

**TO: NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
BOARD MEETING
SEPTEMBER 22, 2026**

PUBLIC SESSION

**TOPIC: UNAPPROVED MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE
WHOLE MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 8, 2026**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Niagara Catholic District School Board receive the unapproved Minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of September 8, 2026, as presented.

The following recommendations are being presented for the Board's consideration from the Committee of the Whole Meeting of September 8, 2026:

7.1.1 Niagara Compliance Audit Committee Report

THAT the Niagara Catholic District School Board approve that the Niagara Catholic District School Board continues as a joint participant in the Niagara Compliance Audit Committee, as presented.

THAT the Niagara Catholic District School Board approve the Terms of Reference, as established (*Appendix I*); as presented.

THAT the Niagara Catholic District School Board approve that the Secretary of the Board be delegated the authority to appoint members to the Niagara Compliance Audit Committee, as presented.



MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2026

Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee of the Whole of the Niagara Catholic District School Board, held on Tuesday, September 8, 2026 in the Father Kenneth Burns c.s.c. Board Room, at the Catholic Education Centre, 427 Rice Road, Welland.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Vice-Chair Burkholder.

A. ROUTINE MATTERS

1. Opening Prayer

Opening Prayer was led by Trustee Benoit

2. Roll Call

Vice-Chair Burkholder noted that all Trustees and Student Trustees were in attendance.

Trustee	Present	Present Electronically	Absent	Excused
Natalia Benoit	✓			
Joseph Bruzzese	✓			
Rhianon Burkholder	✓			
Danny Di Lorenzo	✓			
Larry Huibers	✓			
Doug Joyner	✓			
Jim Marino	✓			
Paul Turner	✓			
Student Trustees				
Mason Pasma	✓			
Alan Sony	✓			

The following staff were in attendance:

Giancarlo Vetrone, Chief Executive Officer; **Kim Kinney**, Chief Education Officer; **Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells**, **Gino Pizzoferrato**, **Domenic Massi**, **Joseph Zaroda**, Superintendents of Education; **Rosa Rocca**, Chief Financial Officer; **Julia Tiessen**, Chief Human Resources and Communications Officer; **Anna Lisa Conidi**, Recording Secretary/Administrative Assistant, Corporate Services

3. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Trustee Marino

THAT the Committee of the Whole approve the Agenda of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of September 8, 2026 as presented.

CARRIED

4. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

No Declaration of Conflict of Interest was declared with any items on the Agenda.

5. Approval of Minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of June 9, 2026

Moved by Trustee Joyner

THAT the Committee of the Whole approve the Minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of June 9, 2026, as presented.

CARRIED

6. Consent Agenda Items

Trustee Huibers requested Item A6.1 2026-2027 Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants be held. This item was moved to Committee and Staff Reports Section C4 of the agenda.

6.1 2026-2027 Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants

Presented for information.

6.2 Staff Development Department Professional Development Opportunities

Presented for information.

6.3 In Camera Items G1 and G4.1

Moved by Trustee Di Lorenzo

THAT the Committee of the Whole adopt consent agenda items.

CARRIED

B. PRESENTATIONS

C. COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS

1. CEO and Senior Staff Introduction to the 2026-2027 School Year

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Vetrone provided background information and a corporate overview of the CEO and Senior Staff introduction to the 2026-2027 School Year. Chief Executive Officer Vetrone introduced Senior Administration Staff to provide further detailed information.

Chief Education Officer Kinney provided an Academic Overview. Chief Human Resources and Communication Officer Tiessen provided a Human Resources and Communications overview. Chief Financial Officer Rocca provided a Business and Financial Services overview. Superintendent Pizzoferrato provided a K-12 Student Support Services and Special Education Overview. Superintendent Forsyth-Sells provided a Student Mental Health and Well-Being Overview. Superintendent Massi provided a Safe and Accepting School, Attendance and Elementary Staffing, and Public Health Partnership overview. Superintendent Zaroda provided a Secondary Education, Programs and Services overview.

The CEO and Senior Staff introduction to the 2026-2027 school year report was presented for information.

