

Celebrating Women's History Month in the TCDSB

Women's History Month is formally celebrated by the Government of Canada and by many Ontario school boards. Women's History Month is an opportunity to celebrate the achievement of women in and beyond Canada. Women's History Month is also an opportunity to bring attention to equity issues women continue to experience in Canada.

The Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) has intermittently recognized October as Women's History Month. The TCDSB did not in October 2021, for example, but did in October 2020. TCDSB educators have a tendency to recognize and emphasize in their schools and classrooms what the TCDSB formally recognizes. Not formally recognizing October as Women's History Month in any upcoming year, such as in 2021, is a missed opportunity for the TCDSB to celebrate the achievement of women and to improve equity for women within the broader TCDSB community.

Bill 13 (the Accepting Schools Act of 2012) amended the Education Act to include a specific emphasis in four key equity areas, including promoting gender equity. Celebrating Women's History Month and International Women's Day is consistent with the equity goals of the Education Act (as amended by the Accepting Schools Act) and consistent with the equity goals of the TCDSB's Equity Action Plan. The formal annual recognition of Women's History Month and International Women's Day do not solve all gender equity issues in the TCDSB, but it would be an important positive part of the effort to promote gender equity.

I am requesting that the Toronto Catholic District School Board:

1. Recognize October 2022 and every October thereafter as Women's History Month;
 2. Recognize March 8, 2022 and every March 8 thereafter as International Women's Day (where another specific school day will be emphasized should March 8 be a non-school day);
- and

3. Establish a Women's Advisory Committee to support Women's History Month and International Women's Day activities and other related equity activities in the Toronto Catholic District School Board.

Thank you for considering my delegation. I invite questions for clarification including on the following related issues, which I list in the form of questions for time and your convenience:

1. Why do you believe that celebrating only International Women's Day and not Women's History Month is insufficient in focusing on the promotion of gender equity?
2. How does the official board recognition of an event like Women's History Month impact teachers in their classrooms in planning for the promotion of gender equity?
3. You wrote above the following: "TCDSB educators have a tendency to recognize and emphasize in their schools and classrooms what the TCDSB formally recognizes." Can you elaborate on this?
4. You referred to how the Education Act (through the Accepting Schools Act, 2012, amendments) promotes three equity areas other than gender equity. What are these three equity areas and which events can promote improvements in those three equity areas?
5. Why is it an incorrect assumption that the TCDSB is not challenged by gender equity issues and therefore does not require the formal recognition of events such as Women's History Month and International Women's Day to promote gender equity?