

OUR MISSION

The Toronto Catholic District School Board is an inclusive learning community uniting home, parish and school and rooted in the love of Christ.
We educate students to grow in grace and knowledge to lead lives of faith, hope and charity.

OUR VISION

At Toronto Catholic we transform the world
through witness, faith, innovation and action.



AGENDA ADDENDUM THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND WELL BEING, CATHOLIC EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

PUBLIC SESSION

Nancy Crawford, Chair

Michael Del Grande, Vice-Chair

Thursday, February 3, 2022

7:00 P.M.

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18.a. <i>From Magdalena Pszczolkowska, Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Toronto regarding Letter of Support to Proclaim Katyń Massacre and Smolensk Air Disaster Commemoration Day in all Toronto Catholic District School Board Schools on April 10th</i>	5
18.b. <i>From Tadeudz Opitz, Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired) regarding Letter of Support to Proclaim Katyń Massacre and Smolensk Air Disaster Commemoration Day in all Toronto Catholic District School Board Schools on April 10th</i>	6 - 7



DELEGATION REGISTRATION FORM FOR BOARD, STANDING OR OTHER COMMITTEES

Response Summary:

First Name:

Daniel

Last Name:

Demczuk

Please select the applicable Board, Standing, Statutory, Sub or Ad Hoc Committee at which you are requesting to depute.

Student Achievement and Well-Being Catholic Education Human Resources Committee

Do you wish to Delegate by electronic means?

Yes

Do you require assistance from the Recording Secretary's Office? If yes, please contact the Recording Secretary's Office at delegations@tcdsb.org or the Recording Secretary at sophia.harris@tcdsb.org.

No

Do you wish to make your deputation in private session because the matter involves the disclosure of intimate, personal or financial information in respect of a member of the Board or Committee, an employee or prospective employee of the Board or a pupil of his or her parent or guardian?

No

Date of Deputation:

02-03-2022

Topic of Deputation:

To commemorate Katyn Massacre and Smolensk Air Disaster in TCDSB schools.



DELEGATION REGISTRATION FORM FOR BOARD, STANDING OR OTHER COMMITTEES

Key Issue(s):

To proclaim Katyń Massacre and Smolensk Air Disaster Commemoration Day in All TCDSB schools on April 10 and every year thereafter

Brief Summary of the Topic of Deputation:

Providing the supporting speech with the perspective of the Polish youth in Canada, in regards to the the postulated issue. I am Polish and aware of the proposed motion. I enjoy history and felt it is important to support the Polish community by providing the perspective.

Action Requested:

Be it resolved that all schools at the TCDSB have a moment of silence and reflection for the victims of Katyń Massacre and Smolensk Air Disaster and/or a commemoration day on April 10, 2022 and every year thereafter.

Please select one of the following options:

I am here as a delegation to speak only on my own behalf.

Submission Date:

01-28-2022

Good evening, I am here to support the motion to make Smolensk Air Disaster and Katyn Massacre a commemoration day on April 10th this year and each year thereafter in all TCDSB schools.

The Katyn Massacre has been an event that is tragic on many levels: it is a war crime, an inhumane campaign of the ideology to reshape others and a tragedy for thousands of families. Following the Soviet invasion of Poland in September of 1939, the Soviet secret police has decided to purge the newly acquired territories of people that could lead any form of resistance. They have rounded up about 22 thousand of members of intelligentsia: police officers, lawyers, priests, and officers who were taken as prisoners of war. In May 1940, those people executed on the scale that could be called industrial. It was a plan. A plan that costed lives. The bodies were dumped in mass graves in Katyn Forest, left to never be discovered. When the truth came to light in 1943 Soviets denied Polish request to have independent committee from Red Cross to investigate the bodies. When turning to its allies, US and UK, Polish Government in exile received no backing as they valued the alliance with the Soviets more. In post war times, the massacre stayed unrecognized, illegal thing to talk about in communist Poland.

