



The Niagara Catholic District School Board, through the charisms of faith, social justice, support and leadership, nurtures an enriching Catholic learning community for all to reach their full potential and become living witnesses of Christ.

Niagara Catholic District School Board

St. James Catholic School Council

By-Laws

Revised: September

2024



Catholic School Council

TERMS OF REFERENCE

In keeping with the Mission, Vision and Values of the Niagara Catholic District School Board, Catholic School Councils support the Mission of Catholic Education and the Mission, Vision and Values of the Niagara Catholic District School Board, by providing a communication link to parents/guardians, Principals/Vice-Principals, staff, students, school communities and the Board.

Catholic Education, in the Niagara Catholic District School Board, is the shared responsibility of all partners: the Board, the Bishop of St. Catharines, parish priests, staff, students, parents/guardians, and members of the community.

A Catholic School Council will be established in each elementary and secondary school in the Board to encourage the active participation of its members to improve student achievement and well-being of all students in their school community, and to enhance the accountability of the education system.

**St. James
Catholic School Council**

BY-LAWS

The St. James Catholic School Council will develop By-Laws within the first sixty (60) days of the school year governing the conduct of the Catholic School Council's affairs:

- specifying the number of parent/guardian members to be appointed or elected to the committee, governing the process of appointment or election of parent/guardian members and governing the filling of vacancies in parent/guardian membership,
- specifying the number of community representatives, up to three, to be appointed to the committee, governing the process of appointment of community representatives and governing the filling of vacancies in community representative membership,
- governing the election of members of the committee to the offices of Chair/Co-Chair(s), and any offices provided for in the By-Laws, and governing the filling of vacancies in the offices of the committee,
- establishing rules respecting conflicts of interest of the members of the Catholic School Council, and
- establishing a process for conflict resolution for internal Catholic School Council disputes, consistent with the Board Complaint Resolution Policy No. 800.3.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the St. James Catholic School Council through active participation of its members is:

- to build strong Catholic identity and community to nurture the distinctiveness of Catholic Education,
- advance student achievement and well-being for all students in their school community, and
- to enhance the accountability of the education system to parents/guardians.

The St. James Catholic School Council will achieve its purpose by making recommendations in accordance with the Regulation to the Principal of the school and the Board.

- Recommendations made to the Principal of the school and/or the Board on any matters that the Catholic School Council identifies as priorities will represent the general views of the school community and the best interests of all students in the school. Recommendations shall be in keeping with the Mission, Vision and Values of Niagara Catholic District School Board along with the distinctive character, philosophy and goals of Catholic Education and respectful of the faith and traditions of the Catholic Church. The Board will retain all the powers and duties specified in the Education Act and its related Regulations.

MANDATE OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL COUNCIL

The St. James Catholic School Council through the active participation of its members is:

- to advocate and strengthen Catholic Education
- to improve student achievement and well-being of students
- to enhance the accountability of the education system to parents/guardians
- to support the Mission Statement, Vision 2020 Statements, Strategic Directions and Enabling Strategies from the Vision 2020 Strategic Plan.

COMPOSITION

The composition of the St. James Catholic School Council will ensure that parent/guardian members constitute a majority of the members and reflect the diversity of the school community and will include the following where possible:

- Parent/guardian members.
- The Principal of the school.
- One teacher who is employed at the school.
- One person who is employed at the school, other than the Principal/Vice-Principal or any other teacher (i.e. support staff).
- In the case of a school with one or more secondary school grades,
 - one student enrolled in the school who is appointed by the student council, if the school has a student council, or
 - one student enrolled in the school who is elected in accordance with section 5, if the school does not have a student council.
- In the case of a school with no secondary school grades, one student enrolled in the school who is appointed by the Principal of the school, if the Principal determines, after consulting the other members of the Catholic School Council, that the Catholic School Council should include a student.
- Community representative(s) appointed by the Catholic School Council who is not an employee of the school.
- One parent/guardian to represent the Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education (OAPCE).
- A parish priest or representative from the local parish or a designate from the community will represent the parish on the Catholic School Council.
- One parent/guardian representative of a special needs child within the school to advocate for students with special needs.

