

2022 Questionnaire

Ontario Catholic School Trustees

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, district and ward, and preferred contact information:

Candidate’s name: Mathew Varsava

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YOUR VISION FOR SERVICE AS A TRUSTEE

Adapted from OCSTA’s “Becoming a Catholic School 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 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 makes the human

person 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?

__As a graduate of both Catholic Elementary and Secondary School, I know first-hand how important a thriving Catholic school system is. As a graduate, I was able to experience how the ethical and moral approaches of Catholicism intertwine with other elements of the curriculum so that faith and education are not separate elements but rather that faith informs and infuses education with an additional layer of meaning.

Now, as a parent of two children in the Catholic education system, I want to help pay forward the many blessings which I received by ensuring that the system continues to stay vibrant. I view the role of a trustee as ensuring that the local board continues to play the crucial role of helping our children become incredible citizens, both as citizens of the world, and of the Church.

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

___The first, and most important, accomplishment of a Catholic school trustee is to ensure they help our schools stay as vibrant examples of Catholic Living in our communities. This means not only as important centres of education and faith, but also more broadly as community hubs that are living examples of our Faith.

In practical terms, this means ensuring that our schools have the resources they need to be able to offer a multitude of opportunities to our youth so that everyone has an equal opportunity to use the skills which God has infused them with.

As a children growing up, our Catholic schools played important roles in linking education and faith and as serving as facilities for our community organizations to utilize to enrich our surrounding area. This is directly linked to the teachings we follow of inviting everyone to experience the mercies of Love and Fellowship. When we invite others to experience the incredible environments that are built in our schools we are acting as positive representatives of our Faith Community.

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

___As a graduate of the Catholic school system in Ontario, I can relate first-hand to the role that our schools can play in the development of our youth. I was honoured that the opportunities offered through being a student included being on numerous provincial education steering committees and of serving as the first Student Trustee in the Bruce-Grey Catholic School Board.

Now, as a parent of school Catholic School students (in grades 2 and 3), I am also directly linked to ensuring that these benefits continue through a vibrant and sustainable Catholic School System. I want to make sure that all students have the same kinds (and more) of opportunities that I had – that they can learn and grow, learning how one can grow as a whole person, steeped in both faith and science.

I also offer over 15 years of professional experience, as a corporate executive and in the public service. This means that I can ensure we are getting the best value for the money we are investing in our youth and also work with a wide variety of stakeholders to ensure that we are all, together, working for what is best for our students.

Only when we work together, with the right guiding principle (from our Faith), can we ensure that all children will have the opportunity to grow and thrive.

[we invite you to attach a copy of your resume]

Catholic school trustees are called to express their personal faith in full communion with and participation in the faith life of 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?

___ I believe that Catholic education can play (and does play) a crucial role in helping our children understand that faith and education are two separate things but rather than faith informs how we engage with our world.

In this way, Catholic education stands as distinct from that offered in the secular system. To us, our schools are important linkages that ensure that faith is intertwined with all elements of our daily lives. This is an incredibly important lesson for our children – that they can live rich and rewarding lives without having to step away from their faith, but rather because of their faith.

This is how Catholic education helps our broader communities as well – we help educate not just good students, but good people.

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.

___ As an extension of what I have offered in previous questions, I believe we all witness our faith through all of the actions we take each and every day. This goes beyond being involved in our local parish communities (where I am a Knight of Columbus at St Mary's Parish) - rather it extends to how we live as examples of our faith.

This is why I teach my children the importance of being thankful, both to God for the bounty which has been bestowed on us, but also to those who help them every day. By being thankful in our engagement with others, we are acting as living examples of our faith.

This extends to teaching our children about the importance of prayer, about how faith doesn't end when one walks out of Church or leaves the school – that it extends to how we seek to emulate the lessons of the Gospels in our prayerful relationship with God. This is why we teach our children to pray (and why I set the time to pray myself) - that we can be reminded of the importance of saying thank you for all we have received, and also of our obligation to help others.

To try and pay forward the blessings which I have received, I volunteer as a Beaver Leader. Previously (when my kids played baseball), I was a Tee-Ball and Blast Ball coach. I think it is incumbent

upon those who can to try and find ways to give back. In this way we can be witnesses to the role that faith plays in our lives and follow the axiom to Do Until Others as we Would have Done Onto Us.

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?

