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September 10, 2020

Hello TCDSB Trustees:

We are writing this letter in regard to the recent motion that was approved on Thursday's board meeting re: school uniforms. We have a genuine concern in which this motion was presented and consequences for what it entails.

We understand that these are truly unprecedented times, and in the sincere hope of trying to offer help and support to families this motion may have appeared in goodwill - but unfortunately, it has created quite the opposite and has just made things more confusing and given parents more stress.

This motion was presented in the early morning on Friday in the Board meeting, without any prior input or consultation of any kind from any parents. Uniforms, and it's any decision regarding its implementation is not a small question, and requires the proper time, information, alternatives and variables behind any decision regarding it.

While we appreciate the student trustee's grassroots initiative, the purchase and expectation of uniforms are of a great parental concern. As parent groups, we had no idea of this concern being considered, had not heard it as a concern from any of our stakeholder feedback sessions, had not considered options or the impact across the system.



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In the Community Engagement Policy T.7, it states, in its purpose: *"This policy affirms and promotes the need to engage community members in decision-making processes that foster student achievement and well-being, identify new and emerging issues, support the implementation of Toronto Catholic District School Board plans and strategies, and provide direction about policy decisions."*

Parents, on average, already purchased the required school uniforms for the new year as we were to begin on the 8th, as always we act accordingly to prepare our kids for the school year passing this motion a week before school is to officially commence, puts a lot into question. This matter directly impacts the Dress Code, local school codes of conduct, progressive discipline and student safety.

To highlight some of the confusion we are hearing: it will not be enforced, but, students can wear them if they like or wear civvies only - what will our schools look like - How about the students that actually prefer to wear the uniform that their schools have, so that there is no comparison of what they can and cannot afford of regular clothes, not to mention that in many schools students have a pride in wearing their school colours which gives them a sense of belonging and guidance.

We believe that the best course of action is to reconsider this motion, ensure that uniforms are a part of the fabric of our Catholic schools, as it has been for decades, and continues to be one of the many reasons that sets us apart from the public board. We understand the challenges that families have faced since the beginning of this pandemic, but we also know that there has always been support given to our families in need, and now is no different. In G.11, Policy SS07, "Dress Code for students" also addresses this - Maybe a motion to allocate funding to



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the Angel Foundation specifically for students for uniforms may be an option, contacting suppliers to lower their prices, offer more vouchers etc. - and in the

meantime allow local schools to consider modifications or timing changes to their dress code to ensure comfort for students while wearing masks and adapting to new classroom environments.

The more structure, tradition, normality we can offer our students right now is the best way for them to adapt to the other new changes in schools, now is not a time for this kind of change which will only create safety concerns, confusion and more stress for parents - but at the *very least*, have the proper consultation with parents, and not rush into decisions that will impact our Catholic Schools in more ways than one.

John Del Grande

CPIC Chair

Annalisa Crudo-Perri  
OAPCE Executive Director