

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: Marisa Hall
School District: Durham Catholic District School Board
Ward: Ajax
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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?

Throughout my professional career, I have always worked in the non-profit sector advocating for those without a voice, including children. When we think about the most vulnerable in our communities, children are on this list. I see the role of Catholic Trustee as the ultimate advocate for our children. Trustees set the tone for our school boards through policy development, fiscal management and identifying the strategic direction of the school board. By doing this, Trustees play a crucial role in the decisions that are made that impact our children.

Second, my faith is an extremely important part of my identity. I was raised by devout Catholic parents and educated through the Ontario Catholic system. I am a practicing Catholic, and I am raising two children within the Catholic faith. Our Catholic teachings have shaped the person I am today. My faith is at the center of everything that I do. As I have continued to journey with the Lord through the difficulties of life, I have been able to deepen my faith.

The vocation of Catholic Trustee allows me to combine advocacy for children with the deep love I have for my faith. I am drawn to this role because I see it as a calling, and it is an extension of who I am as a person.

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

Amplify parent voice - We need a Board of Trustees that will listen to their constituents. When I am elected as Trustee, my constituents' voices will be a critical part of how I do the work.

Transform relationships by engaging community - We need to increase trustee presence in schools and in our community. It is only through engagement that we ensure the needs of the community are brought forward and considered in policy development. The Board of Trustees needs to engage in more meaningful consultation with parents. Parent voice needs to be part of the consideration when developing policy. My policy proposal: every policy put forward by the board needs to be supported by DCPIC and other advocacy tables the DCDSB engages with where parents are represented. To ensure our Trustees are representing the views of their constituents, trustees must hold various engagements sessions with their constituents throughout the year. I hope to participate in the school communities of Durham region by attending events and hosting regularly scheduled town halls with opportunities for families and students to provide feedback and ask questions,

Advocate: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA). These are values that should guide the work of a Trustee. I hope to create a DEIA committee of the Board that is responsible for viewing policies and decisions through a DEIA lens. Diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility must genuinely be addressed. Diversity among our educators, equity in our approach to education and academic achievement (understanding what different children need to thrive instead of applying a blanket approach to all kids) and inclusion - safe school for all kids including addressing bullying.

Prioritize the closing of any gaps in academic achievement as a result of the pandemic by ensuring strong policies are developed to help our children catch up. I would propose a policy that puts into place a plan to close the academic gap that has occurred as a result of the pandemic. This plan would see children struggling academically, identified, and supported through additional resources such as extra hours help, opportunities to extend learning into a part of the summer and continuing with grant opportunities for 3rd party tutoring

Encourage collaboration with our union locals to ensure safe, positive workplaces for all our education workers. Our schools must be a safe place for our educators as well. I will work with Unions to ensure this priority is achieved.

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

I have a variety of experiences that make me qualified to serve as Catholic school trustee.

I served on my children's parent council for the past two years as Secretary.

This year I have been elected to a new position as the parish representative for the school.

I have an extensive background in organizational leadership. The last 10 years of my career I have worked in senior roles within organizations which has given me a depth of experience in organizational leadership and board governance.

I have a master's degree in Public Policy and Administration. I understand the policy development process and how to create sounds policies and processes.

I am a practicing catholic. I am an active parishioner of my church and my community.

You may also attach your resume.

Attach 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 am a product of the Ontario Catholic School System. The most important contributions Catholic education makes to the lives of our children and our communities, is to impart Catholic values, teachings, and morals on students. Values such as fairness, compassion, respect, and concern for social justice and the environment – are the cornerstone of Canadian values and the cornerstone of our social fabric. Catholic education prepares students to be conscious contributors of our society and I believe these values have shaped the person I am today.

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 am a practicing Catholic. I attend mass weekly with my family (husband and two children).

I am an active member of my parish. I volunteer my time with our parish's wedding coordinator ministry where I help our parish priests to prepare couples to receive the sacrament of marriage.

I am also a lecturer for our parish. I read at various Sunday masses.

I am a non-profit professional. I have dedicated my entire career to working in the non-profit sector advocating for those from marginalized communities. I see this work as an extension of my faith and in this line of work I am able to put into practice my Christian values.

I am a mother of two children. Raising children is an active role. It cannot be done passively. It involves a deliberate and intentional approach to ensure children have the right foundation to grow into responsible adults. This is even more true when it comes to raising Catholic children. Every day I instill our Catholic beliefs in my children. From attending a catholic school and attending mass weekly, to including my children in prayer groups that I am a part of or watching my favorite programming through Ascension Presents, I am always actively passing on the values and teachings of Catholicism to my children.

During my free time, I love to attend retreats to local shrines, I enjoy attending adoration and listening to Catholic podcasts.

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?

One of my main goals is to strengthen the relationship between church, family, and school. It will be my expectation that a child's education is approached in partnership with parents, but the church has a significant role to play in this relationship because some children may not learn how to practice their faith at home. School visits from the parish priest, masses at the church and sacramental preparation that involves the church are all a large part of what shapes a child's experience with the catholic faith.

