

YORK CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

MINUTES

of the Inaugural Board Meeting in 2024

Wednesday, November 18, 2024 at the Catholic Education Centre, 320 Bloomington Road W, Aurora, Ontario

PRESENT:

Members:

Trustees for the Term 2022 – 2026

Elizabeth Crowe, Trustee for Aurora, King and Whitchurch-Stouffville
 Carol Cotton, Trustee for Markham Area 1: Wards 1,2,3, 6
 Frank Alexander, Trustee for Markham Area 2: Wards 4,5,7,8
 Maria Iafrate, Trustee for Richmond Hill
 Joseph DiMeo, Trustee for Richmond Hill (Virtual)
 Angela Saggese, Trustee for Vaughan Area 1: Ward 1
 Michaela Barbieri, Trustee for Vaughan Area 2: Ward 2
 Angela Grella, Trustee for Vaughan Area 3: Wards 3,4,5
 Jennifer Wigston, Trustee for Vaughan Area 3: Ward 3,4,5

Student Trustees:

Monica Galstyan, Senior Student Trustee
 Sabine Cuesta, Junior Student Trustee

Administration:

J. De Faveri, J. Sarna, R. Antunes, A. Arcadi, A. Battick, M. Brosens,
 J. Chiutsi, G. De Girolamo, K. Elgharbawy, A. Iafrate, T. Laliberte, C. McNeil, S. Morrow,
 L. Paonessa, J. Powers, L. Sawicky, S. Wright

Legal Counsel:

Melissa Eldridge, BLG

Absent:

Theresa McNicol, Trustee for East Gwillimbury, Georgina and Newmarket
 Approved Medical Leave of Absence

Recording Officer:

S. Greco

Presiding:

John De Faveri, Interim Director of Education and Secretary of the Board for the Election of the Chair of the Board of the Board.

2025:001

CALL TO ORDER

The Secretary of the Board opened the Inaugural Meeting of the Board for the Election of Officers for years 2024-2025 at 7:00 pm and thanked Father Ernie for celebrating Mass. Appreciation was extended to the Religious Education Team, St. Br. Andre Vocal Class and Teachers Ms. Comella and Ms. Leung, and Retired Principal Mr. Cordi. The Opening Prayer and Land Acknowledgement was recited.

2025:002

ROLL CALL / INTRODUCTION OF TRUSTEES FOR THE 2022-2026 TERM

- Elizabeth Crowe, Trustee for Aurora, King and Whitchurch-Stouffville
- Theresa McNicol, Trustee for East Gwillimbury, Georgina and Newmarket (MLOA)
- Carol Cotton, Trustee for Markham Area 1: Wards 1,2,3, 6
- Frank Alexander, Trustee for Markham Area 2: Wards 4,5,7,8
- Maria Iafrate, Trustee for Richmond Hill
- Joseph DiMeo, Trustee for Richmond Hill
- Angela Saggese, Trustee for Vaughan Area 1: Ward 1
- Michaela Barbieri, Trustee for Vaughan Area 2: Ward 2 (Virtual)
- Angela Grella, Trustee for Vaughan Area 3: Wards 3,4,5
- Jennifer Wigston, Trustee for Vaughan Area 3: Ward 3,4,5
- Monica Galstyan, Senior Student Trustee
- Sabine Cuesta, Junior Student Trustee

2025:003 DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS:

Interim Director J. De Faveri welcomed everyone to the Inaugural Board meeting and remarked as follows:

Each year, at the Inaugural Board Meeting, we start a new chapter in the storied history of the York Catholic District School Board by electing a Chair and Vice-Chair of the Board. I want to thank all of our Trustees, with a special thank you to Elizabeth Crowe for serving as the Chair and Maria Iafrate for serving as the Vice-Chair. These are complex and demanding positions, we are grateful that you offered your time and talents to the YCDSB by taking on these leadership roles.

To all our Trustees, I look forward to continue working with you in the best interests of Catholic education and the many people enriched by it. Thank you for your continued dedicated service to the York Catholic District School Board. Now to look back at the year that was..

The 2023-24 school year was marked by many successful, uplifting moments that demonstrated the ability of Catholic education to nurture a student's whole person in a positive, life-affirming environment.

New Schools

Perhaps our most exciting celebration during this school year was the opening of the Stouffville Multi-Use Facility, which is home to Blessed Chiara Badano Catholic Elementary School, St. Katharine Drexel Catholic High School and Blessed Chiara Badano Child Care Centre. Opening its door to young Stouffville residents on March 6, 2024, this building will one day be home to 1,273 grade 1-12 students and 49 preschoolers in the child care centre. Although the road to that opening wasn't always smooth, the building now provides the bright, welcoming and modern learning environment that the growing Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville needs.