PARENT/GUARDIAN MEMBERSHIP

Nomination forms will be available at the school each September prior to the election of Catholic School Council members. Interested parties are to complete a nomination form and submit the completed form by 4:00 p.m. EST. on the designated date to the school Principal. All forms will be date stamped for receipt. Incomplete forms will not be accepted.

Eligibility

1. To be eligible for election/appointment to the St. James Catholic School Council a person must:
 - be a parent/guardian of a student enrolled in St. James,
 - reside within the Board's jurisdiction, and
 - support the Mission of Catholic Education, and the Mission, Vision and Values of the Niagara Catholic District School Board.
2. A parent/guardian who is employed by the Board is qualified to be elected/appointed to the St. James Catholic School Council and shall at the first meeting inform the Catholic School Council of their employment with the Board.
3. A person is not qualified to be a parent/guardian member of a Catholic School Council if he or she is employed at the school.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

Nomination Forms will be available at the school each September prior to the elections. Interested parties are to submit a complete Community Representative Nomination form, and provide a letter of reference from a community organization to support the nomination to the Principal of the school by 4:00 p.m. EST. on the designated date. All forms will be date stamped for receipt. Incomplete forms will not be accepted.

Eligibility

1. A person is not qualified to be nominated or appointed to the St. James Catholic School Council as a community representative unless the person is qualified to vote for members of the Niagara Catholic District School Board and is a resident in the Board's jurisdiction.
2. A person who is employed by the Board cannot be nominated or appointed to the St. James Catholic School Council as a community representative unless:
 - he or she is not employed at the school: and
 - the other members of the Catholic School Council are informed of the person's employment with the Board before the appointment.

3. A person nominated/appointed to the St. James Catholic School Council as a community representative will be required to:
 - act in the best interest of Catholic Education;
 - support the Mission of Catholic Education, and the Mission, Vision and Values of the Niagara Catholic District School Board;
 - carry out responsibilities in a manner that assists the school in fulfilling its duties under the Education Act, the Regulations and the guidelines issued under the Act, and the Catholic School Council Policy No. 800.1 and St. James Catholic School Council By-Laws;
 - attend and participate in meetings of the St. James Catholic School Council, including sub-committee meetings of which they are members; and
 - promote student achievement and well-being of all students in the school.

ELECTIONS

Elections shall be held within the first thirty (30) calendar days of the start of the school year, on a date that has been selected by the current Chair and/or Co-Chair(s) of St. James Catholic School Council in consultation with the Principal of the school.

The Principal shall at least fourteen (14) days before the date of the election of parent/guardian members give written notice of the date, time, and location and availability of nomination forms to every parent/guardian who has a student enrolled at the school. This notification may be given by giving the notice to the students for delivery to parents/guardians and by posting the notice in the school that is accessible to parents/guardians, and posting on the school website.

If an election is to be held, notification will be given to all candidates as to the date/time of the election. Elections will be organized by the Principal and any outgoing Catholic School Council members to:

- Review and finalize nominations, confirm names on ballots, run the election, and communicate the results.
- Nominees must be in attendance and will be invited to make a brief two (2) minute presentation to parents/guardians.
- The election of parent/guardian members shall be by secret ballot.
- Names and addresses, and contact information of the Chair/Co-Chair(s) and OAPCE representative of the St. James Catholic School Council shall be forwarded to the Director of Education/Designate within thirty (30) calendar days of the election.
- Names of Catholic School Council members will be published to the school community by the Principal no later than thirty (30) calendar days following the election.

TERMS OF OFFICE

A person elected/appointed as a member of a Catholic School Council holds office from the date the person is elected/appointed until the date of the first meeting of the Catholic School Council after the elections held in the next school year (renewable).

OFFICERS

The St. James Catholic School Council shall elect Chair/Co-Chair(s) from the parent/guardian members to chair the Catholic School Council.

- An employee of the Board cannot serve as the Chair/Co-Chair of the Catholic School Council.