This tragedy stays as a scar on Polish community. It is loss of so many lives of young people and over 45 years of denying the knowledge about the fate of those people to their families. It continues, without recognition of how much of an atrocity it was. To add to that, another tragedy has stricken in 2010 with the Smolensk Air Disaster. A tragic loss of lives of highest officials in the country from all political backgrounds, including: the President of the Republic of Poland: Lech Kaczyński, First Lady – Maria Kaczyńska, Last President in Exile – Ryszard Kaczorowski, Marshal of the National Assembly, and heads of armed forces.

Katyn massacre is an atrocity that has been committed in following ideological orders, forgetting that the people on the other side are also human beings. It is important for people to learn about it as we live in the world, which is increasingly remote and impersonal, in the times where narration of "us" versus "them" is on the rise and it is easy to lose sight of people different from us as individuals. That dehumanization is the first step towards every tragedy, as it allows people to rationalize things that would otherwise be unthinkable.

Tragedies like Katyn have implications that carries over for generations. Losing a parent, not being able to learn your own history, it all leaves an impact. It is a wound that is mangled and scarred. Teaching young people about those

catastrophes, brings us closer towards the world where we don't repeat the mistakes of our past. But for that, the healing needs to happen. Commemorating those tragedies would be a step in the right direction and great service to all people of Polish ancestry.

Thank you



Consulate General
of the Republic of Poland
in Toronto

Toronto, 28 January 2022

Mr. Brendan Browne
Director of Education
Toronto Catholic District School Board
80 Sheppard Ave. E
Toronto, ON

LETTER OF SUPPORT

I am writing to express my support for establishing at Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) April 10th as a day of remembrance of the Katyń massacre victims and the Smoleńsk air disaster.

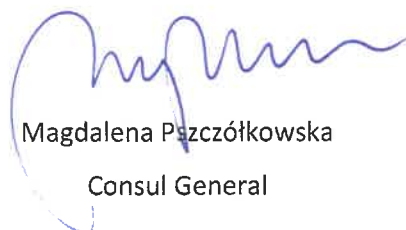
Katyń massacre is one of the most painful pages in Polish history that cannot be forgotten. The size of the tragedy in which officers of the Polish Army, policemen, representatives of the Polish intelligentsia and cultural elites were killed by the Soviets in the spring of 1940, was covered with silence by communists for many years. In 1980 Toronto became a home for the first Katyń Monument erected abroad in the public place.

Unfortunately, there is another painful date in the recent history of Poland. On 10 April 2010, a government Tu-154M plane crashed near Smolensk, Russia, killing 96 passengers, including Polish President Lech Kaczyński and the First Lady Maria Kaczyńska, the last President of Poland in Exile Ryszard Kaczorowski, the Deputy Speakers of the Sejm and Senate, a group of parliamentarians as well as many others. A Polish official delegation was flying to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Katyń massacre.

The memory of these two painful tragedies is extremely important for every member of the Polish community, both living in Poland and abroad. Decision on establishing at Toronto Catholic District School Board April 10th as a day of remembrance of the Katyń massacre victims and the Smoleńsk air disaster will be a very meaningful gesture for members of Polish community, both students and parents, in TCDSB's district.

Canada as a multicultural country with high respect to values, different cultures, as well as diversity leads national wide example of tolerance and remembrance policy. As a Consul General of the Republic of Poland I fully support TCDSB's diversity and its commitment towards historical truth and catholic values.

