

ANSWERING THE CALL TO VOCATION: BECOMING A CATHOLIC SCHOOL TRUSTEE



A GUIDE FOR THOSE CONSIDERING
CATHOLIC TRUSTEESHIP

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Introduction: A Brief History of Catholic Schools

Alberta boasts a strong publicly-funded educational system where Catholic education holds a distinct role. This role has strong historic roots; existing prior to the creation of the province, it was further constitutionally enshrined with the *Alberta Act, 1905*. With this foundation, Catholic education is celebrated and continually strengthened today through Alberta's publicly funded system. The Alberta government's commitment to providing Alberta students with an education system that offers them choice is exemplified in the preamble to the existing *School Act*, saying:

"The Government of Alberta affirms its commitment to the preservation and continuation of its one publicly funded system of education through its two dimensions: the public schools and the separate schools."

For the past decade, francophone schools have also been part of the publicly-funded system as a choice for francophone students.

Students have an opportunity to thrive and achieve success in a faith-based educational system which challenges them to reach their learning potential. Catholic education is an indispensable part of the culture and education system.

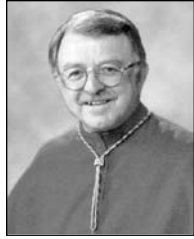
This booklet is meant to explore the unique place that Catholic schools have in Alberta. In addition, it will discuss the role of the Catholic school trustee and inform Catholic school electors of their unique role in the Catholic partnership between school, home, and parish. This booklet is intended only as an introduction and guide. For additional information, please contact your local school board, Alberta Education, the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association, or the Alberta School Boards Association.

All the great spiritual leaders in history were people of hope. Abraham, Moses, Ruth, Mary, Jesus, Rumi, Gandhi, Dorothy Day, all lived with a promise in their hearts that guided them toward the future without the need to know exactly what it would look like. Let's live with hope.

~ Henri J.M. Nouwen



My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:



We are joined together in communion as a Catholic family, and called forth to receive our vocation in Christ. Part of this vocation ensures our continued support of Catholic schools. Catholic schools are an essential part of faith formation and a critical apex in the triad of church, home, and school. Our support of Catholic schools can take many forms, but one form is the call to Catholic trusteeship.

All Catholic Separate school boards are both “Catholic” and “Separate”, the first adjective being an ecclesiastical designation and the second being a legal designation in civil law. Catholic trustees are called upon to adhere to the principles and intent of both Canon Law and Civil Law. In this way the authority, responsibility and jurisdiction of Catholic Separate school trustees is considerably complicated compared to their non-Catholic Public school counterparts, which are called upon only to adhere to the constraints of civil law.

The heart and soul of Catholic education is Jesus Christ, and our school system finds its very reason for existence in its communication of the Christian message. As evangelizers we are called to bring Christ’s message into new places in our communities. Catholic trusteeship is one way that we can do this. We have been called to work together as a community of believers committed to putting the values of our faith into practice in the daily life of the school, the home and all of society.

This booklet reminds us all of our mission. I commend the Alberta Catholic School Trustees’ Association for developing and publishing this document. It will help to focus our attention on the importance of Catholic education in the province of Alberta.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. H. Henry'.

Frederick Henry
Bishop of Calgary
April 2010



*We are all pencils in the hand
of God.*

~ Mother Teresa

Catholic Schools: Permeated by Faith

Catholic education is a unique partnership between the school, home and parish.

Together this triad seeks to develop a student's whole person by integrating academic excellence and faith. The central focus of Catholic education is Jesus Christ.

This faith dimension ensures that Catholic schools are not a duplicate of public schools. Catholic schools are distinctive faith communities that nurture the spiritual, academic and physical needs of students through the integration of the Alberta Education curriculum with gospel values and sacramental life. Christ is the centre of the Catholic school and his presence and teaching permeate the school building. However, it doesn't just stop at a cross on the wall or a chapel in the school or a religious ceremony, there is a faith dimension integrated into every aspect of the curriculum.