Chief Executive Officer Vetrone and Senior Administration Staff answered questions of the Trustees.

2. Niagara Compliance Audit Committee Report

Chief Executive Officer Vetrone presented the Niagara Compliance Audit Committee Report. Giancarlo Vetrone, Chief Executive Officer provided background information and highlighted the terms of reference for the Niagara Compliance Audit Committee report.

Chief Executive Officer Vetrone answered questions of the Trustees.

Moved by Trustee Joyner

THAT the Committee of the Whole recommend that the Niagara Catholic District School Board continues as a joint participant in the Niagara Compliance Audit Committee;

THAT the Committee of the Whole recommends to the Niagara Catholic District School Board the approval of the Terms of Reference, as established (*Appendix 1*);

THAT the Committee of the Whole recommends to the Niagara Catholic District School Board that the Secretary of the Board be delegated the authority to appoint members to the Niagara Compliance Audit Committee.

CARRIED

3. Continuing Education/Summer School

Joe Zaroda, Superintendent of Education provided background information on the Continuing Education/Summer School program. Superintendent Zaroda introduced Marla Rapattoni, Principal of Continuing Education and Tara Vinc, Principal for the Summer School Program.

Ms. Rapattoni and Mrs. Vinc highlighted key components of the Continuing Education/Summer School program. The Continuing Education Summer School program was presented for information.

Superintendent Zaroda, Ms. Rapattoni and Mrs. Vinc answered questions of the Trustees.

4. Consent Agenda Item A6.1 -2026-207 Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants

Trustee Huibers asked questions regarding the cost of vulnerable sector checks and how it may create a barrier for parents who wish to volunteer in schools, particularly newcomers and families facing financial challenges. Superintendent Forsyth-Sells explained that Parent Reaching Out (PRO) funding is prescribed by the Ministry of Education and cannot be used to cover these costs. Trustees expressed concern that requiring parents to pay for checks may limit meaningful parental involvement. Superintendent Massi indicated that families are to speak with school Principals and request a letter from the school to be used to support their application.

Moved by Trustee Huibers

THAT the Committee of the Whole adopt 2026-2027 Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants.
CARRIED

5. Monthly Updates

5.1 Student Trustees' Update

Mason Pasma and Alan Sony, Student Trustees, presented a brief verbal update on the current activities of the Student Senate.

5.2 Senior Staff Good News Update

Senior Staff highlights included:

Superintendent Massi

- Superintendent Massi highlighted that today's school visits highlighted a very positive and exciting start to the school year. Across schools in Niagara Falls, classrooms were welcoming, students were engaged, and the buildings looked exceptional thanks to the extensive work completed by the Facilities team over the summer. The overall feedback was overwhelmingly positive. The cleanliness, ongoing improvements, and pride evident throughout our schools reflected the tremendous efforts of staff and contributed to a successful opening day.

D. GOVERNANCE POLICIES

1. Governance Policies for Recommendation to the Board

Nil to Report

2. Governance Policies Prior to Vetting

2.1. Volunteer Recognition Policy (800.4)

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells, presented the Volunteer Recognition Policy (800.4) prior to vetting.

- No amendment

The Committee of the Whole requested that the Volunteer Recognition Policy (800.4), be vetted from Sept 9, 2026 to October 20, 2026 with a recommended deadline for presentation to the Committee of the Whole in November for consideration to the Board in November.

2.2. Retirement and Service Recognition Celebration Policy (201.2)

Julia Tiessen, Chief Human Resources and Communications Officer, presented the Retirement and Service Recognition Celebration Policy (201.2) prior to vetting.

- No amendment

The Committee of the Whole requested that the Retirement and Service Recognition Celebration Policy (201.2), be vetted from September 9, 2026 to October 20, 2026 with a recommended deadline for presentation to the Committee of the Whole in November for consideration to the Board in November.

3. Governance Policy Review Schedule

Chief Executive Officer Vetrone presented the Governance Policy Review Schedule.

E. INFORMATION

1. Trustee Information

1.1 2026-2027 School Calendar and Meeting Dates

Chief Executive Officer Vetrone presented the 2026-2027 School Calendar and Meeting Dates.

1.2 2026-2027 School Year System and Student Events

Chief Executive Officer Vetrone presented the 2026-2027 School Year System and Student Events.

1.3 2026-2027 Diocese of St. Catharines Calendar of Events

Chief Executive Officer Vetrone presented 2026-2027 Diocese of St. Catharines Calendar of Events.

F. OTHER BUSINESS

1. General Discussion to Plan for Future Action

Nil reported

G. BUSINESS IN CAMERA

Addressed within consent agenda section.

H. REPORT ON THE IN-CAMERA SESSION

Moved by Trustee Di Lorenzo

THAT the Committee of the Whole report the motions from the In Camera Session of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of June 9, 2026.

CARRIED

SECTION B: STUDENT TRUSTEES EXCLUDED

Moved by Trustee Di Lorenzo

THAT the Committee of the Whole approve the Minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting - In Camera Session (Section B: Student Trustees Excluded) held on June 9, 2026 as presented.

CARRIED (Item G1)

Moved by Trustee Di Lorenzo

THAT the Committee of the Whole approve the Minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting - In Camera Session (Section B: Student Trustees Excluded) held on June 9, 2026 as presented

CARRIED (Item G4.1)

I. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Trustee Benoit

THAT the September 8, 2026 Committee of the Whole Meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED

This meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of the Niagara Catholic District School Board held on **September 8, 2026.**

Approved on **October 13, 2026.**

Rhianon Burkholder
Vice-Chair of the Board

Giancarlo Vetrone
Chief Executive Officer
Secretary/Treasurer

**TO: NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
BOARD MEETING
SEPTEMBER 22, 2026**

PUBLIC SESSION

TITLE: NIAGARA COMPLIANCE AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Committee of the Whole recommends that the Niagara Catholic District School Board continues as a joint participant in the Niagara Compliance Audit Committee;

THAT the Committee of the Whole recommends to the Niagara Catholic District School Board the approval of the Terms of Reference, as established (*Appendix I*);

THAT the Committee of the Whole recommends to the Niagara Catholic District School Board that the Secretary of the Board be delegated the authority to appoint members to the Niagara Compliance Audit Committee.

Prepared by: Giancarlo Vetrone, Chief Executive Officer/Secretary-Treasurer

Presented by: Giancarlo Vetrone, Chief Executive Officer/Secretary-Treasurer

Recommended by: Giancarlo Vetrone, Chief Executive Officer/Secretary-Treasurer

Date: September 22, 2026



REPORT TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE SEPTEMBER 8, 2026

NIAGARA COMPLIANCE AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Compliance Audit Committee

Compliance Audit Committees are required under the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* (MEA) for all local boards including Catholic school boards, to consider applications from eligible electors requesting audits of candidates, contributors, and registered third party campaign finances in relation to the 2026 Municipal Election, and any by-elections during the 2026-2030 term pursuant to the Municipal Elections Act.

Compliance Audit Committee (Municipal Elections Act) 88.37

(1) A council or local board shall establish a compliance audit committee before October 1 of an election year for the purposes of this Act. 2016, c. 15, s. 66.

Compliance Audit Committee (Municipal Elections Act) 88.37

(1) A council or local board shall establish a compliance audit committee before October 1 of an election year for the purposes of this Act. 2016, c. 15, s. 66

Composition

(2) The committee shall be composed of not fewer than three and not more than seven members and shall not include:

- (a) Employees or officers of the municipality or local board;
- (b) Members of the council or local board;
- (c) Any persons who are candidates in the election for which the committee is established; or
- (d) Any persons who are registered third parties in the municipality in the election for which the committee is established. 2016, c. 15, s. 66.

Eligibility for appointment

(3) A person who has such qualifications and satisfies such eligibility requirements as may be prescribed is eligible for appointment to the committee. 2016, c. 15, s. 66.

Same

(4) In appointing persons to the committee, the council or local board shall have regard to the prescribed eligibility criteria. 2016, c. 15, s. 66.

Term of office

(5) The term of office of the committee is the same as the term of office of the council or local board that takes office following the next regular election, and the term of office of the members of the committee is the same as the term of the committee to which they have been appointed. 2016, c. 15, s. 66.

Role of clerk or secretary

(6) The clerk of the municipality or the secretary of the local board, as the case may be, shall establish administrative practices and procedures for the committee and shall carry out any other duties required under this Act to implement the committee's decisions. 2016, c. 15, s. 66.

Costs

(7) The council or local board, as the case may be, shall pay all costs in relation to the committee's operation and activities. 2016, c. 15, s. 66.

Appendix 1 – Niagara Compliance Audit Committee Terms of Reference

THAT the Committee of the Whole recommend that the Niagara Catholic District School Board continues as a joint participant in the Niagara Compliance Audit Committee;

THAT the Committee of the Whole recommends to the Niagara Catholic District School Board the approval the Terms of Reference, as established (*Appendix 1*);

THAT the Committee of the Whole recommends to the Niagara Catholic District School Board that the Secretary of the Board be delegated the authority to appoint members to the Niagara Compliance Audit Committee.

Prepared by: Giancarlo Vetrone, Chief Executive Officer/Secretary-Treasurer

Presented by: Giancarlo Vetrone, Chief Executive Officer/Secretary-Treasurer

Approved by: Giancarlo Vetrone, Chief Executive Officer/Secretary-Treasurer

Date: September 8, 2026

Terms of Reference for Niagara Compliance Audit Committee

1. Authority

1. Sections 88.33 and 88.35 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996 (Act)* provides that an elector who is entitled to vote in an election and believes on reasonable grounds that a candidate or a registered third party has contravened a provision of the Act relating to election campaign finances may apply for a compliance audit of the candidate's or registered third party's campaign finances, even if the candidate has not filed a financial statement.
2. Sections 88.34 and 88.36 of the *Act* requires the clerk to review the contributions reported on the financial statements submitted by a candidate or registered third party and report any contraventions of any of the contribution limits to the compliance audit committee.
3. Section 88.37 of the *Act* requires the council or local board, to establish a compliance audit committee before October 1st in an election year for the purposes of Sections 88.33 to 88.36 of the *Act* relative to a possible contravention of the election campaign finance rules.

2. Establishment of Committee

1. A Joint Compliance Audit Committee is established with the potential participants as set out below, and shall be named the "Niagara Compliance Audit Committee" ("Committee"):

Local Area Municipalities": Town of Fort Erie, Town of Grimsby, Town of Lincoln, City of Niagara Falls, Town of Niagara on the Lake, Town of Pelham, City of Port Colborne, City of St. Catharines, City of Thorold, Township of Wainfleet, City of Welland and Township of West Lincoln

"Region": Regional Municipality of Niagara

"School Boards": District School Board of Niagara and Niagara Catholic District School Board.

2. The potential participants as set out in Section 1 above, shall each determine its participation in the Committee, the results of which shall form the "Joint Participants."
3. The Committee is a statutory committee.

3. References

Terms of Reference for Niagara Compliance Audit Committee

1. The following municipal terms shall have a corresponding meaning for School Boards: municipality/board, Council/Board, Clerk/Secretary, responding municipality/responding board. Reference to Councils/Boards and Clerks shall be deemed to include those of the Joint Participants.
2. Responding municipality means the municipality/board responsible for the office, with the Region responsible for the offices of Regional Chair and Regional Councillors, municipalities responsible for the office of Mayor and Councillors/Aldermen and School Boards responsible for the office of trustees.
3. The local area municipalities shall receive the compliance audit applications on behalf of the Region and School Boards who will then immediately provide same to the Region or School Board to commence the compliance audit proceedings.

4. Term

1. The term of the Committee shall be concurrent with the term of Council. The term of appointment of the Committee members shall be December 1 of the regular election year to November 14 of the next regular election year, including any by-elections, or until such time as the applicable Committee has disposed of any remaining matters in accordance with the *Act*.