I would like to see increased involvement of the Church in the preparation of reconciliation, first communion and confirmation. These past two of years of the pandemic have excluded parish priests from entering the schools. Now that restrictions have lifted my goal is to support parish staff (priests, deacons, sacramental coordinators) to go into the schools to help teachers prepare students to receive their sacraments.

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?

As a trustee I hope to encourage policies that address the gaps in academic achievement as a result of the pandemic. I plan to propose a policy that puts a plan into place. This plan would see children struggling academically, identified and supported through additional resources such as extra help during recesses or after school, opportunities to extend learning into part of the summer and continuing with grant opportunities for 3rd party tutoring.

In addition to this plan, I plan to use my background in diversity, equity, and inclusion to examine the difference in academic achievement between various students. Many factors affect academic achievement but having a full picture of why (data) there are gaps in achievement for certain children will help int the development of a plan. Using data to assess achievement gaps between low- and high-income students, and between Canadian- and foreign-born students.

Also, students, especially high school students, should have access to courses that are relevant for today's world and these course should be courses that interest students. If a student is interested in what they are learning they are more likely to do well in that course. In addition to core courses, I propose our high schools offer more variety of courses to attract students and thereby increase their grades.

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?

My plan for remaining in touch with my parish and bishop includes my role on the Parent Council of the school my children attend. This school year, I was nominated and voted as the council's parish representative. This role solidifies the link between school and parish. I am a very active member of my parish, so this role is a perfect fit for me!

At minimum, a trustee should be a practicing catholic. Trustees should be visible at their local parish and have a relationship with the parish Priest. Unfortunately, many or all our current trustees do not attend mass regularly. It is through the relationship with the church that there can be the relationship with the bishop.

When I am elected as trustee, my plan for remaining in touch with my bishop includes reaching out to the Bishop and establishing a personal relationship.

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?

My arguments for a continued publicly funded Catholic system include:

- Catholics should continue to have access to a publicly funded education because education in our country is a right and the right to publicly funded catholic education was entrenched in the constitution in 1867.
- Abolishing catholic English and French schools would cause massive disruption and chaos to move students into one system. It would also force the exit of families into a private system which would mean an increased disparity between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' in our province. The move of Catholic schools to a private system would further entrench this divide and put families in a difficult financial position forcing a sacrifice (food, extra curricula, donations/charitable giving, shelter etc.), to continue to educate their children.
- Not only Catholics benefit from the Ontario Catholic school system. Many non-Catholic parents choose to send their children to Catholic schools because they recognize the system's academic excellence and holistic values.

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?

My plan to stay aware of the range of matters I am expected to impart on students includes:

- spiritual guidance: I believe this is essential in continuing to pass along our values, beliefs, and teachings to our children. Spiritual guidance includes prayer, going to confession and receiving spiritual guidance from my parish Priest.
- professional development: attending all mandatory trainings and elective trainings to ensure I am familiar with the role of trustee. It is important for trustees to be open to continuing to learn and grow and training is an important way individuals learn.
- collaboration with other Catholic trustees from other boards of education: I will reach out and connect with trustees from other school boards to identify areas of work that the Durham school board could deepen or perhaps begin (if there is an area of work that has been missed).
- engaging with my constituents : the only way to truly know the full range of matter students and families expect is to engage with them and listen to their needs.

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 plan to host regularly scheduled Town Hall meetings that provide opportunities for families and students to provide feedback and ask questions. This will encourage transparency and is one way communities can hold trustees accountable. Transparency and accountability should be standard expectations that are part the role.



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.

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

SUBMIT - SEND BACK TO CATHOLIC CONSCIENCE

Biography – Marisa Hall

I care deeply about community and collaboration. I am a product of the Ontario Catholic School system and I believe catholic education has shaped who I am today.

I am a community developer, a systems thinker and an advocate. I've dedicated my entire professional career to community/organizational development, capacity building, collaboration and advocacy. I have worked in various communities across the GTA managing collaboratives that focus on systems level work.

My experience ranges from organizational leadership and development to diversity and cultural competence across three different regions: Toronto, Peel and Durham.

Currently, I am the Director of Engagement at a Durham Region developmental services agency. This agency is a charitable organization offering opportunities for personal growth, community inclusion and empowerment to people with developmental disabilities and their families.

I hold a masters degree in Public Policy and Administration (MPPA) from Ryerson University with a focus on health and social policy. I also hold a Specialist HBA in Political Science from the University of Toronto.

I spend my free time working with the parent council of my children's school helping to build a positive and welcoming school community.



St. Bernadette Catholic Church

29 September 2022

To Whom it May Concern,

As the Pastor of St. Bernadette Catholic Church in Ajax, of which Marisa Fortune-Hall is an active and participating member, engaged in several important ministries; I personally attest to the importance of her Catholic Christian faith. I endorse her standing as a Catholic School Trustee. This letter is not a personal endorsement, but rather a letter of good standing for Marisa.

Yours in Christ,


Rev. Fr. Chris Lemieux
Pastor

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