Catholic schools have become a definitive and positive choice for many families because of their innovation and creativity. Catholic schools continue to excel in the foundational themes identified by Alberta Education in 2009-2010 as areas of growth: opportunity, fairness, citizenship, diversity, excellence and choice.

Opportunity

Alberta's students are afforded an opportunity to receive high quality education permeated by Catholic faith. Students achieve extremely high standards of excellence in academics, athletics, the arts, and in other specialized programs. When combining this with an integration of Gospel teachings and sacramental life, students are holistically achieving their full potential in Catholic schools.

Fairness

Fairness is a key component not only of the Catholic faith, but also of Catholic schools. A commitment to the ethics of social justice dwells within the walls of the school and extends into the school community. In addition, one of the successes of our schools has been the creation of specialized programs which serve students of all abilities. Catholic

schools celebrate this nurturing and know that it makes Catholic education something special.

Citizenship

Many of today's leaders have been educated in Catholic schools. Students in our Catholic schools are being continually challenged to engage critically with the world. Our Catholic teachers and administration know the importance of fostering knowledge that is creative and adaptive; our Catholic students are being educated to become global citizens able to compete successfully in a knowledge-based economy. The permeation of faith in our schools adds an extra and holistic component to this equation.

Diversity

Catholic schools are places of great diversity. They foster and encourage a student population that demonstrates diversity of background and diversity of abilities. This is a diversity that is both encouraged and supported. Furthermore, it is a diversity that is legislatively recognized in both the *School Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Excellence

Alberta's parents and students are continually recognizing the success that is occurring in Catholic schools. This success has been demonstrated in the high profile of Catholic schools as yearly award winners in the Minister's Education Leadership Recognition awards, as well as with increasing enrolments in Catholic schools.

Choice

Alberta's publicly-funded education system recognizes the need for choice. It provides students with opportunities to choose an education program that fits their academic and faith needs. This choice-based system is legislatively recognized in both the *School Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Having choice in a publicly-funded education system makes all elements of the



The whole fruit of their educational endeavors should consist in the testimony of God and a good conscience.

~St. Thomas More

education system better, as each component works to create adaptive and innovative ways to provide the best education possible to students.

Catholic schools offer an integrated curriculum of faith formation and academic development in an effort to form the student's whole person. This puts Catholic schools in a unique position within the publicly-funded education system, one that is celebrated by the community and guided by the work of the Catholic school trustee.

*The future starts today,
not tomorrow.
~ Pope John Paul II*

Responding to Your Vocation: A Call to Trusteeship

Catholic schools are governed by locally-elected Catholic school boards comprised of Catholic trustees. They are a vital link between the school, the church, the community, and the government, and they provide an essential Catholic oversight of the school division or district. The Catholic school trustee, answering the vocation of trusteeship, is a steward for the Catholic school. This vocation is a call from the Church and the community to bring together faith and political life to share in the central mission of the Church: passing our Catholic faith on to our children.

To be a Catholic school trustee represents a dual challenge: trustees must ensure that students are provided an education, while at the same time ensuring that Catholic principles and values are reflected in policies and practices of the school board, thus establishing an education system that is permeated by faith. In practice, this plays out in trustees being accountable to both government legislation, as well as *Canon Law* (Church Law).

Through legislation, the government delegates much of its authority for the governance of education to locally elected boards. Catholic school boards are also accountable to the bishop in their diocese.



Canon 806(1) states:

“The diocesan Bishop has the right to watch over and inspect the Catholic schools situated in his territory, even those established or directed by members of religious institutes. He has also the right to issue directives concerning the general regulations of Catholic schools.”

The ability to fulfill both a faith role and a political role without compromise is paramount for Catholic school trustees. Their position as leaders in the faith community requires understanding, a willingness to grow, and a commitment to bear daily witness to the faith.

