

2024 Trustees Election Questionnaire

Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools

The Catholic Church considers that elected democratic office is a position of immense responsibility, to be held in high trust and exercised with great humility, wisdom, and responsibility, in the interest of the common good.

This is particularly true with respect to those who seek to govern publicly-funded Catholic Schools. Education is of first importance for the future of our society, and Catholic education, properly conducted, can be of unique importance in passing our faith to future generations. Few endeavors offer comparable opportunities to integrate faith into the entire range of personal and social values for future generations.

The Church teaches that the ultimate purpose of this life is to seek the truth, which is God. “God is the ultimate end of his creatures and for no reason may the common good be deprived of its transcendent dimension.” This truth is most effectively communicated to our children by their families, parishes, and schools.

Please confirm your name and GSCS region, and preferred contact information:

Candidate’s name: J.R. (Ron) BOECHLER
Region: Saskatoon
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Phone: (306) 249 5658
Social Media Handle(s): As found on City of Saskatoon’s Candidate Profile webpage and GSCS’ Elections webpage.

YOUR VISION FOR SERVICE AS A TRUSTEE

Catholic schools are not alternate public schools. In addition to the curriculum presented by secular schools, Catholic schools provide religious instruction, impart Gospel values and display religious symbols, and serve as a critical part of the Church’s mission to evangelize youth. Catholic and non-Catholic parents freely choose to send their children to Catholic schools with the full expectation that they will be socialized into a faith community in which the person and message of Jesus is central to instruction in all subject areas.

The distinctiveness of Catholic schools arises from their teaching students to incorporate the person and the message of Jesus Christ in all aspects of their lives, while our secular society looks to the individual human being as the measure of all things. Catholic schools provide the spiritual and transcendent dimension which says that God is ultimately the measure and meaning of life.

Q. 1. What draws you to the vocation of service as a Catholic school trustee?

I agree it is a vocation and while that requires a multifaceted answer, I know for me it started with a desire to have the needs of all our school communities heard at the board level. For me this means representing students, parents, staff and the broader community. It means to advocate and be prepared to speak on behalf of each individual in our division. It means lobbying on the provincial level for our communities diverse needs.

Q. 2. What do you hope to accomplish as a Catholic school trustee?

I am fortunate enough that I have accomplished many things as a Catholic school trustee. I want to accomplish more by speaking for those who cannot and to listen to those who are not being heard. Moving forward I would love to see the provincial government finally acknowledge the importance of classroom composition and the advantages that capping a school building size brings to the students and the community. I also hope to entrench with other school communities our constitutional rights and freedoms. And last but most importantly give our staff and students the best guidance and support while growing with God.

Q. 3. What experience do you have that qualifies you to serve as a Catholic school trustee?

I am married, for 36 years, father of four children and grandfather to two more children (so far). I have been an Emergency Medical Technician, a police officer and a community volunteer. I have been a school trustee for 27 years. In each of those categories I have had my faith tested, my heart broken, and yet I still believe in God and His beauty. I believe my faith and experience gives me a unique set of skills that allows me to serve.

These skills include applying my values of God and family; empathy and analytical thinking; understanding of conflict resolution and the complexity of community dynamics; advocacy and collaboration. I also know about budget management, resource allocation, governance and policy making. Admittedly, the last few are not exciting but they are important.

[you are invited to attach a copy of your resume]

(I invite you to contact me with any questions you may have on this or any other item.)

I will interject here that while Catholic Education is a right, it should not be taken for granted. Indeed there are many examples of how those rights can be eroded and eliminated. We must stay vigilant.

In our province there are many voices calling for the elimination of Catholic Education under the banner of financial savings and inclusiveness. We must be prepared to defend our faith and our schools. Catholic school trustees are called upon to express their personal faith, while fully embracing and participating in the Catholic Church.

Q.4. In your view, what are the most important contributions Catholic education can make to the lives of children, and the communities they will become part of?

To provide a safe and nurturing environment where children can come to know God, to know what it means to live a Catholic life. To obtain the values and characteristics demonstrated by our teachers and to emulate that into the broader community. Honestly our mission statement says it all. Rooted in Faith; Growing in Knowledge; Reaching Out to Transform the World.

Q. 5. Please describe the nature of your devotion to Christ and the Catholic Church, including ways in which you witness to your faith in your daily life.

I do have a personal relationship with Christ. I like to think it is unique, as is every believer's relationship. I am also committed to living the gospel daily. Don't get me wrong, I stumble and fall but the path is clear and the destination is fixed. I do pray, several times a day in fact. I try and find time each day to worship but in the business of life I have forgotten at times to make that time. This may sound selfish but a huge benefit of being on the board of education has been to study and reflect on scripture and Catholic teachings with my colleagues, a spiritual advisor, and church representatives including the Bishop. That has been a rich and rewarding experience I try and repay. While I think it's important to mention the sacraments, it's not a list of boxes to be checked off but rather the benefits of living my faith. Part of living my faith is having a strong liturgical life. I believe I have that. My life has been one of serving others while demonstrating I have a place and have earned the right to be in that place. My life has the faith and values that are the foundation to a strong moral compass and permeates what I think and do everyday. I believe that is what we as Catholic parents strive for for any of our kids.

