

NIAGARA CATHOLIC ANNOUNCES 2019 CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

The Niagara Catholic District School Board held its Inaugural Meeting of the 2018-2022 Board of Trustees at Denis Morris Catholic High School on December 4, 2018. The Inaugural Meeting was preceded by a Mass and Commissioning of the trustees-elect at St. Julia Catholic Church, officiated by Bishop Bergie.

Niagara Catholic's new Board was sworn in during the Inaugural Meeting by the Honourable Madame Justice Jane Milanetti of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, immediately prior to the election for the Chair and Vice-Chair.

Frank Fera, trustee for Niagara Falls since 2000, was acclaimed as Chair of the Board. He served as Vice-Chair in 2009. This is his first time as Chair.

Dino Sicoli, who was elected by English-Catholic school board supporters in Port Colborne, Fort Erie and Wainfleet, was elected Vice-Chair. He previously served as Vice-Chair in 2015.

During his remarks, Chair Fera spoke about the importance of remaining focused on the mission of continuing to provide excellence in Catholic education to students in Niagara.

"As we move forward, focusing on making students as a priority, at the centre of our Board's mandate, we must keep Catholicity at the core of our decision making," he said. "That is what makes us unique – let us embrace it. Furthermore, we have an obligation as trustees to inspire our staff and, in turn, our students, to instill faith in them, to encourage them and to provide them with unique opportunities to walk in the footsteps of Saint Paul and become true followers of Christ."

Vice-Chair Sicoli spoke about the opportunities a new Board of Trustees have to promote Catholic education in Niagara.

"We are in the midst of a period of transition here at Niagara Catholic," said Vice-Chair Sicoli. "We welcome five new trustees to the Board. For many organizations, this amount of change could signify significant challenges. I choose to look at it as a time for opportunities - opportunities that will allow us to move forward in our quest to provide a quality Catholic education to our students."

Director of Education John Crocco welcomed Niagara Catholic's five new trustees and welcomed back returning ones, and congratulated Chair Fera and Vice-Chair Sicoli on their new roles.

"I am pleased to welcome our newest trustees to the Niagara Catholic family, and congratulations to Chair Fera and Vice-Chair Sicoli," said Director Crocco. "We look forward to working with the new Board of Trustees, as we continue to build upon Niagara Catholic's strong foundation and continue to the tradition of excellence in Catholic education in Niagara.

"I also extend sincere appreciation, on behalf of the entire Niagara Catholic family, to our former trustees Maurice Charbonneau, Father Paul MacNeil, Ed Nieuwesteeg, Ted O'Leary and Pat Vernal. May God continue to bless you as you embark on new paths, and I invite you to remain connected with Niagara Catholic."

The complete texts of remarks by the Chair and Vice-Chair are attached for your information.

Niagara Catholic provides excellence in Catholic education to approximately 21,000 students throughout Niagara, from Kindergarten through graduation.

Contact: John Crocco, Director of Education
Issued by: Jennifer Pellegrini, Communications Officer
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Welcome All,

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I am honoured to acknowledge His Excellency, Bishop Bergie, the Honourary Chair of the Board; a true disciple of Christ and a Bishop who tends to his flock with the utmost piety and sincerity. Thank you, Your Excellency, for your presence here this evening and for celebrating Mass with us on this important occasion. I also wish to acknowledge the co-celebrants of this evening's Mass, and thank them for their participation, Monsignor Clutterbuck, Father Paul MacNeil and Father Aji Varghese.

A special welcome to the newly elected trustees, who have entrusted me with this vote of confidence as Chair of the Board, a position I will hold seriously, with integrity and humility.

To begin with, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to those who daily are given the distinct privilege of touching the lives of our students in so many capacities: Thank you religious leaders, principals, teachers, support staff and custodial workers. It is you who are the heart of our schools. It is all of you whom we owe a debt of gratitude. Thank you. Let us always keep in mind that it is our students who give us purpose and hope.

