

Good evening everyone and thank you for joining us this evening. I would like to congratulate my fellow trustees who were elected to the Board, and I very much look forward to working with this team to continue to advance student achievement and foster our Catholic identity as the Niagara Catholic District School Board. I also thank my fellow trustees for having the faith and confidence in electing me as Chair. I am looking forward to working with all of you and making a difference and having a positive impact as a productive and united Board of Trustees.

As a Catholic school system, we are not an alternate for public school, but a system built on the guiding principle of our Gospel value, where Jesus is the centre of our teaching. Children at a very young age are taught to value the love of God and learn to live out their faith every day in all aspects of life. It is important that we all work together as stakeholders in Catholic education continue to foster and build on what we have.

As Trustees we are involved in the Governance of the Board and not the day-to-day operation. Director Cipriano and members of Senior Administration will provide the direction, leadership and knowledge to carry out the Board's Strategic Plan while keeping in mind the Mission, Vision and Values of Niagara Catholic. It will be our job to support their work and make sure that we achieve the goals and expectations set forth through a process ensuring accountability and transparency.

With this said, we must remember that Niagara Catholic has many traditions and practices in place which make it unique and distinct from other boards. Other boards have emulated many of our practices across the province, and many times, we have been the leaders in Catholic education across the province. It is important to keep this distinctiveness and keep our identity of who we are. Secondly, we are not a board for elite students only, but rather as our Mission would imply, an elite board that prides itself on inclusivity and equitable practices and provides educational programs for all students

regardless of ability, disability, or any other distinguishing factor. Upon completion of school, all students must have the knowledge, skills, confidence and “the edge” to pursue and be successful in their desired pathway. It is our job through governance to assure that this indeed is reality for all as we work through the Board’s Strategic Plan.

As a board, our greatest resource is our staff and most precious asset is our students. Our staff needs to be supported, nurtured, and valued so that their worth can be truly maximized in a safe work environment. The staff has made our school board unique and distinct with enthusiasm, dedication, and commitment to Catholic education. Like a family, the parents provide the foundation upon which the child learns and develops. This is the same in our schools. The staff creates a solid foundation that affords our students the benefit of a quality Catholic education superior to any other.

As a Catholic school system we are part of a faith community, we form the triad between the home, school and church. No partner is less or more important in fostering this triad...as a school system we need to work very closely with our parishes and do our part to be part of the community. At a time when secular forces impact and influence the values and morals of our children, it is important that the schools play an important role in promoting the importance of the Church and role that the Church can play in ones’ life.

In conclusion, I look forward to my term as a trustee and Chair. Hopefully, as a united Board we can continue to build upon the success of those who have gone before us while forging and exploring new paths along the journey of Catholic education.

God bless all of us!