The YCDSB also had the opportunity to dream of more new schools in the future, as the Government of Ontario generously committed \$47.2 million in funding for two new schools in the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre. We are happy to work with the York Region District School Board on this joint project. One day, we hope to have 497 YCDSB elementary student spaces in this school. Projects of this scope take years to complete, but we look forward to providing more details as we work to bring these schools to life.

Also, we continue to make progress on opening a new elementary school in Queensville, Ont. Design work on the school continues, with construction expected to commence in 2025.

We Are Diverse. We Are One in Christ

We celebrated diversity in the 2023-24 school year with a renewed "We Are Diverse. We Are One in Christ" campaign. An anonymous artist graciously gifted the YCDSB with original artwork that beautifully demonstrates that we are all one in Christ. That artwork now appears on stickers, agendas and banners that are found throughout our schools. We are grateful to our Board of Trustees for generating the idea, which encapsulates the mission of Catholic education and has been received with great enthusiasm by our community.

Living Our Faith

Our students, staff and community members did an amazing job living out Gospel values by helping those in need. Once again, every YCDSB fundraised for ShareLife. In 2023-24, the YCDSB was the top fundraising school board in the Archdiocese of Toronto for ShareLife, raising \$167,000. And we raised another \$200,000 in support of the Terry Fox Foundation. The generosity of the York Catholic community demonstrates our community's commitment to living our faith. It is something that I know we are all very proud of.

Student Achievement

Speaking of being proud of our community, the YCDSB's EQAO and OSSLT results again led the province, as did our five-year graduation rate. We received funding to continue the International Extended Day Language Program, so students can have access to tri-lingual education. And every one of our elementary schools were able to visit a STREAM Centre.

In so many ways, the YCDSB shows the province what publicly-funded Catholic education should be.

Well-Being

Students and staff perform their best in environments that value and support their well-being. Well-being comes in many forms, and the YCDSB was busy throughout the 2023-24 school year enhancing the well-being of our students and staff. We saw mental health ambassadors promoting positive mental health in almost every one of our schools. Staff attendance at mental health literacy training increased by 20 per cent over the previous year. And we explored how to better serve our students by conducting a Student Census, an Exit Survey and a School Climate Survey.

Indigenous Winter Games

In the previous school year, we advanced equity and inclusion in a number of ways. But I think the most joyous example was the Indigenous Winter Games, where the grade 6 students from the feeder schools of St. Joan of Arc CHS in Maple, Ont., spent a day participating in traditional Indigenous winter sports. This event was a fun way of increasing knowledge of and respect for Indigenous cultures. We plan to host three Indigenous Winter Games during this school year.

Deficit

We spent considerable time working with an audit team to understand the YCDSB's current deficit and to brainstorm ways to reduce it. We are only at the beginning of the process of eliminating this deficit, but I know we are all committed to overcoming this challenge in the most responsible way possible.

Celebrating Faith

Finally, in recent weeks, we saw our community celebrate our faith in two exciting, long-lasting ways. First, by working with community partners, we distributed pictures of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in all of the schools to show our students and staff every day that Jesus loves them.

And we unveiled the new artwork that is found in this boardroom, which was created by very talented secondary school students and personifies our faith in an incredibly beautiful and striking way.

All of this shows me that despite the challenges that come with running a large school board, the York Catholic District School Board is succeeding in creating a space where faith, well-being, equity and academic excellence can thrive. It has been an honour to be your Interim Director of Education because I am overwhelmed by the incredible things that the York Catholic team does day after day. To our Board of Trustees, thank you for your confidence in me. And to our staff, thank you for sharing your talents to make our community a better place.

2025:004 ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR YEAR 2024-2025

We will now turn our attention to the task of electing our Board Chair for 2024-2025.

Our Operating By-Law #1, Section 2, states that the Director of Education shall preside until the election of the Board Chair. The Board shall elect a Chair.