___As a graduate of the Catholic school system in Ontario, I experienced first-hand the importance of a strong and vibrant relationship between the local parish and the school. This was particularly important when preparing for, and celebrating, the sacraments.

___One of the best way to help ensure that this bond continues is to foster strong relationships between our principals and our parish priests. As key leaders in our communities, their ability to work together is crucial when we ensure that the needs of Catholic students are supported.

___A trustee can be an important part of that relationship, ensuring that open and constructive dialogue is ongoing and that we all recognize that it is only when we all work together that we can offer our students the best opportunity to grow as Children of God in our society.

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 all their studies, covering the full range of provincial educational curricula. How do you see yourself assisting in that process?

___Key to ensuring our students do their best in their studies is making sure that they have all the resources they need to be able to excel in their areas of passion and interest. This means extending and strengthening the supportive ecosystem around them – making sure there are engaging and educational extra-curriculars available to them.

___When we look at the job of educating our students as one that we all are involved in, we can then look at how each part of the support network is being treated. Do our parents have the information they need to support our students at home; do our education teams have the resources they need; have we engaged with the broader community to seek out expertise that can be brought to support our students through opportunities like co-ops, coaching and mentoring.

___Looking at education as an ecosystem of advocates all working together towards the common purpose of developing well-rounded successful students ensures that we leverage all of the resources needed to support our children. This means taking a humble approach that respects the views of all those involved, and that is appreciative to the views of everyone.

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?

___Staying connected begins with being a part of the local parish beyond just attending Mass. This is one of the reasons why I am a Knight of Columbus – to engage with more members of our parish community and to ensure that I am exposed to feedback from as many folks as possible.

__As a trustee this extends out to ensuring that I am open and available to anyone wishing to offer feedback and engage to deliver the best possible education for our children. Being open and engaging with our parish community, and by actively participating in parish life, is key to ensuring that the concerns of the community are addressed.

Q.9. Some have proposed that separate Catholic schools be abolished. In what ways do you envision yourself advocating for the continuing rights of Catholics to educate their children in separate Catholic public schools?

__I believe that a separate Catholic school system is in the best interests of our children and our Faith Community.

__Through my work in the public sector, I can leverage the experience that I have built in the private sector to help bring positive attention to the great work which our Catholic system is achieving in educating our students to not only pass exams, but also to live their lives as contributing members of society. The best defense against abolishing the Catholic system is to publicize the amazing work that is ongoing, and to ensure that the system has the resources it needs to continue to thrive.

__This is why it is so important for our schools to be community hubs. When we invite community organizations to engage with our schools, we help to build an even broader group of advocates who have lived experience of what makes Catholic education special. This is particularly important for non-Catholics who, even if they do not participate in our faith, can experience first-hand how special Catholic education is.

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 think an important starting point is having been raised in the Catholic school system myself, and of now having two children who are now in our local Catholic elementary school. This is because it provides first-hand experience about what is currently going on in our schools and also having a reference to refer to.

__Being actively engaged in our school communities is a key way to make sure that our children are carrying the values and teachings of our Faith into the broader community. As a member of our local Parents' Council I have an opportunity to see how our schools I engaging in the broader community.

__The best way to be aware of the impact of our students, and to learn about how we can continue to teach them the fullness of our Catholic values, beliefs and teachings, is to listen – listen to the lessons taught during Mass, listen to the feedback from our educators on how those lessons are being imparted in our classroom, listen to the best practices from others who are also engaged in the same pursuit, and to listen to how my children, and those they engage with, are living out the lessons they are being taught.

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?

_I believe in the importance of transparency and accountability, especially in the discharge of the public trust. Through my professional experience, as well as through the MBA which I am currently completing, I understand how to ensure that we receive the best value for the resources that are being invested in our children.

_The best way to discharge this duty is to ensure that the school board itself maintain this ethic of openness and accountability in our community – making sure that documents are readily available for those who have questions, and of maintaining the same ethical approach to public stewardship at all times.

Q.12. It is a **statutory requirement that candidates for the office of Catholic public school trustee be Catholic. Please attach a copy of a letter of reference from your pastor confirming your Catholicity, or other evidence, if available.**

[attach letter of reference]

Pressing SUBMIT will cause a copy of this document to be returned to Catholic Conscience, for posting on our website for use by voters in choosing trustees. Should you wish later to revise or withdraw your responses, please contact us at info@CatholicConscience.org.

SUBMIT

Thank you for helping to improve our electoral process and our schools!