5. Duration

1. The Committee shall be established before October 1st in an election year.
2. The establishment of the Committee and terms of reference shall continue as set out herein from Council term to Council term unless determined otherwise by Council. However, the appointment of the members to the Committee shall be approved by each Council or delegated authority prior to October 1st in each election year.

6. Mandate

1. The mandate of the Committee is to hear and determine all applications filed in accordance with Sections 88.33 to 88.36 of the *Act* pursuant to the procedures established by the Clerks under the *Act*.

Terms of Reference for Niagara Compliance Audit Committee

2. The powers and functions of the Committee as set out in Sections 88.33 to 88.36 of the *Act* include:
 - (a) within 30 days of receipt of a compliance audit application from an elector, review and decide whether it should be granted or rejected;
 - (b) if the application is granted, appoint an auditor licensed under the *Public Accounting Act, 2004* to conduct a compliance audit of the election campaign finances;
 - (c) receive the auditor's report;
 - (d) within 30 days of receipt of the auditor's report, consider the report and if the report concludes the candidate or registered third party appears to have contravened a provision of the *Act* relating to election campaign finances, decide whether legal proceedings against the candidate or registered third party for the apparent contravention shall be commenced, and
 - (e) within 30 days after receipt of a report from any participating municipality's Clerk of any apparent over-contributions to candidates or registered third parties, the Committee shall consider the Clerk's report and decide whether legal proceedings against the contributor should be commenced.

7. Composition

1. The Committee shall be composed of a minimum of three (3) and a maximum of seven (7) members with membership drawn from the following stakeholder groups:
 - (a) accountants or auditors with experience in preparing or auditing the financial statements of municipal candidates;
 - (b) college or university professors with expertise in political science or local government administration;
 - (c) legal profession with experience in municipal law, municipal election law or administrative law;
 - (d) professionals who in the course of their duties are required to adhere to codes or standards of their profession which may be enforced by disciplinary tribunals, and
 - (e) other individuals with knowledge of the campaign finance rules of the *Act*.
2. The Committee shall not include,
 - (a) employees or officers of the Joint Participants;

Terms of Reference for Niagara Compliance Audit Committee

- (b) members of the Council or Board of the Joint Participants;
 - (c) any persons who are candidates in the election for which the Committee is established;
 - (d) any person who is or intends to volunteer or seek employment to assist any candidate or registered third party in the election for which the Committee is established, or
 - (e) any person who is a registered third party in any local area municipality.
3. When an application has been filed under Section 88.33 of the *Act*, only three (3) of the seven (7) members of the Committee shall comprise the Committee for the purposes of reviewing and considering the application.
 4. The Clerk of the responding municipality shall determine the selection of the three (3) sitting members of the Committee from the pool of members based on availability.

8. Member Selection and Appointment

1. At a minimum, the recruitment of committee members shall be advertised in a local newspaper having general circulation and on the websites of the Joint Participants. Other recruitment measures may be initiated by the Clerks.
2. All persons interested in serving on the Committee shall complete an application form prescribed by the Clerks setting out their qualifications and experience.
3. A Nomination Committee consisting of a majority of the Clerks or designates, shall review the applications and submit a joint short list of candidates to the Councils/Boards, or Clerk as the delegated authority, for appointment approval.
4. In the event a vacancy occurs during the term, the municipality may rely on the remaining members to compose a Committee of three (3) members.

9. Selection Criteria

1. Without limiting the foregoing, members shall be selected on the basis of the following:
 - (a) demonstrated knowledge and understanding of municipal election campaign finance rules;

Terms of Reference for Niagara Compliance Audit Committee

- (b) proven analytical and decision-making skills;
- (c) experience working on a committee, administrative tribunal, task force or similar setting;
- (d) availability and willingness to attend meetings;
- (e) excellent oral and written communication skills.

10. Chair of Committee

1. The Committee members shall select a Chair from amongst its three (3) sitting members at its first meeting.

11. Secretary to Committee

1. The Clerk of the responding municipality shall act as Secretary to the Committee.

12. Compensation

1. Members of the Committee shall receive a retention honorarium of \$300.00 including mileage, for attendance at a training session the costs of which shall be shared equally amongst the Joint Participants.
2. Members shall receive an honorarium of \$200.00 per meeting, plus mileage, at the rate of the responding municipality.

13. Costs and Funding

1. The responding municipality shall fund and pay all costs associated with the Committee, including the retention of an auditor and any costs incurred as a result of a decision of the Committee being challenged to the Ontario Superior Court of Justice.
2. The Joint Participants shall equally share in the costs associated with advertising and training.

14. Auditor

1. The Area Clerks shall issue a joint RFP for auditor services and the Committee shall appoint an auditor.

Terms of Reference for Niagara Compliance Audit Committee

15. Meetings

1. The Committee shall conduct its meetings in public but may deliberate in private.
2. The responding municipality's website shall be used to communicate meeting notices, agendas, minutes and decisions.
3. The Committee shall conduct its meetings in accordance with the responding municipality's Council Rules of Procedure By-law and the *Statutory Powers Procedures Act*, with modifications as deemed necessary.

16. Conflicts

1. Committee members shall comply with the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act* and shall disclose a pecuniary interest to the Secretary in advance of any meeting, where possible or absent him/herself from meetings for the duration of the consideration of the application, discussion and voting with respect to the matter.
2. In the event a member discloses a pecuniary interest to the application in advance of the meeting, the Clerk of the responding municipality shall select another member to replace him/her on the Committee.
3. To avoid possible conflict of interest, an auditor or accountant appointed to the Committee must agree, in writing, not to undertake the audits or preparation of the financial statements of any candidate or registered third party seeking election to the Councils/Boards. Failure to adhere to this requirement shall result in the individual being removed from the Committee.
4. All Committee members shall agree, in writing, they will not work or volunteer for, or contribute to, any candidate or registered third party in any capacity in an election to the Councils/Boards. If upon being made aware that a member has participated or contributed to a campaign or registered third party, the Clerks or designates, by majority vote, shall remove the member from the roster or recommend to the Councils/Boards, or the delegated authority, to rescind the appointment to the Committee.

17. Practices and Procedures

Terms of Reference for Niagara Compliance Audit Committee

1. The Clerk shall establish administrative practices and procedures for the Committee and shall carry out any other duties required under the *Act* to implement the Committee's decisions.

**TO: NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
BOARD MEETING
*SEPTEMBER 22, 2026***

PUBLIC SESSION

**TOPIC: APPROVED MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION
ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC) MEETING OF JUNE 3, 2026**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Niagara Catholic District School Board receive the Approved Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of June 3, 2026, as presented for information.



Approved

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

JUNE 3, 2026

Minutes of the Meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee, held on Wednesday, June 3, 2026 at 6:30 p.m., at Saint Francis Catholic Secondary School, 541 Lake Street, St. Catharines, ON L2N 4H7

Superintendent Pizzoferrato called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

A. ROUTINE MATTERS

1. **Land Acknowledgement**
Superintendent Pizzoferrato led the Land Acknowledgment
2. **Opening Prayer**
Roxanne Royer led the opening prayer.
3. **Roll Call**

Members	Affiliations	Present In-person	Present Electronically	Excused	Absent
Jessica Thomas/ Cynthia Peterson	Autism Ontario Niagara Region		X		
Alyson Wilson/Melissa Sullivan	Bethesda Services	X			
Monique Somma (CHAIR)	Community Living (Pelham/Welland)	X			
Sara Wencel & DJ Holmes	Community Living (Port Colborne/Wainfleet)	X			
Andrea Pede	Down Syndrome Niagara				X
Aishah Sonekan	Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara		X		
Erica Simmanivong-Elizarraras/ Katrina Arcand	Mainstream				X
Chris Tawil/Kylee Daley	Niagara Children's Centre				X
Michelle Toy	Pathstone	X			
Patricia Ferrie	Inclusion West Niagara	X			
Community Representative					
Krystine Donato			X		
Indigenous Representative					
Cindi Lee Ecker-Flagg				X	
Secondary Student Senate Representative					
Lucas Bishop			X		
Trustees					
Trustee, Natalia Benoit			X		
Trustee, Jim Marino		X			