Finally, the trustee is an important link in the partnership of home, school and parish. As representatives of the Catholic community to the government, trustees have the opportunity and responsibility to model their faith in the political arena. Implicit in that role is the responsibility to speak out when legislation or political action threatens to compromise the unique nature of Catholic education. Catholic school trustees must continually call for a discerning, visionary, and purposeful interpretation of legislation which recognizes the essence of Catholic education and its significance to society.

What does a Catholic School Trustee Do?

- As trustees, Catholic education is entrusted to us. We must hold within ourselves a deeper understanding of and commitment to the nature of Catholic education.
- As trustees, we ensure that the essence of Catholic education, formed through partnership of home, school and parish, is recognized and supported in the political arena.

Many yearn, but we must lead them to be all lost in wonder, not all worried about pragmatism. We must instill in a new generation the true heart of spirituality, which does not just seek quick answers, but asks greater questions.

~Build Bethlehem Everywhere

- As trustees, we ensure the support and encouragement of our teachers and school staff by providing them with opportunities for faith formation.
- As trustees, we ensure that our educational leaders are able to examine their unique role in shaping the faith life of their school.
- As trustees, we ensure that our students are seen as individuals and given the chance to study in a learning environment permeated by Gospel values and sacramental life.

Roles of a Catholic School Trustee

Politician

Trustees have a public responsibility to ensure their school jurisdiction meets the educational and financial guidelines issued by the government. They are also responsible to their electorate for ensuring that the Catholic community's beliefs and principles are reflected in the school district's policies and programs.

Goal Setter

Trustees provide corporate leadership for the school jurisdiction. They set goals, create statements of purpose for the board, and establish results the board wishes to achieve.

Policy Maker

Trustees develop policies which guide administration and staff in achieving district goals. In this role, the trustee anticipates special needs and frequently reviews the board's policies to ensure it is meeting the district's objectives.

Planner

Trustees must establish priorities to meet the goals set by the board, taking into account the desires of the community and the financial and human resources available. They must also be willing to devote a significant amount of time to their work as trustees.



Communicator

A trustee interacts with a variety of people: the electorate, who need to know that their concerns are being heard and acted upon; the government; the media; school administrators and staff; and other board members. In all cases, the need for clear and effective communication is essential.

Information Receiver and Disseminator

In order to make sound decisions, trustees must seek out pertinent information, keep up-to-date on educational matters, analyze the vast amount of data they receive and clearly communicate information.

Advocate for Education

Trustees are responsible for maintaining a positive image and a high profile for Catholic education locally, provincially and nationally. They inform the community of the district's accomplishments, acknowledge specific concerns, and contribute to responsible solutions.

Role Model

The most significant role of a trustee is to be a Catholic role model in and outside of the boardroom. A Christian lifestyle and a personal commitment to the Catholic faith are basic and essential to the trustee's public credibility.



I call you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit, just as you are called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. Each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. The gifts he gave were to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ.

~ Ephesians 4: 1-7, 12

Steps to Becoming a Catholic School Trustee: Legal Requirements

School board elections are held every three years in conjunction with municipal elections. Candidates are governed by the *Local Authorities Election Act* which states:

“21(1) A person may be nominated as a candidate in any election under this Act if on nomination day the person

- a) is eligible to vote in that election;*
- b) has been a resident of the local jurisdiction and the ward, if any, for the six consecutive months immediately preceding nomination day; and*
- c) is not otherwise ineligible or disqualified.*

(3) Notwithstanding subsection (1), a candidate for trustee of a board of a school district that is wholly or partly within the boundaries of a city is not required to be a resident of the ward in either a general election or a by-election, but must be a resident of the school district.”

Residency is defined in sections 44(4) and 220(6) of the *School Act* which state:

“44(4) Where a separate school district is established, an individual residing within the boundaries of the separate school district who is of the same faith as those who established that district, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic,

- a) is a resident of the separate school district, and*
- b) is not a resident of the public school district”*

“220(6)... after a separate school district is established, a person residing within the boundaries of the separate school district who is of the same faith as those who established that district, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, is a resident of the separate school district and is not a resident of the public school district.”

