMARY

As a Catholic school system we celebrate and acknowledge that June is the month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus where the message is clear that God loves all children,. This includes children and adults who identify as members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

Prepared by: Jennifer Sama, Associate Director
Endorsed by: Domenic Scuglia, Director

APPENDIX A

Email to Secondary Principals

Possible Student Walkout

We are aware that our students are planning various walkouts in response to the status of the Progress Pride Flag tomorrow, **June 8, 2023 beginning at 1:15 pm.** Instagram posts from an external source (@ycdsbstudentsforchange) have been circulating on Instagram and outline general information about the protest and designated protest locations by school. Please click [here to access the posts.](#)

Students have a right to a respectful and peaceful protest. If students choose to protest and walk out of the school, we ask that the administration team be outside the school building to monitor the protest to ensure student safety. Please note that lessons, classes and activities continue as usual in all of our schools.

APPENDIX B

York Catholic District School Board Statement re: Student Demonstrations

AURORA, ONT. – The York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB) is aware of student demonstrations regarding the status of the Progress Pride Flag. Students have the right to peaceful assembly and to protest as they express their opinions. Lessons, classes and activities continue as usual in all our schools.