The following staff were in attendance:

Gino Pizzoferrato, Superintendent of Education, Giancarlo Vetrone, Interim Director of Education, Jenna Young, Roxanne Rees, Nicole Royer, Grace Brochu, Lisa Clark, Ashley Prohaszka, Mikayla Lansbergen, Lori DiMatteo Marcella

4. Superintendent Pizzoferrato moved to amend the approved agenda by inserting “Special Education Funding Overview” by Superintendent Vetrone, as agenda item B1.

Moved by: Trustee Marino

Seconded by: DJ Holmes

THAT the agenda be amended to insert the “Special Education Funding Overview”

CARRIED

Approval of the Amended Agenda

Moved by: Trustee Marino

Seconded by: Michelle Toy

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the amended agenda of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of June 3, 2026.

CARRIED

5. **Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

No declarations of conflict of interest were declared with any item on the agenda.

6. Superintendent Pizzoferrato moved to amend the May 6, 2026 minutes by striking the motion to forward the SEAC letter in support of Trustees to the Board for final approval, and action on this item be postponed until September 2026

Moved by: Trustee Marino

Seconded by: DJ Holmes

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee strike the motion from the May 6th meeting to forward a letter in support of Trustees to the board.

CARRIED

Approval of the Amended Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes of May 6, 2026

Moved by: Trustee Marino

Seconded by: DJ Holmes

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the amended minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of May 6th, 2026 as presented.

CARRIED

B. PRESENTATIONS

1. Special Education budget and Core Education Funding – Superintendent Vetrone

Superintendent Vetrone presented:

- An overview of key funding changes for the 2026-2027 Core Education

2. Flourish Health Services – Sara Cauchon

Sara Cauchon presented:

- The clinic is neurodiversity affirming and serves nearly 2000 clients annually. It offers professional development, over 30 year-round group programs, and comprehensive “whole child” psychoeducational and neurodevelopmental assessments.
- The multidisciplinary team includes psychologists, occupational therapists, social workers, speech-language pathologists, and a dietitian specializing in ARFID/selective eating.
- They partner with community organizations to provide reduced-fee and low-cost assessments to underserved youth.
- Their goal is to fill institutional service gaps, improve student mental health, bolster executive functioning and support neurodivergent students through critical developmental and academic transitions.

3. Saint Francis Student Media Presentation – Saint Francis Students

The students presented:

- The program is a hands-on, multi-year high school communications technology and media course that progresses in focus by grade level
- The production is highly collaborative and involves a large crew. A typical broadcast features a 12-person cast (split into two different groups) and 15 backstage/production roles.
- Students work with expensive, professional technology and learn to navigate distinct production environments, including a main production and a green screen area.
- The program teaches highly transferable life skills for post-secondary success.

C. POLICY REVIEW – Superintendent Pizzoferrato

Superintendent Pizzoferrato reported:

- Four policies up for review:
 - 201.16 - Attendance Support Program Policy
 - 201.11 - Employee Workplace Violence
 - 201.7 - Employee Workplace Harassment
 - 201.6 - Occupational Health and Safety

D. CHAIR’S REPORT- *Chair Somma*

No report.

E. AGENCY REPORTS

1. Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region – *Aishah Sonekan*

Aishah Sonekan reported:

- Updated toolkits and webinars are now available on the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) website to help parents, educators and professionals support individuals with learning disabilities.
- LDAO is offering a 7-to-10-hour, self-paced certificate course called “Learning Disabilities and ADHD 101: Foundations for Supporting Learning and Success”.
 - It covers the impact on learning, behaviour, and well-being, and provides research-informed strategies. It can be taken standalone, or part of the three-part series.
 - The standard price is \$200 but LDANR is offering a discount code to those who reach out to their team.
- Registration remains open for a 7-week online course for parents and caregivers, focusing on parent advocacy, building collaborative school relationships, and navigating IEPs.
- Standard registration spaces are still available for summer camp, and applications are open for fall program sessions.

