



**INAUGURAL ADDRESS**

**2017**

**CHAIR OF THE BOARD**

**DECEMBER 6, 2016**

Fr. Hibbard, Ms. Weir-Burt, senior administration, trustee colleagues and guests:

Welcome to the Inaugural Meeting of the Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board, which officially marks the beginning of the 2017 School Board year.

Fr. Hibbard, please accept my personal thank you for your presence with us this evening and, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, extend to His Grace, Archbishop O'Brien, our sincere appreciation for his continued public support of our Catholic schools and his spiritual guidance as we work to fulfill our Catholic education mission.

Let me extend thanks on behalf of our Board to our outgoing Chair, Trustee Greg Speagle. For the past two years Trustee Speagle has served the Board as Chair and I thank him for his contributions and for the important work he has done for our Catholic school board.

Thank you to my trustee colleagues for allowing me to serve as Chair of the Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board. It is an honour and a privilege. 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 Chair. I have always felt supported by my fellow trustees and I commit to faithfully serving the Board, the students, the staff and all the constituents of our Catholic school board.

I am pleased to welcome trustee Terry Shea into the role of Vice-Chair and trustee Sean Kelly as Chair of the Finance and Operations Committee. I will look to them for support and advice throughout this term and we will work collaboratively in service of our Catholic education system.

Over 25 years ago, the Ontario Bishops wrote a pastoral letter on Catholic Education titled "*This Moment of Promise*". In that letter, our Bishops wrote:

“This is not the moment to simply let things happen or to merely react as situations develop. This moment of promise and risk demands that the Catholic community discern with care and with confidence the steps that lie ahead within the total panorama of education in Ontario.”

Resonating as true today as in 1989, this challenge remains most important to our Catholic education agenda. For us, the trustees of the Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board, we are the advocates, stewards and guardians of Catholic education for almost 12,000 students in schools across our 16,000 square kilometer jurisdiction. For this reason, we are together, bound by a call of service to preserve and enhance the distinctive character of Catholic education, and to do so, with confidence, with care, with compassion and with justice.

Our Catholic School Board, has a strong sense of direction and purpose. We have worked closely with the Director of Education and our senior staff to create a robust and ambitious Strategic Plan that sets forth a bold agenda for the Board. It will continue to be our responsibility as Trustees to ensure that the vision expressed in this plan is realized throughout the Board.

Director DiRocco and Senior Staff, I know I speak for all Trustees when I say how much we are looking forward to continuing to work with you over the upcoming year. Your passion and dedication is evident, and your inspiring leadership motivates others. We respect your depth of knowledge and appreciate your patient support and contributions; helping us to make appropriate and well-informed decisions so that the experience of the students in our schools is rich, meaningful and rewarding.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to thank all of our staff, 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.

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.

I am proud to be a Catholic trustee and I am honoured to serve as the Chair of this Board; a Board that respects the traditions of our faith and one that recognizes our part in an ever changing global society. As we begin this new board year, I look forward with hope, with confidence, and with optimism, to a future where each student and staff member, in our Catholic school system is able to grow and mature into the person God has intended them to be.

Thank you and God Bless.