Election of Chair/Co-Chair(s)

The election of the Chair/Co-Chair shall be by nomination and vote by secret ballot. The candidates receiving a clear majority of votes cast by all parent/guardian members present shall be elected but the count shall not be declared. Should no candidate receive a clear majority of votes cast, the candidate receiving the least number of votes shall be dropped and balloting shall be continued in this manner until a majority of ballots cast shall be in favour of one person or an equality of vote result in a tie, in which one further ballot shall be held. If an equality of votes shall result again, the candidates shall draw lots (straws) to fill the position. The drawing of lots shall be done in alphabetical order and the person who draws the longest straw shall be elected.

Sub-Committees

The St. James Catholic School Council may establish subcommittees to carry out specific tasks or projects in accordance with the overall mandate of the Catholic School Council and to make recommendations on these matters to the Catholic School Council. Members of the sub-committees will elect a Chair/Co-Chair(s) by consensus at the first meeting of the sub-committee.

Subcommittees shall include, but are not limited to: Faith Formation, Goals, Policy and PRO Grant.

A subcommittee of the St. James Catholic School Council:

- Must have at least one parent/guardian member of the St. James Catholic School Council.
- May include persons who are not members of the St. James Catholic School Council.
- Members of the sub-committees will elect a Chair/Co-Chair(s) by consensus at the first meeting of the sub-committee.

The Chair/Co-Chair(s) of the subcommittee shall:

- In consultation with the school Principal and all subcommittee members determine the date and time of the St. James Catholic School Council subcommittee meetings.
- Plan the agenda in consultation with the school Principal.

- Chair the subcommittee meetings.
- Report on the recommendations of the subcommittee at the subsequent St. James Catholic School Council meeting on matters of the committee.
- Record and make available the minutes of the subcommittee meetings to the school Principal and Catholic School Council members.
- Communicate matters of the subcommittee with the school Principal and the Chair/Co-Chair(s) of the St. James Catholic School Council.

VACANCIES

A vacancy in the membership of the St. James Catholic School Council does not prevent the committee from exercising its authority.

Vacancies on the St. James Catholic School Council occur when:

- a parent/guardian member has reached the end of the term
- a member resigns
- a member is unable to fulfill his/her duties

Vacancies in parent/guardian member positions shall be advertised through a variety of methods which may include:

- advertisements in the school newsletters
- School Messenger

Filling a parent/guardian vacancy

Where a vacancy of an elected parent/guardian member occurs, the St. James Catholic School Council may appoint a parent/guardian from the pool of candidates from the previous election process to serve on the St. James Catholic School Council until the next election.

- If none of the candidates from the pool of the previous election process is interested in becoming a St. James Catholic School Council member, the Catholic School Council may request nominations from interested parents/guardians of the school to submit their names by the designated date for consideration.
- The St. James Catholic School Council may then appoint one of the interested candidates.

Filling a vacancy in the Office of Chair/Co-Chair(s)

Where a vacancy occurs in the office of Chair/Co-Chair(s) the Catholic School Council shall elect a parent/guardian member to complete the remainder of the term that has been vacated.

Filling a Community Representative Vacancy

Where a vacancy of a Community Representative occurs, the St. James Catholic School Council may request the agency to appoint another member, choose a different organization, or choose not to fill

the position. Individuals filling a vacated position shall hold the position until the term for that position expires.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The role of the St. James Catholic School Council member carries with it certain responsibilities.

Members

All members of the St. James Catholic School Council must:

- fully participate in the annual Commissioning of the Catholic School Council Members,
- attend all St. James Catholic School Council meetings and subcommittee meetings of which they are members, either physically or through electronic means on a regular basis,
- participate in information and training sessions, and
- work with the Catholic School Council to facilitate the approved mandate.
- solicit views of other parents/guardians and members of the community to share with the members.
- respond to requests from the Board.
- observe the Catholic School Council's Code of Ethics and By-Laws.
- maintain a school-wide focus on all issues.

