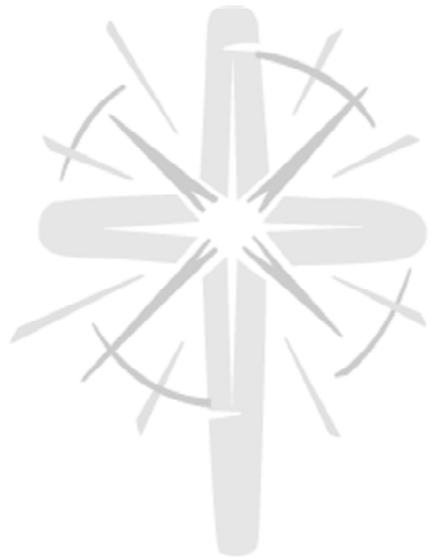




Ontario Catholic School  
Trustees' Association

# *BECOMING A CATHOLIC SCHOOL TRUSTEE*



*A Call to Service and  
Stewardship in Christ*

*“He or she who seeks the  
office of trustee  
is seeking an  
honourable office”*

*(The Challenge of Trusteeship – G. Emmett Cardinal Carter)*

## **The Distinctiveness of the Catholic School**

*“Even though the financial viability of Catholic schools has been guaranteed, the task remains of ensuring their Catholic character.”*

*Pope John Paul II – This Moment of Promise*

Both public and Catholic schools strive for the common goals of academic excellence and education of high quality. Both systems teach students necessary life skills and prepare them for post secondary education, for the workplace, and for their role as responsible citizens. Despite these common goals, however, a Catholic school differs from a public school in both foundation and substance.

Catholic schools are not alternate public schools. In contrast to the public school system, Catholic schools not only provide religious instruction, teach Gospel values, and display religious symbols but, most importantly, create a Catholic learning culture which speaks a language echoing the mystery of God. The Catholic school is an integral 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.

Catholic schools develop in our youth a love for God and people, an appreciation of prayer and a moral foundation to help them as they journey through life. Catholic schools provide a complete academic program in an environment that integrates learning, religious instruction, gospel values, and spiritual formation into all aspects of the curriculum.

**The Catholic school is a faith community** in which spirituality and practice of faith are lived out in the daily experiences of staff and students.

Formal teaching of our Catholic faith occurs through Religious and Family Life Education programs. Religious instruction is not confined, however, to specific periods on a timetable. Subjects which deal with social issues, moral values, ethical decision-making and the impact of technological advances – i.e. history, science, environmental science, literature, economics and technology – are approached and taught in the context of our Catholic beliefs, traditions and practices.

Spiritual formation is nurtured by the environment of the classroom and the school. It is a place where religious symbols are displayed and respected and expressions of prayer, scripture and liturgy are a part of daily life. It is important, therefore, that trustees, supervisory personnel, individuals in positions of responsibility, and the teaching staff, understand, are committed to and exemplify the vision of Catholic education.

Our distinctive character is in our vision of stewardship, extending God’s presence into society. It is our hope that our graduates will transform society. By their presence and their faith, they will continue the mission of our schools and help bring the gospel message to all.

## Entrusted by Families

*“To their Catholic school trustees, families entrust hundreds of thousands of human lives with the capability, the possibility, and finally the promise of achieving human greatness. It is these small, fragile and ultimately marvellous lives that you as a trustee are called to serve.”*

*OCSTA Manual on the Catholic Trustee*

Catholic schools exist because families want to pass on to their children the values, culture, tradition and meaning of their faith. Parents regard these as the greatest gifts they can give to their children.

Our schools are distinctive, not because they are academically or morally superior to others. Their distinctiveness lies in their interpretation of all aspects of the human journey in light of the way life is revealed in the person and message of Jesus Christ. 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.

In a society in which an endless array of secular values compete for the attention of our young people, Catholic schools provide a compass and a direction that reinforces the spiritual sense of life which believing families wish to share with their children. Catholic education is “value added” education. It brings to the process of educating young people a sense of consistency and coherence. This added dimension is made possible by the faith and commitment of teachers and a curriculum rooted in Gospel values.

The perspective of life which Catholic education provides to

its graduates is of benefit not only to them, their families and their church, but to the common good of all citizens.

