

Dear Trustees of the TCDSB,

My name is Kathryn Jaitley. I may be a familiar face and name for some of you representing my parent council, for OAPCE and delegating on matters that impact my school community.

Today I write to you as a parent.

My two children are in grades 2 and 4 at St. Cyril and while I do my very best to raise my family I do lean on our shared faith and our school community to support.

We were speaking as a family the other day about how important it is to mean what we say. That is an important lesson in that we teach our young children to follow through and fulfil their commitments. I leaned on our faith and explained to them to trust in God and ask for courage to be brave enough to follow through with what we say. I wanted to share that personal story with you in hopes that it may have an impact on the decisions ahead.

I attended that historic meeting in November of 2019. I was happy with the outcome of the board's decision to be inclusive. As it was decided then to be an inclusive board and include four terms to the board's code: gender identity, gender expression, family status and marital status. It is now a time for action. It's not enough to be inclusive on paper - we need to mean what we say. As a very engaged parent I see families, teachers, administrators all inclusive of LGBTQ2S students. I see teachers advocate for their students, I see parents exposing their kids to media, sharing celebrating differences and teaching diversity in their daily lives. I see in high schools teachers, and the TCDSB forming clubs and committees to advocate and support diversity and inclusivity - it's a strength and asset to all communities to have that. I have seen principals and vice principal send out all the communication for pink shirt day and celebrate - they proudly share images of these initiatives for all to see. These local initiatives matter and show our kids that we mean what we say.

As an invested parent stakeholder of catholic education am asking all trustees as governors to please mean what you say. Send the right messaging to all catholic boards as leaders and the largest catholic school board.

You say you represent parents and communities. You see, the communities you represent are very much working towards inclusion. They are already doing it.

You say that the TCDSB is an inclusive board than please mean that in your decision to include celebrating and acknowledge pride month.

Our school communities work so hard to teach acceptance and to make all schools a place of belonging through diversity and inclusion. Putting up roadblocks and barriers only hinders the efforts of these communities. Catholic education is a gift for our children and for future generations. As a parent I am disheartened to see such blatant discrimination at the board level.

I ask that you trust in your communities and lean on our faith as a strength to make a decision that makes it possible to improve the climate for all school communities. The decision you make can show love or alternatively fear. Your decision impacts many families, students and staff and represents those stakeholders that chose you. I am hopeful that you will make the best decision you can for us.

With witness and faith comes action.

Please act on May 6th to mean what you say. The students and communities you serve are counting on you.

Thank you
Kathryn Jaitley
(TCDSB parent)