



THOMAS THOMAS
TRUSTEE - MISSISSAUGA, WARD-5

"Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength." - *Isaiah 40:31*

Our DPCDSB **Mission**: Disciples of Christ, nurturing mind, body and soul to the fullness of life.
Our DPCDSB **Vision**: Changing the world through Catholic education.

May 2021

This month, the virtue of **ACCEPTANCE** applies to our Catholic social teachings to create school environments that are safe, caring, and inclusive. Throughout the pandemic, we have witnessed how our school communities have united in faith and come together to promote equality, democracy, and solidarity for a more compassionate world.

Catholic Education Week, May 2-8 – While Catholic Education Week is an integral part of the faith life in our school board throughout the entire school year, this special week provides additional unique opportunities to highlight what Catholic Education means. As Trustees, we are stewards and advocates of Catholic education for our students. In Ontario, we come together as 29 Catholic school boards and locally, as 500 publicly funded Catholic schools across the Archdiocese of Toronto. We are thankful our Catholic schools foster an environment rooted in our call to love and serve, inspired by our Catholic faith. All Catholic Education Week resources are available on the website: www.goodnewsforall.ca.

This year's theme for Catholic Education Week is **Nurturing Hope**. The sub-themes are:

Monday: **Preparing the Earth / Préparer la terre**
Tuesday: **Sowing Seeds of Gratitude / Semer la gratitude**
Wednesday: **Cultivating Relationships / Cultiver nos relations**
Thursday: **Harvesting New Fruit / Récolter de nouveaux fruits**
Friday: **Marveling in Wonder / S'émerveiller**

This year, DPCDSB will feature a social media campaign called #MyCatholicSchool to commemorate Catholic Education Week. Students, staff, parents/guardians and alumni, are asked to reflect on "What do you love about your Catholic school?" or "How are you or your school nurturing hope in your community?" and can share their thoughts through posts, pictures and videos on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram using the hashtags

Extraordinary lives start with a great Catholic education.

#MyCatholicSchool and #DPCDSB_NurturingHope. To find out more about the #MyCatholicSchool campaign, follow along on Twitter (@DPCDSBSchools), Facebook (@DPCDSBSchools) and Instagram (@dpcdsb.schools).

His Eminence, Thomas Cardinal Collins, will celebrate a province-wide Catholic Education Week Mass on May 5, at 11 a.m. EST. Our Catholic school communities, including parents/guardians and families, are invited to participate "virtually" in this celebration of the Eucharist which will be Livestreamed at <https://stmichaelscathedral.com/live>

COVID-19 Funding Update – At the March 23 Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees, an update on the second phase of the Federal investments under the *Safe Return to Class Fund* was provided. Both phases provided funds of \$381 million to the province of Ontario. The initial phase was announced in August 2020. The second phase of the Federal funding resulted in an allocation of \$7.3 million to DPCDSB.

In total, \$24.7 million in one-time provincial and federal funding has been allocated to DPCDSB during this 2020-2021 school year to support learning, technology, transportation, staffing and enhanced health and safety and cleaning measures. DPCDSB has committed the use of all provincial and federal funding. Additionally, DPCDSB is authorized to use up to an additional 1% of accumulated surplus for COVID-19 related expenditures that equates to approximately \$8.9 million and has access to Proceeds of Disposition (POD) of \$0.89 million. Many unknown expenditures related to COVID-19 may still emerge as we continue to the end of this fiscal year, however the plans enacted to date have helped navigate the uncharted territory of fully remote learning, class dismissals, digital software and programming and enhanced health and safety measures. Discussions are ongoing with respect to the 2021-2022 school year and expectations. The DPCDSB Board of Trustees continues to advocate to the Ministry of Education and raise concerns of COVID-19 impacts, and the significant costs involved in operating under these conditions.

The second phase of the federal funding focused on priorities to support the learning and technological needs of students, as well as the health and safety and well-being of all students and staff. DPCDSB has invested in additional Chromebooks and laptops, high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters and portable air scrubbers and will also install swipe access on exterior doors at schools. This will help to address safety concerns and provide additional access points for entering the school for staff and students throughout the day and reduce crowding at bell times.

DPCDSB Public Budget Consultation - A pre-recorded Public Budget Consultation Presentation is available for viewing as well as access to the *ThoughtExchange*® platform to provide input. The links are available on the Public Budget Consultation webpage on the main DPCDSB website. *ThoughtExchange* will be open until May 3rd for input. All other documents and presentations will be available on the website until the end of May.

Technology – Ensuring students and staff have the technology required to provide quality Catholic education and to facilitate learning, both in-person and remote online, has been one of the most significant cost pressures for DPCDSB.

As noted, the new federal funding provides an additional \$3.0 million to address these needs. DPCDSB has utilized the technology funding to procure an additional 4,100 devices, including Chromebooks and enhanced laptops. Our total investment in new computer devices during 2020-2021 is now at 14,400, in addition to Edwin devices. In total, DPCDSB has over 62,000 devices in distribution across the system.

2021-2022 Capital Priorities Projects – On March 24, the Ministry of Education launched the 2021-2022 Capital Priorities Program for school boards to submit business cases for priority capital projects to address accommodation needs such as growth pressures, replacing schools in poor condition, and creating new licensed childcare spaces in schools. Eligible projects include new schools, retrofits and additions that need to be completed by the 2024-2025 school year. The submission deadline for all capital funding requests is May 21.

Renewal Backlog – As of 2019, DPCDSB schools have an estimated total repair backlog of approximately \$345 million, of which about \$60 million is for HVAC repairs. Other key building components that make up a significant

portion of the backlog are the building envelope (roofs, windows, doors, exterior walls) and the mechanical and electrical systems. The Ministry of Education provided approximately \$26 million in funding for the 2020-2021 school year through the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) to DPCDSB to address this repair backlog.