Q.6. As a trustee, how do you propose to ensure that the sacramental needs of Catholic students are supported by the Catholic school system?

This is a must. The sacramental needs of our students during their journey to adulthood has to be supported in the school. As a trustee "we" must ensure that roadblocks such as our right to exist, to educate our students and contribute to the greater good are identified and dealt with. We must also support our teachers and staff in their own faith development so they can be examples and lead our students. I also think to accomplish meeting the needs of our students we must not just include parents but involve parents. If this means we must bare witness and provide support to families as a whole then it should be pursued.

Q.7. In addition to ensuring that students are taught the Catholic notion of incorporating faith into all aspects of our lives, trustees are responsible for ensuring that students are encouraged to do their very best in taking in the full range of provincial educational curricula. How do you see yourself assisting in that process?

Whew! I think this can be answered in a decisively short response. I, as part of the board of trustees, must ensure classrooms are allocated the resources necessary to provide a meaningful program with excellence as a result. Normally I would have included advocating the province for necessary funding but that only seems to get attention in an election year for them.

Q.8. In order to ensure that Catholic schools and the communities they teach in remain true to the Catholic faith, it is important that Catholic school boards and individual trustees remain in contact with their local parishes and bishops. What is your plan for remaining in touch?

In the past I think I've developed a reputation for being open, honest and easy to access. I do not have a problem reaching out when I have a question or concern. Accordingly, I do not have a problem with being contacted with a question or concern. Certainly there has been many times the board has had a question and received open and honest dialogue with a parish community or the Bishop. It has been a very good productive relationship.

Q.9. In what ways do you envision yourself advocating for the continuing rights of Catholics to educate their children in publicly-funded Catholic schools?

I advocate strongly for the right to educate children in a publicly funded Catholic school. It starts as who you are as an individual and the belief that it is the just cause that it is. We have a moral obligation to do so. I'm often asked what about other religions? Do they not deserve the same treatment? Yes. Yes, they do. But not until the government does a study to see at what level of critical mass is necessary to support any educational offering. So while it is true we have constitutional rights, "someone" gave that to us and "someone" can take that away. We must instil ourselves into the fabric of what is just and right. So my approach to advocating on the local, provincial and federal levels has been we ALL deserve this opportunity, not because "we" are special or different. Now I understand that in Saskatchewan Catholics make up approximately 35 percent of the population. I also know that there would be a significant increase in the cost of education if Catholic Schools were not an option. So not only do we need to be able to defend our constitutional rights we must be able to defend our place in a secular society. I have personally championed our cause on several levels and that includes within our own Catholic community. I do not support our membership in the SSBA as a significant portion of the membership tries to define, limit, or eliminate Catholic Education while shaping "their" view of what publicly funded education should look like. We cannot standby and be silent.

Q.10. Trustees are responsible to students and parents for ensuring that the fullness of Catholic values, beliefs and teachings are passed on to our children, and for helping to ensure that our children carry those values and teachings into the broader community. How do you propose to ensure that you yourself are aware of the full range of matter you will be expected to impart to students?

I believe I have addressed this question already but I will add that being a trustee should not be taken lightly. The work and the richness of the Catholic faith is as large or as little as each trustee makes it and the impact of that work is reflected in outcomes. By the way, if you stuck it out this far with me I really appreciate it and feel free to email me at my personal address RonBoechler@outlook.com with your comments or questions.

Q.11. As elected public officials, trustees are accountable to their constituents for prudent, wise, and equitable use of resources, in an open and accountable fashion. In what specific ways do you propose to discharge that duty?

The Board of GSCS has a plethora of ways to engage the constituents and stakeholders. We meet with Catholic Community School Councils, welcome all community members to public meetings and our annual meeting, and publish information online and in print. One additional way I am proposing is to hold public meetings mid-year, in January, at high schools, where we would summarize what has occurred and what is in the works for the immediate future.

Q.12. In closing is there a short comment or favourite biblical quote you would like to share?

Absolutely! Thank you for this opportunity and an appropriate quote I would like to share is “Get wisdom, get understanding: Do not forget my words or turn away from them.” Proverbs 4:5

[It is a requirement that candidates for the office of Catholic separate school trustee be Catholic. Many voters, including particularly parents of school children, seek assurance that trustees they elect are active, dedicated Catholics. If you have a letter of reference from your pastor, or other documentary assurance, we invite you to attach it. Please note, however, that this is not a requirement for posting of your response.]

I will send you a letter of reference however I’m sending you this survey now in the interest of time.

On November 13, 2024 vote

J.R. (Ron) Boechler

For Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools