



NIAGARA CATHOLIC  
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

**MINUTES OF THE  
NIAGARA CATHOLIC PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE  
VIRTUAL MEETING**

**MAY 6, 2021**

Minutes of the Electronic Meeting of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee, held on Thursday, May 6, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

Chair Vernelli called the meeting to order at 6:34p.m.

**A. ROUTINE MATTERS**

**1. Opening Prayer**

Fr. Paul MacNeil led the opening prayer.

**2. Roll Call: *Guest-Maria Sanchez-Keane, Consultant-Multi-Year Strategic Planning***

Before roll call, Chair Vernelli welcomed special guest, Maria Sanchez-Keane, Consultant to the Multi-Year Strategic Planning Committee to the meeting. Chair Vernelli reported that Maria has begun to implement the multi-year strategic planning process and is hoping to hear the voices and perspectives of students, parents, staff, leaders, our faith leaders and community partners. Maria will be making a presentation this evening and will request feedback on ideas and perspectives on the future of Niagara Catholic. Maria will also be hosting a virtual meeting with Catholic School Council Chairs/Co-Chairs on Tuesday, May 18, 2021 from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. to gather their ideas and perspectives on the future of Niagara Catholic.

<b>Parent Members</b>	<b>Geographical Area</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Excused</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Shonna Daly	Fort Erie/Port Colborne/Wainfleet		√	
Jessica Coutinho	Grimsby/Lincoln/West Lincoln/Pelham	√		
Todd Ulbinas	Grimsby/Lincoln/West Lincoln/Pelham	√		
Mary-Kate O'Hara-Skubel	Merritton/Thorold			√
Rita Colling	Niagara Falls/Niagara-on-the-Lake			√
Marilyn Fabiano	Niagara Falls/Niagara-on-the-Lake	√		
Chris Kouroushis	Niagara Falls/Niagara-on-the-Lake	√		
Jitto Tom Uthup	Niagara Falls/Niagara-on-the-Lake		√	
Jeremy Harb	St. Catharines	√		
George Roussos	St. Catharines	√		
Melanie Oakes-Flegg	Welland	√		
Carrie Vernelli	Welland	√		
<b>Parents</b>				
Shelley Gilbert	Society of St. Vincent de Paul	√		
<b>Representatives</b>				
Fr. Paul MacNeil	Bishop/Diocesan Representative	√		
Allan Buri	Secondary Student Senate Representative	√		
<b>Trustees</b>				
Dino Sicoli	Trustee	√		
Leanne Prince	Trustee	√		

Regrets: Shonna Daly, Josie Rocca and Jitto Tom Uthup.

The following staff were in attendance: **Camillo Cipriano**, Director of Education, **Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells**, Superintendent of Education, **Joe Tornabuono**, Elementary Principal, **Lou Stranges**, Secondary Principal and **Yvonne Anderson**, Recording Secretary/Administrative Assistant to Superintendent Forsyth-Sells.

**3. Approval of the Agenda**

Moved by: Co-Chair Kouroushis

**THAT** the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee approve the agenda of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee Meeting of May 6, 2021 as presented.

**CARRIED**

**4. Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

No disclosures of conflict of interest were declared with any items on the agenda.

**5. Approval of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee Meeting Minutes of March 4, 2021**

Moved by: Co-Chair Kouroushis

**THAT** the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee approve the minutes of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee Meeting of March 4, 2021 as presented.

**CARRIED**

**B. PRESENTATION**

Maria Sanchez-Keane, Consultant to the Multi-Year Strategic Planning Committee thanked the NCPIC for the opportunity to present to the members and introduced her colleague, Kathleen Schreurs who provided technical support.

Maria presented an interactive PowerPoint gathering data on responses provided by NCPIC members regarding Catholic education. Questions focused on faith, overall planning and living out our mission, student achievement, closing the education gap, community trends, impact of technology, demographics and the effect on Catholic education, criteria to support facilities, top strategic priorities for the next five years and advice for the leaders of the school board. A question and answer period followed. Maria thanked the members for their participation and stated that the data collected will inform the creation of the new Multi-Year Strategic Plan.

**C. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

**1. Faith Formation**

- Nil Report

**2. Goals/Parent Engagement Events**

Under parent engagement, Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported that:

1. On May 3, an email was sent to all Principals/Vice-Principals, School Council Chairs/Co-Chairs and the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee to share the Ontario

Association for Parents In Catholic Education (OAPCE) Newsletter and promote participation in the OAPCE Virtual Conference held on May 14 and 15, 2021.

2. On May 4, a letter was sent on behalf of Chair of the Board, Larry Huibers and Director of Education Cipriano to NCPIC members inviting them to attend a virtual training session on Board Governance presented by Governance Consultant, Marion Thomson Howell at the May 11, 2021 Committee of the Whole Meeting. The 90-minute session will include the following:
  - Best practices in governance
  - What you should expect of your trustees
  - The difference between governance (trustees) and management (senior staff)
  - The roles and responsibilities of trustees (and senior staff) and
  - Why policies matter

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells stated that this an excellent opportunity for anyone interested in learning more about school board governance.

#### **D. POLICY FEEDBACK**

Chair Vernelli reported that the Trustee Code of Conduct Policy (100.12) is currently under review and asked for feedback. None was forthcoming.

Feedback may be sent to Yvonne Anderson by Friday, May 28, to be submitted on behalf of the NCPIC or no later than 12 p.m. on Monday, May 31, to Jennifer Pellegrini as an individual submission.

#### **E. CHAIR/CO-CHAIR REPORTS**

1. February 24, 2021-EDU Parent Involvement Committee Meeting Summary Report  
Chair Vernelli reported that the summary report of the EDU Parent Involvement Committee and Board Leads Meeting that took place on February 24, 2021 was provided to all members for information. Chair Vernelli asked if there were any questions or comments. No questions or comments were forth coming.
2. EDU Parent Involvement Committee & Board Leads Conference-April 20, 2021  
Chair Vernelli invited Co-Chair Kouroushis to make a report on the EDU Parent EDU Parent Involvement Committee & Board Leads Conference, as she was unable to participate.

Co-Chair Kouroushis reported that the purpose of the conference was to provide PICs an opportunity to network with peers about the challenges and successes of parent engagement as pandemic conditions continue to evolve, and to discuss promising practices and lessons learned about PIC activities that parents found supportive during the pandemic. Participants were assigned breakout rooms to continue to discuss the challenges, promising practices and lessons learned regarding parent engagement throughout the pandemic. Unfortunately, due to technical issues some participants were unable to access the breakout sessions. Further details will be provided in the summary report.

The second part of the meeting was to discuss the future of de-streaming in Ontario's secondary schools. The Ministry of Education reported that the de-streaming of Grade 9 Mathematics will be implemented in September 2021. According to the Ministry, research shows students from racialized communities, low-income households and other marginalized groups are more likely to be steered away from academic courses, which in turn affects everything from graduation rates to employment prospects later in life. Therefore, in order to provide a more equitable education system, students entering grade 9 will participate in a destreamed Grade 9 Mathematics course.

**3. Proposed Letter to the Ministry of Education on behalf of the NCPIC: School Closures and Student Mental Health and Well-Being**

Chair Vernelli reported that NCPIC parent member Todd Ulbinas proposed that the NCPIC send a letter to the Minister of Education to address School Closures and Student Mental Health and Well-Being. Chair Vernelli invited Todd to provide further clarification.

Todd stated that he felt that student mental health is important for student success and that many children are struggling throughout this pandemic. Todd believes that the NCPIC has an opportunity to have the parent voice heard at the Ministry level.

There was consensus to draft a letter for approval by the Board to send to the Ministry to address concerns with school closures and the impact on student mental health and well-being. Superintendent Forsyth-Sells in consultation with Todd, the Chair and Co-Chair will draft a letter to share with all committee members for approval before presenting to the Board for consideration to send to the Ministry of Education.

**F. REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESIGNATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION**

**1. Update: Niagara Catholic Skilled Trades and Technology**

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported that as a follow-up to the NCPIC meeting of March 4, a summary report was sent to all members for information regarding the Niagara Catholic Skilled Trades and Technology Programs, prepared and submitted by Ivana Galante, K-12 Consultant: Business-Technology/Specialist High Skills Major.

**2. Update: Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants**

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported that after consultation on the parameters on how the funds may be spent with the Ministry of Education and follow-up with Chair Vernelli and Co-Chair Kouroushis, the 2020-2021 Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants funding was used to continue to support Niagara Catholic families in need through the distribution of grocery gift cards. A memo was sent to all principals/vice-principals on March 23, to advise them of the availability of grocery gift cards to support families in need. An overwhelming response was received, and Niagara Catholic on behalf of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee sent gift cards to support 108 parents and their families. The accompanying letter that was sent with the grocery gift cards has been shared with all members for information.

### 3. 2021-2022 NCPIC Membership and Meeting Dates

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported that a memo was sent to all principals/vice-principals on April 20, to promote the nomination process for parent/guardian and community representatives on the NCPIC for the 2021-2022 school year. Nomination forms have been posted on the Board website.

- Community representatives are to complete and submit their application no later than Wednesday, September 15, 2021.
- Parents/Guardians are to complete and submit the parent/guardian nomination form no later than Friday, October 8, 2021.

Members coming to an end of their term are encouraged to complete a nomination form for the 2021-2022 school year. For the 2021-2022 the following parent/guardian positions are available.

Fort Erie/Port Colborne/Wainfleet	2 positions
Grimsby/Lincoln/West Lincoln/Pelham	1 position
Niagara Falls/Niagara-on-the-Lake	2 positions
St. Catharines	3 positions
Thorold/Merritton	1 position
Welland	1 position

#### 2021-2022 Meeting dates:

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported that the NCPIC will continue to meet on the first Thursday of the month on a bi-monthly basis in-person or electronically. The meeting dates for the 2021-2022 school year are as follows:

- September 9, 2021 (last meeting of the 2020-2021 school year)
- November 4, 2021 (first meeting of the 2021-2022 membership)
- January 13, 2022
- March 3, 2022
- May 5, 2022
- September 2022 (TBD)

### 4. 2021-2022 Budget Consultation Feedback

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported that the 2021-2022 Budget Consultation feedback survey sent on April 21, to all parents/guardians would be open for completion until midnight tomorrow, Friday, May 7, 2021 and encouraged members to respond to the survey.

### 5. NCPIC Financial Report

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported on the finances of the NCPIC for 2020-2021.

## G. COMMUNITY REPORTS

### Society of St. Vincent de Paul-*Shelley Gilbert*

Shelley Gilbert reported that:

- St. Vincent de Paul is still handing out bag lunches at the soup kitchen and are seeing between 90-100 people per day.

- this year for the North of 60 project, St. Vincent de Paul is sending food to support Fr. Daniel's afterschool program. Approximately 30-40 attend the afterschool program at the church. St. Vincent de Paul is hoping to collect cereal, granola bars, applesauce, etc. and art and crafts, paper, crayons, games, coloring books etc.
- some of the schools were able to run an Easter Food Drive to support our food banks.
- most of the St. Vincent de Paul food banks are still handing out food and are helping other food banks that are closed. No one is ever turned away.
- Shelley now represents St. Vincent de Paul across Ontario.

**H. SEAC REPORT-Co-Chair Kouroushis**

On behalf of SEAC, Co-Chair Kouroushis reported that:

- SEAC hosted an evening with Dr. Sheila Bennett that was well received entitled, "Inclusion Means Everyone!"
- the next SEAC meeting will be on Wednesday, June 2, 2021 at 6:30 p.m., and items on the agenda includes presentations from the Niagara Catholic Continuing Education Department, Learning Strategies Classrooms and a hour segment working through the Multi-Year Strategic Planning process.

**I. BISHOP/DIOCESAN REPORT-Fr. Paul MacNeil**

Fr. Paul MacNeil:

- reported that our parishes have been reduced to a maximum attendance of 10 people during the current stay-at-home order. We are looking forward to reopening. Please continue to support your parishes and clergy as they continue to work hard to keeping our Churches accessible and safe.
- reminded the NCPIC about the Bishop's letter concerning vaccines: "In summary, I wish to state that from a moral perspective, if certain conditions are met, a Catholic can receive this COVID-19 vaccine in good conscience". Our Diocesan Directives Document helps to explain those conditions as clearly as possible. You will find information concerning the COVID-19 vaccines in the resource document entitled, "Directives Concerning COVID-19 Vaccines" at [www.saintcd.com](http://www.saintcd.com). This brief two-page document summarizes the essential criteria for reflection on this issue and contains links to other Church documents that you should find useful.

**J. STUDENT SENATE REPORT-Allan Buri**

Allan Buri reported that:

- applications are open for the NCDSB Student Senate Scholarship. The application deadline is May 14, 2021. A \$500 scholarship will be awarded to two students considered most deserving based on their responses to two questions regarding involvement and achievement in their schools and communities.
- the Secondary Student Senate selected three extraordinary new community representatives for next year. This is the third year this position has been available. These representatives represent a specific community rather than a school and may be non-Catholic.
- on April 23, Niagara Catholic held the annual student leadership symposium virtually. Student leaders from each school across the Board heard from three incredible keynote speakers via YouTube Live. Student Senate also elected a new student trustee, Steffen Zylstra to replace outgoing trustee Luca DiPietro. Steffen Zylstra will serve alongside Sydney Yott for the 2021-

2022 school year. New student councils for each school along with elementary Co-Chairs have also been selected.

**K. STAFF REPORTS-***Joe Tornabuono and Lou Stranges*

Principal Tornabuono, provided elementary and secondary school updates for information.

**L. TRUSTEE REPORTS-***Leanne Prince*

Trustee Prince:

- encouraged everyone to check out twitter as good news is being shared from our schools with a focus on Catholic Education Week.
- reported that Trustees will be participating in Governance Information Session with Marion, Thompson-Hall next week.
- reported that the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) funding was released this week and the Board is working on the 2021-2022 budget.
- shared many thanks to Director Cipriano and the Senior Administrative Team for working with Niagara Public Health and leading the way for Ontario in terms of educators and support staff being vaccinated. Niagara Catholic made the front page of the Toronto Star for positive reasons.

Trustee Sicoli:

- reported that next year, two elementary students will be co-chairing student senate, Nethum Perera and Ava Dechellis.
- thanked outgoing student trustee, Luca DiPietro for his commitment to, and the sharing of his vision for Niagara Catholic over the years and wished Luca much success in his future endeavours.

**M. NEW BUSINESS/AGENDA ITEMS-DISCUSSION FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

- No items were brought forward.

**N. NEXT MEETING:** September 9, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

**O. CLOSING PRAYER:** Fr. Paul MacNeil led the closing prayer.

**P. ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by: Co-Chair Kouroushis

**THAT** the May 6, 2021, meeting of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee be adjourned.

**CARRIED**

This meeting was adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

---

---