Sincerely yours,



Magdalena Pyszczółkowska
Consul General

01 February 2022

Director of Education
Brendan Browne
80 Sheppard Ave E
Toronto Ontario

**Subject: TO PROCLAIM KATYN MASSACRE AND SMOLENSK AIR DISASTER
COMMEMORATION DAY IN ALL TORONTO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL
BOARD (TCDSB) SCHOOLS ON APRIL 10th, 2022 AND EVERY YEAR
THEREAFTER**

Dear Mr. Browne,

I am writing this letter in support of the subject initiative. I am doing so within my authority as Chair/Vice Chair of several Polish organizations and thus I have chosen to consolidate my intervention within a single letter to you. The organizations that I represent are:

Chair of Copernicus Lodge Long Term Care Home
Chair of Polish Studies at University of Toronto
Vice-Chair of the Warsaw-Toronto Friendship Committee

I am also a retired Infantry Lieutenant-Colonel; and,
The former Member of Parliament for Etobicoke Centre

I am the son of Polish parents who, like the entire Polish nation and its people was consumed by the Second World War from its very first day. My father was a soldier who survived the gulag (my grandfather did not) and narrowly escaped his fate at Katyn where many of his comrades were murdered on Stalin's orders. My mother was as a teen taken to Nazi Germany as forced labour and like many women of her generation suffered from lifelong and at times, crippling trauma. The kinds of traumas we talk about today in relation to PTSD and more personal traumas. In generations past these were not discussed but suppressed. However, today there is open dialogue, and the recent Bell Let's Talk Day is a perfect example of that.

The causes of these mental and physical scars weren't just a grab for territory, dominance and assimilation. It was also racially motivated by Nazi Germany believing in their superiority and the Soviets on the other side applying a brutal political communist doctrine that crushed and destroyed any individuality, free thought or action. Stalin was ruthless to all and attempted to destroy all resistance through the murder of Polish leadership and intelligentsia. This led to Katyn and other massacres. It was also a bizarrely motivated attempt to eliminate from history the defeat of the Bolshevik Red Army to the Polish Forces in the Polish-Russo War of 1920.

Many of our veterans and parents have passed and some presently reside in Copernicus Lodge and other seniors' homes. Copernicus is in the catchment area of your schools and many children there are the grandchildren or great grandchildren of these seniors. It is important to share

historical truth and accuracy especially from primary sources that were there. This also helps children bond with their grandparents by understanding their journeys.

The teaching of these tragedies in your schools educates children, all children, about a very difficult time in history for the world. This history was captured in Timothy Snyder's book Bloodlands about this tragic region. If children cannot understand the past, they most certainly will not be able to relate to present events.

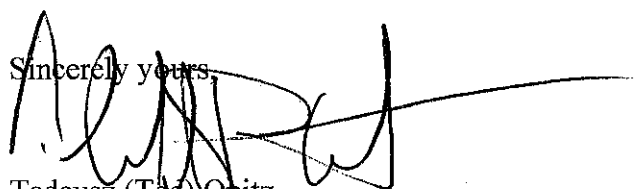
For example, the current conflict in Ukraine has a direct linkage not only to World War II and the fall of the Soviet Union, but centuries back to the birth of the Russian empire which was in fact Kyiv based or Kievan Rus. When I served in Bosnia, many of the combatants I spoke to as well as civilians on all sides, cited centuries old conflicts as justification for present day actions.

The Polish air crash that killed President Kaczynski and his wife and many of Poland's elite, occurred as a result of their travelling to Smolensk on the 70th anniversary of the Katyn massacre. Rather than return the wreckage of the aircraft so an investigation could determine the cause, Vladimir Putin has used it to taunt the Polish people and has caused this to be unresolved and closure to be impossible for Poland.

These events are part of a broader historical tapestry that in an academic and dispassionate context will help students understand that history is a series of connecting points. To understand and study past events and motivations of leaders and nations, only helps develop critical thinking skills that students will rely on later in other disciplines and situations outside of the classroom.

To study and understand past social injustice, discrimination and authoritarianism in other countries involving other people and races will provide tools for students to examine social issues of the day in this country and critically assess those issues and their root causes.

I hope that the Board of Trustees will take my intervention into account and approve the Proclamation mentioned above.

Sincerely yours,

Tadeusz (Ted) Opitz
LCol (ret'd)

cc. Consul-General of The Republic of Poland in Toronto, Magdalena Pszczolkowska
Teresa Lubinski, School Trustee Parkdale High-Park and Etobicoke-Lakeshore