Chair/Co-Chair(s)

The Chair/Co-Chair(s) of the St. James Catholic School Council shall:

- determine the dates of St. James Catholic School Council meetings in consultation with the school Principal.
- plan the agenda with the school Principal.
- chair the St. James Catholic School Council meetings.
- communicate regularly with the school Principal regarding matters of the Catholic School Council.
- be diligent in ensuring that any views presented in the capacity of Chair/Co-Chair(s) represent fairly the position of the St. James Catholic School Council.
- review the By-Laws annually in consultation with St. James Catholic School Council.
- participate as ex-officio members of all subcommittees established by the Catholic School Council.

School Principal

The School Principal shall:

- facilitate and assist in the operation of the St. James Catholic School Council and assist in its operation;
- in consultation with the Chair/Co-Chair(s) determine the date and time of the St. James Catholic School Council and subcommittee meetings and arrange a meeting room;
- plan the agenda with the Chair/Co-Chair(s) and subcommittee Chairs/Co-Chair(s) of the St. James Catholic School Council.
- make every effort to distribute the agenda to all members of the St. James Catholic School Council at least five (5) calendar days prior to the meeting.
- support and promote the approved activities of the St. James Catholic School Council.
- seek input from the St. James Catholic School Council.
- act as a resource on regulations and Board policies.

- communicate with the Chair/Co-Chair(s) of the St. James Catholic School Council on matters of the Catholic School Council as required.
- assist the St. James Catholic School Council in encouraging increased parent/guardian involvement.
- ensure that the approved minutes of the meetings are recorded, maintained, and posted on the Board website.
- facilitate communication between the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee and the Catholic School Councils.
- act as the secretary/treasurer to the St. James Catholic School Council.
- prepare and present a report at each meeting, including a financial statement.
- chair the St. James Catholic School Council meeting in the event that the Chair/Co-Chair(s) is unable to attend a meeting of the Catholic School Council.

MEETINGS

The St. James Catholic School Council shall meet at least four (4) times in each school year between September to June. All meetings will be held at the school and are open to the public.

1. Meetings will open and close with a prayer.
2. Meetings will commence on time and not last more than two hours, unless the majority of the Catholic School Council members agree by motion to a longer meeting of no more than thirty minutes beyond the two-hour time limit.
3. Meetings shall not proceed unless there is a quorum in attendance. A quorum is fifty percent plus one (50% + 1) of current Catholic School Council members.
4. At all times there must be a majority of parents/guardians at the meeting. A member who participates through electronic means shall be deemed to be present at the meeting.
5. The St. James Catholic School Council shall use consensus as the usual method for developing recommendations and plans. If voting becomes necessary, a simple majority will be sufficient for a vote on any issue.
6. When the Catholic School Council votes on a matter, each member of the Catholic School Council is entitled to one vote except for the school Principal.

MEMBER ABSENCES AND ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

Catholic School Council members are expected to attend all council meetings and subcommittee meetings of which they are members, either physically or through electronic means.

- A member who is unable to attend a scheduled Catholic School Council meeting must request to be excused from a meeting by contacting the Chair/Co-Chairs or school Principal and will be marked as excused in the minutes of the meeting.
- Members, who, prior to the adjournment of a meeting, have excused themselves or depart at any time during a meeting will have the time of departure noted in the minutes of the meeting.
- Members, who have not been excused from attendance at a Catholic School Council meeting will be recorded as absent in the minutes of the meeting.
- A member of the St. James Catholic School Council may lose his or her position for being absent for three consecutive meetings without authorization.

- Where a Catholic School Council member submits a letter of resignation or is absent from three (3) consecutive meetings, the Catholic School Council may appoint a replacement to serve until the next election.

AGENDAS/MINUTES AND FINANCIAL RECORDS

Agendas

Every effort will be made to distribute the agenda to members of the Catholic School Council at least five (5) calendar days prior to the meeting by delivering a notice by e-mail and posting a notice on the Board website.

Delegations

Individuals may approach the Chair/Co-Chair(s) of the St. James Catholic School Council or the school Principal to be placed on the agenda. This request must be in writing and received at least two (2) weeks before the meeting. The Chair/Co-Chair(s), in consultation with the school Principal may approve or reject such requests.

