

March 31, 2010

Attention:

Mr. Rory McGukin

Director of Education

Toronto Catholic District School Board

80 Sheppard Ave

Toronto, ON

I am writing on behalf of many families of Polish Heritage who live in Toronto and whose children attend schools in the TCDSB.

Many Poles have immigrated to Canada, with Wilno, Ontario being the first and oldest Polish settlement in Canada, dating as far back as 1858. Toronto's Polish immigration started in the 1870s and has continued ever since. Some of the largest waves of immigrants arrived after the Second World War and settled in and around the Roncesvalles area, and many of their descendants remain there to this day (myself included). As many people know, Roncesvalles Avenue now hosts the largest Polish Festival in North America.

There are many reasons why we should celebrate Polish Heritage in the Toronto Catholic School board. We can celebrate notable Poles in history, from astronomer Nicolas Copernicus (Mikolaj Kopernik), famed pianist-composer Fryderyk Chopin, physicist Marie Sklodowska-Curie who conducted pioneering research on radioactivity, and our dear Holy Father, St. John Paul II, who instituted World Youth Day. The 17<sup>th</sup> World Youth Day occurred in Toronto in 2002, and encouraged young Canadians especially, to strengthen their Catholic faith.

Selecting May 3<sup>rd</sup> as Polish Heritage Day, and May as Polish Heritage month has special significance for Canadians of Polish descent. The month of May is devoted to our Holy Mother, Blessed Virgin Mary Queen of Poland. The Polish nation has always had a special devotion to Mary, as evidenced by the annual national pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa, where hundreds of thousands walk from all corners of the country over many weeks, culminating in the feast day of the Assumption of Mary.

Poland was wiped off the map of Europe from 1795-1918, overcame the Nazi Occupation during the Second World War with a fierce resistance, endured over 40 years of Communist oppression with its first transitions to a democratic government that began in 1989. I am proud of my Polish heritage and the rich history of Poland. During today's uncertain times, my ancestors and their struggles inspire me to face whatever challenges lay ahead for us in Toronto, Ontario and Canada.

As students and families of the Toronto Catholic District School Board, we have an opportunity to celebrate Poland and people of Polish heritage that have continued to enrich our lives as Canadians.

Please support Teresa Lubinski's motion to declare May 3<sup>rd</sup> as Polish Heritage Day and May as Polish Heritage Month in the Toronto Catholic District School Board.

Sincerely,

Dr. Anna Lukowski, MD, CM, FACP, Internal Medicine, Hospitalist

Alumnus of St. Vincent de Paul Catholic School and St. Joseph's College School, TCDSB

Mother of 4 children who are currently students or former students at St. Vincent de Paul School