



MOST REVEREND THOMAS COLLINS
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Dear Trustees of the Toronto Catholic District School Board,

Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

One evening not long ago I joined a gathering of devoted Catholic educators in the room where you deliberate, to celebrate the publication of Dr. Robert Dixon's new history of Catholic education in Toronto, *We Remember, We Believe*. It is a story of many difficulties, but also of the dedication, competence, and self-sacrifice of the religious sisters and brothers, and of the laity and clergy who for over 160 years developed Catholic education in our community. We have much of which we can be proud in the past, and in the present.

The fundamental theme is simple: selfless dedication to the common good which is a Catholic education, rooted in the Gospel, for the benefit of the children who receive it. As I travel from school to school I see that all the time.

That very morning, Mr. Hartmann had issued his most thorough, fair, and excellent report outlining with painful but most fruitful clarity the actions of the board and its members, which fall far short of the standard expected of any board exercising a public trust. It is a picture which does not reveal the spirit of selfless devotion to the common good which is fundamental to Catholic education in Ontario, and which is the heritage of Catholic education in Toronto. The Toronto Catholic District School Board is only one of many Catholic boards, which all together care for over 600,000 students, but the reality of this board's actions over the past few years reflects poorly on Catholic education, and on our whole Catholic community.



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In 1853 the second Bishop of Toronto, Bishop Charbonnel, wrote:
"You [parents] will elect school trustees who, being your representatives in your most sacred of your duties, will choose the teachers of your children, direct and discipline their schools, and promote their religious, intellectual and temporal welfare by the extended powers granted to, and the grave obligations imposed on them by the law. You see therefore at once that the fate of your schools will depend on the choice of the trustees and of the teachers."

It has always been the conviction of the Catholic community that the role of the Catholic trustee is vital to our school system. You work under the Education Act and other laws of the Province of Ontario to ensure that Catholic education is provided to the children of Catholic parents. You are called to serve as role models by the way in which you conduct yourselves individually and collectively. You are also representatives of the Catholic community. You are called to be examples, and the standard to which you are held is high, because we are called to be witnesses to the faith, which is the highest standard. You are accountable not only to the Catholic community but also to the people of Ontario. Your practices must be above reproach, consistent both with the law and with the ideals of Christian stewardship.

We can draw inspiration from the history of Catholic education in Toronto, and lessons from the revelation of the failures of recent years. The principles of governance noted throughout Mr. Hartmann's report set the minimum standard for those entrusted with responsibility as a board of education. The Catholic community expects that all who are entrusted with a role in Catholic education will exhibit selfless dedication arising from faith, and from a consciousness of the sacred vocation of Catholic educators.

This is no time for fruitless recrimination, or divisive bickering. Only selfless pursuit of the common good of the children can restore the trust that has been lost.

All who hold public office need accountability, but also the support and the prayers of those whom they serve. Be assured that in these difficult days I pray that God will abundantly bless you and guide you. You can count on my support and interest in the vital work that you do.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Thomas Collins

Thomas Collins,
Archbishop of Toronto.