In these sections, Roman Catholic includes all members of the Roman Catholic Church and all of the Eastern Catholic churches which recognize the Pope as the head of the Church.



Sections 22 to 24 of the *Local Authorities Election Act* outline the circumstances by which candidates are ineligible to run as a candidate. This includes:

22(1.1) A person is not eligible to be nominated as a candidate for election as a trustee of a school board if on nomination day the person is employed by

- a) a school district or division,*
- b) a charter school, or*
- c) a private school,*

in Alberta unless the person is on a leave of absence granted under this section.”

If candidates under section 22(1.1) are elected, they are deemed to have resigned from the district by which they are employed on the day they take their official oath of office.

In addition to the legal requirements, candidates running for Catholic school trustee also have:

- the desire to be a leader in the faith community,
- the commitment to the formation of students academically and spiritually, and
- the willingness to explore and grow in their own faith.



Responsibilities of Catholic School Electors

The success of Catholic schools depends on the effort of everyone in the faith community. While some are called to run as candidates for school trustee, others may be called to be supporters of Catholic education in other ways. Whether it is in the classroom, home, or parish, every member of the faith community has a responsibility to

Catholic social teaching more than anything else insists that we are one family; it calls us to overcome barriers of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, economic status and nationality. we are all one in Christ Jesus - beyond our differences and boundaries.

~Communities of Salt and Light,

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 1993

ensure the vibrancy of our Catholic schools today and far into the future. An election is a prime opportunity for the community to have its say in how Catholic education continues to endure.

Section 47(1) of the *Local Authorities Election Act* states that a person is eligible to vote if he or she is at least 18 years old, a Canadian citizen, a resident of Alberta for the six consecutive months immediately preceding election day and is a resident in the area on election day. Sections 44(4) and 220(6) of the *School Act* define residence as being “of the same faith as those who established the district, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic.” In these sections, Roman Catholic includes all members of the Roman Catholic Church and all of the Eastern Catholic churches which recognize the Pope as the head of the Church.

All eligible members of the Catholic community have the responsibility to vote and to become involved in decisions regarding Catholic education. There are a number of opportunities for community members to become involved. These include:

- attending local school board meetings,
- during an election, becoming informed about the candidates and their ideas,
- ensuring that the policies of the board are a true reflection of the beliefs and values of the Catholic community, and



- participating in a local school council, either as a parent or a community representative.

Faith for the Future

It is the responsibility of all members of the faith community to heed the call to serve and support the formation of our children, whether that call is Catholic school trustee, educator, or community supporter. The responsibility to show Christ to our students lies on all our shoulders.

Catholic school trusteeship is a unique vocation which serves the Church and the community. The Catholic school trustee plays an integral part in ensuring that Christ is the heart and soul of every Catholic school. The uniqueness of Catholic education lies in the fact that its purpose and end is holiness.



ACSTA Member Boards

Calgary RCSSD No. 1
Christ the Redeemer CSRD No. 3
Conseil scolaire catholique et francophone du Sud de l'Alberta
Conseil scolaire Centre-Est No. 3
Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord
Conseil scolaire du Nord-Ouest No. 1
East Central Alberta CSSRD No. 16
Edmonton CSSD No. 7
Elk Island CSRD No. 41
Evergreen CSRD No. 2
Fort McMurray RCSSD No. 32
Grande Prairie RCSSD No. 28
Greater St. Albert CRD No. 29
Holy Family CRD No. 37
Holy Spirit RCSR No. 4
Lakeland RCSSD No. 150
Living Water CRD No. 42
Lloydminster RCSSD No. 89
Medicine Hat CSRD No. 20
Red Deer CRD No. 39
St. Paul ERD No. 1
St. Thomas Aquinas RCSR No. 38
Yellowknife Catholic Schools

Your local school board is:

For more information on Catholic schools in Alberta and the Northwest Territories, please contact the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association or your local Catholic school board.



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