Minutes and Financial Records

The approved minutes and financial transactions of the St. James Catholic School Council shall be retained in accordance with the policies of the Board respecting the retention of documents by committees of the Board.

1. The approved minutes of the St. James Catholic School Council shall be:
 - posted and remain on the school website for four (4) years.
2. The approved minutes and records of its financial transactions shall be available for examination at the school by any person without charge for four (4) years.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A conflict of interest for a St. James Catholic School Council member involves situations in which the member's private interests may be incompatible or in conflict with the Catholic School Council.

- Each Catholic School Council member shall avoid situations that could result in an inconsistency between the overall goals and vision of the St. James Catholic School Council and a personal or vested interest that may arise in connection with his or her duties as a Catholic School Council member.
- Should an issue or agenda item arise during a council meeting where a council member is in a conflict of interest situation, he or she shall declare the conflict of interest immediately and decline from the discussion and resolution.

- The Catholic School Council member shall declare a conflict of interest in matters that they, members of their families or their business affiliations could directly or indirectly benefit from the decisions of the committee.
- A Catholic School Council member who identifies a conflict of interest must declare it before any discussion of the matter begins.
- The Catholic School Council member must:
 - publicly state the conflict of interest, explain the general nature of the interest and have the declaration recorded in the minutes.
 - not vote on the matter under discussion.
 - leave the room when the committee is discussing the matter and have this fact recorded in the minutes.
 - not discuss the matter with members or attempt to influence the decision.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

If the school Principal, after discussion with the St. James Catholic School Council Chair/Co-Chair(s), determines that any of the Catholic School Council members have contravened Regulations 330/10 or Board Policy 800.1, the school Principal or Chair/Co-Chair(s) will discuss the matter with the Director of Education. Please see the Complaint Resolution Policy No. 800.3.

- If a Catholic School Council member becomes disruptive during a meeting, the Chair/Co-Chair(s) shall ask for order.
- If all efforts to restore order fail or the unbecoming behaviour continues, the Chair/Co-Chair(s) may direct the individual member to leave the meeting, citing reasons for the request.
- The removal of a Catholic School Council member for one (1) meeting does not prevent the member from participating in future meetings of the Catholic School Council.
- The incident shall be recorded and submitted to the Director of Education by the Director's designate/Superintendent of Education within one (1) week of the meeting.
- It is recommended that parties involved in the conflict follow the Board's Complaint Resolution Policy No. 800.3.
- Upon removal of a Catholic School Council member, a special meeting shall be called, the purpose of which will be to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution to the dispute. Such a meeting shall be a private meeting and not construed as a meeting of the St. James Catholic School Council.
- Any resolution reached at the meeting to resolve the conflict shall be signed and respected in full by all parties to the agreement.

CODE OF CONDUCT

A Catholic School Council member shall:

- support, encourage and enhance parent engagement at the school level in order to build strong Catholic identity and community to nurture the distinctiveness of Catholic Education, and to advance student achievement and well-being for all students in the Niagara Catholic District School Board.
- consider the best interest of all students and the Catholic School Council members.
- be guided by the Mission of Catholic Education and the Mission, Vision and Values of the Board.
- become familiar with the Education Act, Board Policies, and Ministry of Education Regulations.
- maintain the highest standards of integrity, recognizing and respecting the personal integrity of each member of the Catholic School Council and Board staff.
- treat all other Catholic School Council members and Board Staff with respect and allow for diverse opinions to be shared, without interruption.
- create a positive environment in which individual contributions are encouraged and valued.
- acknowledge democratic principles and accept the consensus of the St. James Catholic School Council for recommendation to the school Principal.
- focus discussions at Catholic School Council meetings to those items that fall within the mandate of the Catholic School Council.
- bring questions or concerns to the attention of the school Principal through appropriate policies of the Board.
- promote high standards of ethical practice within the Catholic School Council.
- not accept any payment for their involvement on the Catholic School Council.
- refrain from making any negative statements about any individual or groups.
- declare any conflict of interest.