In addition to the GSN funding from the Ministry of Education, DPCDSB is pleased to have received \$24.5 million in funding from the federal government through the COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure Stream (CVRIS) for the following school improvements:

- Air handling unit and exhaust fan replacements to improve ventilation;
- Installation of new information technology network infrastructure in classrooms;
- Purchase of new portables to replace aging ones with poor ventilation;
- Installation of water bottle filling stations;
- Installation of new exterior access doors in kindergarten/childcare classrooms;
- Boiler replacements.

Air Scrubbers – DPCDSB has now deployed approximately 1,000 portable air scrubbers using the federal air quality/ventilation funding provided during the 2020-2021 school year. The deployment of scrubbers has focused on elementary schools whose ventilation systems have recirculating air systems (i.e., do not provide 100% fresh air intake) and portable classrooms system-wide that are currently in use by students. Additional units have been ordered and will be deployed over the coming weeks.

Energy Initiatives – In 2019, DPCDSB began a new *Five-Year Energy Conservation and Demand Management Plan* with a target of reducing energy consumption by 12.5% over five years. Two years into the plan, DPCDSB is well on its way to meeting this target, as total energy consumption has been reduced by almost 10%.

Energy initiatives planned for the five-year period from 2019 to 2023 include:

1. New LED lighting in all schools by 2023;
2. The installation of high efficiency HVAC (boilers, air handling units, etc.), at many schools;
3. Building automation systems installations to promote higher energy efficiency, reduced maintenance costs, and improved comfort.

Furthermore, DPCDSB is saving energy through its shuttering program, where unused classrooms in schools are taken out of service because of decreasing student enrolment. Access to these rooms is restricted to reduce the need for custodial cleaning and limit the consumption of utilities. Since 2017, DPCDSB has shuttered over 300 classrooms across 62 elementary schools, resulting in a reduction in spending on electricity and natural gas by about 1% overall. Due to COVID-19, the shuttering program has been suspended in order to allow schools to use all available classrooms to promote physical distancing.

[For more information](#): Administration and Finance Committee Meeting, April 6, 2021

Elementary Student Vaccinations – Typically, senior elementary students, in partnership with Peel Public Health, receive HPV, Meningococcal and Hepatitis B vaccinations during the school year. However, all Region of Peel school-based immunization clinics are currently on hold due to COVID-19 and related vaccine distribution. Appointments booked on Dec 31, 2020 and later will be contacted and their appointments are cancelled. It is anticipated that students will have an opportunity to receive school-based vaccines at a later time. The Region has indicated this may happen in the fall of 2021. Schools will be contacted by the Region of Peel when immunization clinics resume.

Review of Literary Resources – As part of DPCDSB's commitment to ensuring equitable and inclusive learning environments for our students, a vigilant response to the relevance of materials in our schools is necessary. Scholastic announced it would cease publication of its series, *The Adventures of Ook and Gluk: Kung-Fu Cavemen*

from the Future, because of passive anti-Asian racism. Author Dav Pikey issued a public apology on March 25 for the portrayal of harmful stereotypes. DPCDSB is in the process of removing these texts from our school libraries. Program staff have also pulled a number of Dr. Seuss titles, (*Cat's Quizzer*, *McElligot's Pool*, *On Beyond Zebra*, *Scrambled Eggs Super!*, *If I Ran the Zoo*, *And to Think I Saw It on Mulberry Street*) because of racist content. Our Program and Equity Departments continue to work with library staff to review texts that promote colonial and racist perspectives that are harmful to our children.

Ontario COVID-19 Child Benefit – On March 31, the provincial government announced, as part of the [2021 Budget, Ontario's Action Plan: Protecting People's Health and Our Economy](#), that payments will be automatically provided to parents who received Support for Learners payments, and they can expect payments beginning on April 26. Families will receive \$400 for each child (aged 0 to Grade 12) and \$500 for each child and youth (21 years old or younger with special needs). Parents who did not previously apply for the Support for Learners program can apply online for the new funding starting on May 3 with a deadline of May 17. [To apply, click here](#).

Remote Learning – The Ministry of Education has announced plans to introduce Legislation this spring that would make remote learning a permanent part of Ontario's education system and to change the way it is governed. *"Reports that the government is considering expanding access to on-line and remote learning threatens to undermine the quality of education for students and is of deep concern to Ontario's 29 publicly funded Catholic school boards. These significant concerns and serious implications include:*

- *Negatively impacting the quality of learning experiences and equity in opportunity for students.*
- *Immediate and long-term reductions in funding.*
- *The ability of Catholic and other school systems to realize their distinct missions."*

- March 26, 2021 **Patrick Daly, President OCSTA** (Ontario Catholic Schools Trustees Association)

Members of Provincial Parliament – As parents/guardians, you are always encouraged to contact your Members of Provincial Parliament (MPP)s to share your concerns about the future of Catholic education in Ontario. It is crucial that our MPPs hear from you to understand the impact of provincial decisions for your children and especially Catholic education in the Region of Peel.

I invite our parents and guardians to follow me on my social media platforms. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have. I am pleased to help support our students and their families in Catholic education. All DPCDSB Community Information Bulletins are accessible online at www.dpcdsb.org.

Wishing a very Happy Mother's Day to all mothers, guardians, grandmothers and female mentors. Many blessings to you as you glorify God, in the special role He has chosen for you in lives of our children. May God continue to bless you today, and always.

Yours in learning, growing and leading with Christ,

Trustee Thomas Thomas

DPCDSB Trustee - Mississauga, Wards 5

Chair – Contract Negotiations Committee

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