As we move forward focusing on students as a priority, at the centre of our Board's mandate, we must keep Catholicity at the core of our decision-making. This is what makes us unique – let us embrace it. Together we must work collaboratively to create a culture of kindness, a system that values and upholds positive communication with all employees.

Communication is essential to the credibility and welfare of this Board. It will be the conduit for our successes. Above all, I wish to remind all of the trustees that it is our job to listen and receive feedback from everyone in the community that we serve, especially the parents and guardians who depend on us to ensure that their voices will be heard.

Furthermore, we have an obligation as trustees to inspire our staff and, in turn, our students, to instill faith in them, to encourage them and to provide them with unique opportunities to walk in the footsteps of Saint Paul and become true followers of Christ. And this should not be taken lightly. For it is my profound belief that our public activities are undeniable manifestations of what we profess as a Catholic community.

Lastly, as we begin this new Board year, with the overwhelming theme of bringing forth positive change, together, let us embark upon a fulfilling journey of hope and faith, and let it be our priority to help to grow and support our students and staff. As we strive to encourage the triad that is our school board, let us draw upon the words of Bishop Bergie, who, in a recent article of *The Vineyard*, stated, and I quote: there can be peace and calm in our faith the midst of any storm, but to find it, we must go deep and encounter our faith."

Thank you, and enjoy the evening.

Your excellency, trustee colleagues and guests: Welcome to the Inaugural Meeting of the Niagara Catholic District School Board, which officially marks the beginning of the 2019 School Board year.

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to address you tonight as the Vice-Chair of The Niagara Catholic District School Board.

Let me extend thanks on behalf of our new Board to our outgoing Chair, Trustee Fr. Paul McNeil, Vice- Chair Pat Vernal. We thank them for their contributions and for the important work they have done for Catholic Education in Niagara.

I am proud to be a Catholic trustee and I am honoured to serve as the Vice-Chair of this Board. I accept this important role with humility. I thank my fellow trustees for allowing me the opportunity to serve in this privileged role. The trust and faith you have placed in me is very much valued and it gives me the confidence I will need to serve this Board.

As I have done in the past, I can only promise to continue to do the best job I can. The rest we do and accomplish as a team. We are in the midst of a period of transition here at Niagara Catholic. We welcome five new trustees to the Board. For many organizations this amount of change could signify significant challenges. I choose to look at it as a time for opportunities - opportunities that will allow us to move forward in our quest to provide a quality Catholic education to our students. Opportunities to work with our dedicated staff, senior administration, parents, clergy and students in bringing a faith based, and Christ centered education to all who choose to attend our schools. This is our opportunity to let our constituents know that Catholic education in Niagara will be healthy, strong and a vital part of the publicly funded education system in this province.

Biblically speaking this is an opportunity to re-build a positive culture of hospitality, collegiality, one of integrity, honesty and respect –building of the Kingdom of God. This is indeed a great opportunity to make a difference...one-step at a time.

A special thank you is extended to all of our teaching & support staff, our principals and vice-principals who everyday go above and beyond for our students. Your commitment is evident in the vibrancy of spirit that is experienced in our Catholic school communities and it is a testament to the exceptional quality of education offered in our classrooms.

Catholic education is a gift to treasure, to cherish, to promote and to protect. Trustees, the responsibility to do that falls squarely on our shoulders. Our message needs to be about the value of Catholic education. As always, it is our students who give us purpose and hope. They are the reason we are here. We delight in seeing how engaged they are in their learning, how they give witness to their faith, and how they are making a positive impact on our world. I thank them for the inspiration they bring to us.

As we begin this new board year, I look forward with hope, with confidence, and with optimism, in working with all of the Educational partners.

In closing, I want to share with you a closing prayer from today's Mass. *“LORD, come and dwell in every part of our life. Make us into your glorious dwelling place.”* This is a place where we bring peace, justice, truth to one another.

Thank you and God Bless all of you.