The following are the procedures for the election:

- *A seconder is NOT required for nomination.*
- *Trustees joining the meeting remotely will be permitted to be nominated as Chair of the Board or Vice Chair of the Board.*
- *Trustees joining the meeting remotely may participate in the secret ballot process.*
- *All nominees will be permitted to address the Board members before voting for a maximum of two minutes each.*
- *All nominators will be permitted to introduce the nominee for one minute.*
- *Election shall require a clear majority of the votes cast.*
- *Trustees will email their vote to the Board's legal counsel, Melissa L. Eldridge, who has joined our meeting in-person to oversee the voting process. Trustees should have received Melissa's email address in an email from Mark Brosens Senior Manager of Brand, Marketing and Communications, which was sent just before Mass began.*
- *Two scrutineers from the Senior Team will observe the vote tabulation.*

- *In the event of three or more candidates, the candidate receiving the lowest number of votes will be eliminated, and another vote will be held until there is a clear majority.*
- *If there are three or more candidates – and after the vote, there is still no clear majority -- but there is a tie between the candidates receiving the lowest vote -- so that no candidate can be eliminated -- a second vote by ballot will be held.*
- *If there is still a tie after that vote, I will draw lots between the candidates who have a tie vote, and the candidate whose name is drawn will be eliminated.*
- *In the event of two candidates and after the vote, there is no clear majority, a second vote by ballot will be held.*
- *If there is still a tie after that vote, I will draw lots between the candidates with a tie vote, and the candidate whose name is drawn will be eliminated.*

a) Election of Chair of the Board

The Interim Director called for nominations for the office of Chair of the Board.

Nominations:

- i) Maria lafrate nominated Elizabeth Crowe.
Elizabeth Crowe accepted the nomination.

****See Appendix A for nomination remarks.**

The Director repeated thrice the call for nominations for Chair of the Board. Nominations for Chair of the Board were closed on **Motion by lafrate/Wigston** and **CARRIED**.

There being no other nominations, the Interim Director declared Elizabeth Crowe, Chair of the York Catholic District School Board for the year 2025. Elizabeth Crowe was acclaimed Chair of the Board.

b) Election of Vice-Chair of the Board

The Interim Director called for nominations for the office of Vice-Chair of the Board.

Nominations:

- i) Maria lafrate was nominated by Carol Cotton.
Maria lafrate accepted the nomination.

***See Appendix A for nomination remarks.**

The Director thrice repeated the call for nominations for Vice- Chair of the Board. Nominations for Vice- Chair of the Board were closed on **Motion by Cotton/Grella** and **CARRIED**.

There being no other nominations, the Director declared Maria lafrate, Vice-Chair of the York Catholic District School Board for the year 2025. Maria lafrate was acclaimed Vice-Chair of the Board.

Acclaimed Chair of the Board, Elizabeth Crowe provided brief comments -

"This is a special moment for me to be acclaimed as Board Chair for another year. Entering my 31st year as a Trustee, I reflect on the past and I know that we are facing some of the most challenging times in our history. Not only do we have to face the prospect of addressing a deficit, we are also going through a lot of societal pressures that challenge our core beliefs. We are being questioned about the very existence of Catholic education by the general public, especially in the last few weeks. I am totally committed to working with each and every one of the Trustees at this table and all the members of the Senior Team. I know that we are the best Board in the province, not just the best Catholic Board, but the best Board in the province. I am sure that we

will work together to address this deficit while remaining focused on our strategic plan and putting the needs of our students first. I thank everybody for your support.”

Acclaimed Vice-Chair of the Board Maria lafrate remarked as follows:

“I echo Chair Crowe. Thank you Trustee Cotton for the nomination, I really appreciate your kind words. . I really learned a lot this past year from each one of you. I’m committed to working with everyone, my colleagues at this table and members of the senior team, to get us out of these murky waters. I know we will be on the other side very soon. Thank you.

Presiding: Elizabeth Crowe, Acclaimed Chair of the Board

2025:005 APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: Wigston/DiMeo

THAT the agenda be approved as presented.

- MOTION CARRIED –

2025:006 ACTION ITEM(S):

a) TRUSTEE APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES

Chair Elizabeth Crowe proposed the appointments to Board Committees for the year November 2024 to November 2025 as follows:

STANDING COMMITTEES

MOTION: Barbieri/Cotton (ON BLOCK)

THAT the Trustee appointments to the Standing Committees for the year November 2024 to November 2025 be as follows:

- a) **Corporate Services** - All Trustees
- b) **Executive Committee** (*Chair of the Board, Vice-Chair of the Board and 1 Trustee*)
Chair, M. lafrate, A. Saggese
- c) **Human Resources Committee** (*5 Trustees*)
F. Alexander, M. Barbieri, E. Crowe, M. lafrate, J. Wigston
- d) **Joint Board Consortium Committee** (*Chair of the Board and 2 Trustees*)
Chair, A. Grella, A. Saggese
- e) **Policy Review Committee** (*7 Trustees*)
F. Alexander, M. Barbieri, C. Cotton, A. Grella, J. DiMeo, A. Saggese, J. Wigston
- f) **Student Success & Pathways Committee** (*5 Trustees*)
F. Alexander, M. Barbieri, M. lafrate, T. McNicol, A. Saggese
- g) **Surplus Asset Review Committee** (*3 Trustees*)
C. Cotton, J. DiMeo, T. McNicol