Catholic schools are a gift which believing people wish to share with their children.



## Constitutional Foundation and Governance of the Catholic School

*“As a result of more than 100 years of struggle and sacrifice by our ancestors,  
– we enjoy the right to provide a full Catholic education from junior  
kindergarten to the end of secondary school.”*  
OCSTA Brief – Royal Commission on Learning

Catholics in Ontario are privileged to have their own school system as a constitutional right. This fundamental right includes the right to:

- elect trustees to govern our schools
- determine the curriculum and teaching staff in accordance with government regulation
- set the annual budget within the constraints of government grants

These rights are established in the Constitution of Canada, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and are acknowledged in provincial legislation and decisions of various courts including the Supreme Court of Canada.

Catholic schools are governed by Catholic trustees elected by Catholic school electors living in the jurisdiction of Catholic district school boards. The powers, duties and responsibilities are detailed in the *Education Act* and other legislation, and in regulations. The Catholic board of trustees functions within this legislative authority as a corporate body. Individual trustees possess no authority or power to act independently.

The Catholic school board establishes a Christian vision for the school system. It exercises direction and leadership by applying Christian principles to such key issues as:

- system mission and goals
- strategic planning
- policy formation and procedural by-laws
- approval of curriculum including Religious Education and Family Life Education programs
- management and evaluation of policies and procedures
- approval of budget guidelines and design
- employment of staff committed to the philosophy of Catholic education



## Stewardship: A Call to Christian Ministry

*“What makes a steward? Safeguarding material and human resources and using them responsibly is one answer; so is generous giving of time, talent, and treasure. But being a Christian steward means more. As Christian stewards, we receive God’s gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly in justice with others, and return them with increase to the Lord.”*

*To Be A Christian Steward – United States Catholic Conference*

Christian stewardship means managing everything justly. Catholic trustees are entrusted with the significant responsibility of stewardship of the mission of Catholic education. This involves ensuring and safeguarding the integrity of the Catholic school system which is based on the religious ideals of our Catholic faith, and is dedicated to sharing gospel values through the life and programs in our schools.

Trustees fulfill this ministry by working cooperatively to ensure that the religious dimension is evident in policies and practices, in business meetings, in decision-making processes, and in hiring and promotion guidelines.

Catholic stewardship is reflected in several other aspects of the board’s responsibilities; in the insistence that all government curriculum guidelines are infused with philosophy and values consistent with the Catholic tradition; in the employment of staff who are committed to the vision of Catholic education; in board support for and promotion of faith development opportunities for staff and board members alike; and in the

provision of adequate resources for programs in religious education and family life education; pastoral care and chaplaincy services; and strengthening the home-parish-school partnership.

It is the responsibility of the Catholic school board to ensure that the goals of Catholic education and the religious dimension upon which our schools are founded are maintained as first priorities, always in clear focus, never sacrificed or compromised. It is also the Catholic school board’s responsibility to ensure that these goals are supported adequately by budget and by appropriate human and material resources.



## Catholic Trusteeship: A Unique Challenge

*“No one should seek (the office of trustee) for any motive other than an objective one of serving and of trying to make the school system better.”*

*G. Emmett Cardinal Carter*

The *Education Act* specifies that to be eligible to serve as a Catholic school trustee a person must be:

- a Canadian citizen
- a Roman Catholic
- 18 years of age or older
- a resident within the jurisdiction of the board, and
- not an employee of any district school board

Given the mission and distinctiveness of Catholic schools, it is simply not enough for a trustee of a Catholic school board to meet only the minimum legal requirements of office.

Catholic school boards need trustees who are persons of faith, with a vision of life that is centred in the person of Jesus, and whose life and lifestyle give personal witness and example to the teachings of Christ.

Catholic school boards must be served by trustees who have a sense of being called to ministry. They must be trustees who insist on quality academic programs steeped in gospel values and excellence and who publicly promote and defend the religious dimension of our Catholic schools.

Catholic school boards will function effectively with trustees who possess Christian attributes and skills which facilitate full participation of all board members in the decision-making process, which foster respect for diverse opinions, and which promote good working relationships with others.

