



*From Your Catholic School Trustee Sharon Hobin, BA, Bed.
Wards 2 & 8, Chair of the Board of Trustees*

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December 2021

***May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Rom. 15:13)***

This month’s virtue is **hope**. As we begin the season of Advent, hope continues to guide our 2021-2022 school year. During this exciting time of anticipation and celebration, Advent marks a new liturgical calendar, as we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ. Through the eyes of our children at Christmas, we are lit up by the miracle of the baby Jesus. Christ’s saving message carries the reminder of hope with Jesus’ presence in our schools, homes and in our hearts.

DPCDSB Elections – On December 7, 2021, at the Organizational Meeting of the Board the following trustees were elected or acclaimed:

Chair	Sharon Hobin
Vice Chair	Luz Del Rosario
Chair, Admin. and Finance	Stefano Pascucci
Vice Chair, Admin. and Finance	Mario Pascucci
Chair, Faith and Program	Shawn Xaviour
Vice Chair, Faith and Program	Darryl D’Souza
Chair, Board By-law/Policies	Brea Corbet
Vice Chair Board By-law/Policies	Thomas Thomas
Chair, MYST	Bruno Iannicca
Vice Chair, MYST	Luz Del Rosario

MYST: Multi Year Strategic Plan

2022-2023 Education Funding – In response to the 2022-2023 Ontario Education Funding Guide and consultation process, our DPCDSB Board of Trustees was asked to provide input to the Ontario Catholic Schools Trustees Association (OCSTA) on five identified focus areas including:

- Mental health supports.
- Reducing administrative burden and red tape.
- Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG).
- Urban and priority secondary schools.
- New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP).

In addition, DPCDSB provided feedback to OCSTA on the following items:

- As with the Indigenous Education funding, DPCDSB is requesting that protected funding for dismantling anti-Black racism be considered as part of the Grants for Students Needs (GSN).
- Schools were required to redirect school budget funds to invest in software and online educational learning programs to ensure uninterrupted learning for students during remote learning periods. Without future funding to reinvest or an annual provision for this expense, electronic equipment will become obsolete.
- Most school boards are experiencing increased stress and medical leaves among administrative staff, and instructional staff. There is no mechanism within the grant to support short term replacement staff.

COVID-19 Vaccination for Children – On November 19, Health Canada approved the use of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for children aged 5 to 11 years-old. The Ministry of Education provided information to school boards to support COVID-19 vaccination readiness planning. Peel Public Health (PPH) has noted that its pediatric population strategy will focus on directing children to school-based clinics and dedicated days at the fixed and mobile clinics. On November 23, booking availability opened through the provincial online system, for this age group.

Peel Public Health (PPH) intends to expand the availability of vaccines at its existing DPCDSB school-based clinics scheduled in December to enable these age groups to get vaccinated. All COVID-19 vaccination clinics held at DPCDSB schools will continue to operate outside regular school hours.

Rapid Antigen Testing – Our board continues to work collaboratively with our public health units on all health and safety measures, to promote the wellness of our students, families, and staff. In regions of the province where there is a heightened risk of COVID-19 spread, local public health units can offer targeted, voluntary rapid antigen testing to unvaccinated, asymptomatic students in select schools in their communities. This screening is intended to provide an additional layer of protection in schools in areas of the province where risk of transmission is higher.

Peel Public Health (PPH) has indicated it has begun to receive rapid antigen test kits from the provincial government and they are ready to start allocating test kits to DPCDSB schools as they deem appropriate. PPH will ensure that information is provided to the school community about the use of the test kits and what to do should a test come back positive. Participation is completely voluntary and is not required for students to attend school. Also, there is no requirement for students or families to disclose their vaccination status to the school or to the DPCDSB to participate. A letter from PPH was sent to all DPCDSB parents and guardians with additional information: [Region of Peel Update on PCR and rapid antigen COVID-19 testing options for students November 5 2021.pdf \(dpcdsb.org\)](#).

Secondary Term 2 – The DPCDSB Board of Trustees has advocated on behalf of our students and parents/guardians, elevating their feedback on the need to return to a more normal semester mode of learning. On November 18, the Ministry of Education and the province’s Chief Medical Officer of Health announced that secondary schools will be permitted to resume a regular timetabling model of four courses per day, starting in February 2022. With the support of Peel Public Health, DPCDSB secondary school will return to the traditional semester model of four courses per day as of February 3, 2022. Schools will be providing students with updated timetables in January 2022, to reflect the return to a full semester model. The final assessment for all courses will continue to be a Culminating Performance Task (CPT) until the end of the 2021-2022 school year.

International Travel – DPCDSB remains dedicated to ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of its students and employees in our schools and workplaces. DPCDSB takes direction from our local public health authorities, the Ministry of Education and the Chief Medical Officer of Health on all matters related to the management of COVID-19 in our schools and facilities. With the upcoming Christmas holidays, we understand that families may consider travelling. Parents/guardians should stay informed about the federal government’s COVID-related rules for international travellers. DPCDSB will comply with the advice and guidance of Public Health Officials and the Federal Government and will also require all employees returning from travel outside of Canada to adhere to Public Health guidelines upon their return.

For students travelling internationally, the Government of Canada currently [requires a mandatory 14-day quarantine or self-isolation](#) for individuals who are not fully vaccinated entering Canada, even if they do not have symptoms of COVID-19, tested negative for COVID-19, or have recovered from COVID-19. The Federal government also recommends that household members of international travellers should stay home for the duration of the traveller’s 14-day self-isolation period. **Children in the household must not attend group settings, such as schools, camps, or daycares.** Exceptions apply for fully vaccinated household members.