STATUTORY COMMITTEES

THAT the Trustee appointments to the Statutory Committees for the year November 2024 to November 2025 be as follows:

- a) **Audit Committee** (*3 Trustees*)
C. Cotton, M. Iafrate, J. Wigston
- b) **Board Safe Schools Committee** (*3 Trustees and 1 Alternate*)
E. Crowe, A. Grella, M. Iafrate
Alternate Member: J. Wigston
- c) **Supervised Alternative Learning for Excused Pupils** (*1 Trustee and 1 Alternate*)
J. Wigston
Alternate Member: E. Crowe
- d) **York Catholic Parent Involvement Committee** (*1 Trustee*)
E. Crowe

STAFF COMMITTEE

THAT the Trustee appointments to the Staff Committee for the year November 2024 to November 2025 be as follows:

- a) **YCDSB Distinguished Alumni Selection Committee**
J. DiMeo, A. Saggese

THAT the Trustee appointments to the Staff Committees for two years starting November 2024 and ending November 2026 as follows:

- a) **Religious Education Advisory Committee** (*1 Trustee*)
A. Saggese

- MOTION CARRIED -

2025:007 PRAYER TO ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

2025:008 ADJOURNMENT:7:27 P.M.
ON MOTION: Barbieri/Saggese and CARRIED

Secretary of the Board

Chair of the Board

APPENDIX A**NOMINATION REMARKS FOR THE POSITION OF CHAIR****Nomination of Elizabeth Crowe****Nomination Remarks by Maria lafrate**

"I am honored to nominate Elizabeth Crowe for the position of Chair as she approaches a remarkable milestone—30 years as a YCDSB Trustee this December. Elizabeth's deep knowledge of the Board and its history is unparalleled. She has a unique ability to recall everything from the smallest details to pivotal moments that have shaped the YCDSB. Currently, she is leading the alumni interviews for our Archive initiative—a fitting role for someone who has played such an integral part in the Board's legacy. Throughout her tenure, Elizabeth has navigated both the Board's glory days and its challenges with wisdom and resilience. Her engineering expertise has been a valuable asset during the construction of many YCDSB schools, including her most recent favorites, St. Katharine Drexel CHS and Blessed Chiara Badano CES. These schools stand as a testament to her commitment to creating safe, inclusive spaces where students can grow in their faith and realize their God-given potential. Elizabeth is deeply committed to her community, and she often mentions Parent Council meetings as one of the most rewarding part of her role, connecting directly with families and celebrating their successes. She ensures that every voice is heard and that all are treated with fairness and respect. As we navigate challenging times, I am confident in Elizabeth's leadership to guide us toward calmer waters. Her dedication, and passion make her the ideal candidate for Chair. Thank you for your consideration."

NOMINATION REMARKS FOR THE POSITION OF VICE-CHAIR**Nomination of Maria lafrate****Nomination Remarks by Carol Cotton**

" I am very pleased and honoured to put forth the name of Trustee Maria lafrate to continue in the position of Vice-Chair. Even though we all know Maria very well, there are still a couple of things I would like to highlight as part of my nomination. As an individual, I think that we can all agree that Maria is a highly passionate person. I know sometimes that gets her into trouble, but at the bottom of it, she cares deeply and passionately that every student in this Board, regardless of which area they live in, has an equitable opportunity to succeed. I see that evidenced all the time and I thank her for it. We could also take a page out of Maria's book as an example of how a Trustee should conduct their diligent and thorough preparation for meetings. I know of no other Trustee who reads and prepares and researches the reports she has been given and the progress that we track prior to meetings more than Trustee lafrate does. I really respect her for it, because for anyone who doesn't understand the role of Trustee, I don't think you could actually imagine the sizeable stacks of paper that we wade through over the course of three or four months. I'd like to thank Maria for making those efforts and for often pointing out things that are either incongruent or are evidence of items that we need to spend a lot more time focusing on. Over the past year as Vice-Chair, I would like to offer my congratulations to her for what has been, I think, a significant growth in personal self-confidence and knowledge. I have seen her skill as a Chair develop considerably and those of you who know me well, know my commitment to efficient meetings and so I look forward to enjoying Trustee lafrate's leadership in that area for the year to come."