Catholic school boards will benefit from the dedicated contributions of deeply committed trustees. Trustees must be capable of dealing with the pressures of office and willing to make difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions. They must be prepared to devote the time necessary to attend meetings and public functions, to reflect the interests and priorities of constituencies on various board committees and/or advisory bodies and to address the concerns of parents.



## **Catholic Leadership: A Shared Responsibility**

*“There is no such thing as “just a job” in a Catholic school. There are only various forms of Christian service, each calling for extraordinary dedication.”  
This Moment of Promise*

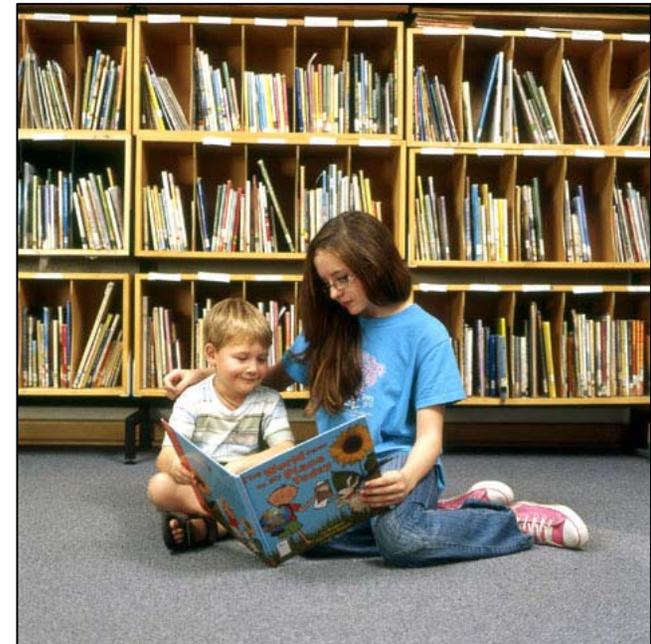
Catholic school boards employ professional supervisory officers and administrative staff to supervise and manage the operations of the school system, to implement board decisions and policies, and to provide trustees with their professional expertise, advice and guidance. All of these functions are critical to effective board planning and decision-making.

The ministry of Catholic trustees and administrators is a gospel invitation to work as a team, with mutual respect for their complementary roles, as they strive toward their common goal of providing authentic Catholic education.

Together, trustees and administrators bring to the decision-making process, public, political, legislative, and religious perspectives and concerns, as well as professional experience, information and counsel. Prudent decisions are made when these factors are present in a Christian atmosphere of trust, respect and honesty.

Catholic trustees share their servant leadership with their partners in the Catholic educational community. Parents, clergy, teachers and staff are all part of the consultation process. This partnership is essential to the Catholic school system.

Through facilitating policies and providing adequate resources and in-service opportunities in a Christian atmosphere, Catholic trustees empower and encourage teachers and other staff to be inspirational and creative and to fulfill their ministry of evangelization through Catholic education.



## **The Joy of Service: Privilege, Responsibility**

*“... those involved in Catholic education have an awesome  
privilege and responsibility.”*

*This Moment of Promise*

As members of the Catholic community, Catholic trustees are called to serve Christ in an educational system whose mission is to share the person and message of Christ through the curriculum and life of the Catholic school. It is this Christ-centred mission which makes Catholic schools distinctive.

Through this important Church ministry, trustees share in the joy of providing an education that addresses the spiritual, moral, academic and physical needs of our young people. A trustee’s sense of accomplishment comes from the decisions and initiatives which impact positively on the students’ learning and growth in faith.

Trustees are encouraged by the knowledge that the contribution of their skills, experience and time is an investment in the future and in the future leadership of our communities, our Catholic schools, our country and our Church.

Trustees acknowledge and celebrate the service rendered by the entire Catholic community. They give thanks and praise to God for the generous service of all partners in Catholic education.

The Catholic educational community has an enviable record of strong trustee leadership, service, commitment, determination, creativity and management, even in times of adversity.

The history of Catholic schools in Ontario is rich with the struggles and successes of Catholic school trustees. It is a legacy of well-established Catholic schools and school systems across this province.

Current and future generations of Catholic trustees will share in the joy of adding new and meaningful dimensions to this legacy.