Fully vaccinated travellers do not need to quarantine. The Federal government identifies a traveller as being fully vaccinated if they have received a full series (or a combination) of Health Canada approved vaccines and it has been at least 14 days since they received their last dose. **Unvaccinated children under 12 years of age and dependents of fully vaccinated travellers are also currently exempt from quarantine; however, they must avoid group settings, such as schools, camps, or daycares.**

Enrolment Projections – All school boards across the province experienced enrolment declines during the 2020-2021 school year, as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021-2022, it was evident that Greater Toronto Area (GTA) school boards are continuing to experience this decline in enrolment. DPCDSB has advocated to the Ministry of Education that our board will require stabilization funding, like that provided in the 2020-2021 year by the Ministry. The DPCDSB Planning Department has prepared an analysis including enrolment projections. As has been noted at our Board of Trustees - Administration and Finance Committee meeting in October 2021, past projections would not have anticipated the recent circumstances that have resulted in families leaving Peel Region. This includes the sharp appreciation of real estate in the Region of Peel, the impacts of COVID-19 and flexible work arrangements. However, this enrolment decline could have serious implications for DPCDSB for years to come, as families move away from the GTA to more affordable regional areas.

Student Transportation – Student Transportation of Peel Region (STOPR) transportation consortia continues to work diligently with all school bus operators, school boards and local public health authorities for the 2021-2022 school year to ensure safe and secure service is provided to all our students. STOPR is currently following the capacity restrictions for student transportation vehicles recommended by Peel Public Health (PPH). However, as a result of the additional runs and routes this school year, due to capacity restrictions that had been in effect during the pandemic, STOPR has faced more day-to-day challenges in covering unexpected driver absences.

Currently, our school or student transportation have been running on minimal ridership capacity, as per the direction from PPH. Due to concerns regarding bus delays in addition to operational issues, PPH is supportive of STOPR's request to resume full capacity on secondary school runs. STOPR, through collaboration with Peel Public Health, will be working to increase the loading of our secondary buses to full capacity. To that end, secondary bus routes will be condensed, and bus stops will be streamlined, based on operational need.

PPH continues to recommend a cautious approach around resuming courtesy transportation and would like to first assess the loading process for secondary school buses running at full capacity. Courtesy seating for secondary students will be reviewed in the second semester, once student learning modes and ridership decisions are finalized and an accurate assessment of COVID-19 activity, at that time can be determined.

Therefore, at this time, it is important to note there is no guarantee that the suspension of courtesy ridership will be lifted for the 2021-2022 school year.

1. Estimated timeline: November 15, 2021 – January 21, 2022:
 - Review current ridership capacity.
 - Ask schools to “opt out” any students that have been assigned but are not riding.
 - Combine stops and runs to reach full capacity.
 - Eliminate any runs or routes that are no longer required.

2. Estimated timeline: January 24, 2022 – February 4, 2022:

- Review change of learning mode survey results.
- Add and remove students.
- Review runs to determine if runs need to be added or removed.

After completing this process, STOPR will meet with PPH to review the status of COVID-19 cases and inquire further about the possibility of courtesy transportation for secondary school bus runs.

School buses for elementary students will continue to operate at reduced capacity. Further review of full capacity busing for this age group may be modified based on any future changes to Ministry of Education direction and vaccination coverage within the 5 - 11-year-old age group. More information is available on www.stopr.ca

Fundraising in Schools – Having a cautious approach to re-opening schools this year has effectively provided a controlled environment for implementing health and safety protocols. As the year has progressed, many schools and Catholic School Councils have expressed interest in moving forward with fundraising activities (i.e., selling chocolates, poinsettias and other individually wrapped items). Introducing fundraising events at schools has been discussed with our Peel Public Health authorities. As a result, school fundraising events will be allowed. All health and safety protocols and physical distancing measures must be adhered to. At this time, however, no outside volunteers/parents/guardians will be permitted inside the schools to assist with organizing efforts. If a school chooses to fundraise, they will need to rely on staff volunteers. The use of School Cash Online™ and the online donations module will be encouraged for all fundraising efforts. Discussions about food day programs (i.e., pizza days) are continuing with public health and further updates will be provided.

Athletic Teams – Our local public health units have not advised on vaccination mandates for our students participating in high contact activities or while participating in extracurricular school activities. Our board continues to strongly recommend that students are vaccinated, however they are not required to do so for activities taking place within our school facilities.

However, the Region of Peel does require individuals to be fully vaccinated to access community facilities, and as such, DPCDSB is required to comply with municipal bylaws. Where DPCDSB's school athletic teams are required to use a public facility and proof of full vaccination for students/athletes is required upon entering, parents/guardians will be made aware of this expectation to the students/parents with the affiliated permission forms.

At this time, spectators are not permitted to attend/watch any **indoor** athletic games in our school facilities. Given any provincial announcement for public spaces removing capacity restrictions, such measures would not transfer over to schools (e.g., sporting events where parents/guardians can attend

games) since schools do not have the requirement for all attendees to be fully vaccinated nor do they have infrastructure to verify vaccine certificates.

As identified on the province's website regarding outdoor spectators for sporting events under Step 3 of the province's *Reopening Plans*: "For unseated events, spectators are permitted at a maximum capacity of 75% or 5,000 people (whichever is less) and other restrictions." Therefore, spectators are permitted at school **outdoor** events (i.e., Soccer, Track and Field, etc.).

It is a season of hope, of joyful expectation and of peaceful preparation. Advent means "Coming". It is the coming of Jesus into the world. During the season of Advent, we are called to seek the light of Christ. For Advent Resources from the Archdiocese of Toronto, please visit: <https://www.archtoronto.org/advent>. The DPCDSB Christmas Break is **December 20-31, 2021**.

I wish all students, families, and staff a very Blessed and Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

I invite you to follow me on my social media platforms. You are welcome to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have.

May the good Lord hold you in the hollow of His hand.