



## Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association



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Beverley Eckensweiler, *President*  
Michelle Griepsma, *Vice President*  
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May 21, 2020

Joseph Martino  
Chair  
Toronto Catholic District School Board  
80 Sheppard Avenue East  
Toronto, ON M2N 6E8

Dear Joseph:

We trust that everyone is staying safe during these difficult times. We have met with your board on several occasions over the past few months to discuss your involvement in our association and believe we have had very fruitful discussions. We very much appreciated your willingness to share as well as be open to the work that we do on behalf of your board. TCDSB is a valued and integral member of the association. We had hoped to schedule a follow-up meeting to our March 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, but unfortunately the Covid-19 virus created a state of emergency preventing us to meet again in person.

We initially met during the January seminar with the Chair, Vice-Chair, and your Director along with our Association President, Past President, Vice-President and staff from OCSTA. We listened to concerns that your board had and discussed the many ways that OCSTA has worked and served on behalf of your board. We outlined the process that we went through to achieve "Stabilization Funding" for in-year transportation relief that saved your board in excess of \$6M dollars. We also highlighted our advocacy involvement with Toronto Hydro as there were plans in place for Toronto Hydro to charge your school board for inspections. Much of the advocacy work we do is very relevant to large boards and the pressures that they face. We also highlighted and thanked your staff who were very much a part of the Collective Bargaining process this year. A special thank you goes out to your Director of Education who was an integral member of our OECTA bargaining team.

On March 4<sup>th</sup> at your suggestion, we invited the three largest boards to the OCSTA office. We met with the Chair, Vice-Chair and Directors from each of those boards. We highlighted at that meeting the key role of our Association which is to "preserve and protect Catholic education" and explained the importance of having all boards engaged and supportive of the provincial advocacy agenda driven and implemented by this Association. We discussed fee structures, how they are arrived at and the per-student cost for each board. We also discussed the fairness of the membership fee structure within the context of the depth and breadth of the work that we do which encompasses: advocacy; preparation of numerous briefs (including the influential finance brief) that are submitted and presented to the Ministry of Education; participation in consultations; and contributions to policy papers on many issues that impact large boards, (e.g., Transportation, PARG's, GSN's, Special Education, and EDC's). We also highlighted the involvement that we have with your staff on a regular basis to gain insight on local needs, to address their queries and to support them in their effort to gain a provincial perspective whenever required.

PROMOTING AND PROTECTING CATHOLIC EDUCATION

We also reviewed the resolutions and the fact that they very much guide the work of the Association as many TCDSB resolutions have been acted upon by OCSTA. For example, we have established a repository of legal opinions and will make that available to our boards at their request. We will also be soliciting the membership to gather interest in obtaining legal insurance for matters that are not covered by the board, e.g., matters that occur out of the day to day operations in your role as trustees. At the upcoming AGM of June 27, the Resolution Committee will be recommending to the membership that an Ad Hoc Committee be established to specifically address Resolutions 1-20 through to and including Resolution 6-20. These resolutions address OCSTA Vote Allocations (Dufferin-Peel CDSB); OCSTA Membership Fee Structure (Toronto CDSB); Amendment to OCSTA By-Law relating to Class Membership and Criteria for Determining Regions and Representation (Halton CDSB); Amendments to the “Amended and Restated By-law Number 2019-01, A By-law Relating Generally to the Conduct of Its Affairs (“OCSTA By-Law”) (Halton CDSB); Association Name Change (Toronto CDSB) and Term Limit for Regional Directors (Waterloo CDSB). These resolutions all deal with the governance structure of OCSTA. We will have representation from large boards on this Ad Hoc Committee.

We are aware that boards are building school budgets in the absence of the release of GSNs and we want to ensure you that if there is a reduction in school board funding OCSTA would correspondingly alter the fee structure in recognition of the financial pressure boards would be facing and support our members in getting through these difficult times. The resources that we have from membership dues are directed to targeted advocacy efforts, driven by decisions made by trustees to serve the best interests of all members. Recently we were successful as Intervenor in the “Theodore Case” in Saskatchewan — a landmark decision that had it not been successful could have negatively impacted publicly funded Catholic education in Ontario. We were able to support such important legal advocacy, on behalf of the 29 Catholic boards in this province, because of the membership fees collected for these very reasons.

This year marked our 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary as an association and we have been successful in preserving and protecting Catholic education from the challenges that we have had to face. One of the biggest reasons is that we are unified and strident in facing those challenges together. Catholic education has benefitted millions of Catholic school graduates over those 90 years and we would hope to continue this legacy together, unified and strong recognizing the great many pioneers of Catholic education upon whose shoulders this system is built.

Sincerely,



Nick Milanetti  
Executive Director

cc: Beverley Eckensweiler, OCSTA President  
Rory McGuckin, Director of Education, TCDSB