2. Niagara Children’s Centre – *Chris Tawil*

No report.

3. Pathstone Mental Health – *Michelle Toy*

No report.

4. Community Living (Port Colborne/Wainfleet) – *DJ Holmes*

No report.

5. Inclusion West Niagara – Patricia Ferrie

No report.

6. Down Syndrome Niagara - Andrea Pede

No report.

7. Mainstream – Katrina Arcand

No report.

8. Bethesda Services – Melissa Sullivan/Alyson Wilson

Melissa Sullivan reported:

- 2026 is the 25-year anniversary of children and youth services at Bethesda.
- Upcoming workshops:
 - Caregiver club – June 29th
 - Toilet training virtual workshop – June 17th
 - Transition to Adulthood workshop – starts June 2nd, runs weekly for 4 weeks
 - ACT – June group running, expanding into Hamilton and Haldimand-Norfolk regions, Grimsby location next.
 - Space still available to summer groups: Transition to Kindergarten, Transition to Highschool, Transition to Adulthood
- Register for all groups/workshops here: [Free Summer Autism Services for Children & Youth | Bethesda Services — Bethesda Services](#)

9. Autism Ontario Niagara Region – Cynthia Peterson

Cynthia Peterson reported:

- June 21st is a family event featuring a sensory-friendly screening of Toy Story 5 at the St. Catharines movie theatre.
- Summer Camp (July & August) – one to one support for campers
- Bowling events are currently ongoing through June to recognize and celebrate Autism Ontario volunteers.

10. Community Living (Welland/Pelham) – Monique Somma

No report.

F. COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE REPORT - Krystine Donato

No report.

G. INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATIVE REPORT - Cindi Lee Ecker-Flagg

Roxanne Rees (for Cindi) reported:

- The Student Voice Initiative is a bi-annual program for self-identified Indigenous students focused on building confidence and leadership through activities, elders and coordinators. The goal is to empower students to advocate for themselves and voice their concerns within their schools
- Family of Schools Cultural Presentations:
 - A pilot initiative where specific high school regions host mini cultural showcases. Elementary and secondary students come together to share their talents with the broader community.
 - The pilot just wrapped up for three high school communities (including Saint Michael and Saint Paul) and their surrounding elementary schools.
 - The board plans to pilot this initiative in three new high school communities next year.
- Lunch and Learn Program:
 - A program for self-identified high school students that connects them with local support organizations.
 - The program provides crucial practical and financial aid.

H. SECONDARY STUDENT SENATE REPRESENTATIVE REPORT- Lucas Bishop

Lucas Bishop reported:

- “Time to Shine” Special Education Formal was held in May at Saint Francis, hosted by the Student Senate and was a great success.
- “Mother Mary Baby Shower Initiative” is a board-wide donation drive that recently wrapped up across all eight secondary schools during the month of May.
 - Students were encouraged to bring in baby items and essentials to support vulnerable mothers.
 - All collected donations will soon be delivered to Strive Niagara to support local mothers in need.

I. STAFF REPORTS

1. Elementary Principal – Susy Walsh

No report.

2. Secondary Principal – Nicole Royer and Roxanne Rees

No report.

3. Student Support – Superintendent Pizzoferrato

Superintendent Pizzoferrato reported:

- Secondary Special Education Class IPRCs are taking place through the month of May and June as students and families prepare for this important transition to high school.
- Our next Student Support Session is taking place on June 9. The focus of the session will be on Prevalent Medical Plans of Care. Staff will have most of the day to learn how to complete the updated forms. We are also beginning the initial phases of using RISE to assist with these forms. Thank you to the Student Support Facilitators who are guiding this session.
- For the Professional Development day taking place on June 5, the Elementary Educational Assistants will have the opportunity to participate in virtual sessions hosted by Niagara College staff in both the Educational Assistance & Adult Support Program and the Autism and Behavioural Science program. The theme for the morning focuses on cultivating growth mindsets and building essential independence in our students. In the afternoon, members of our Student Support Department – ABA team, Speech-Language Pathologists and Student Support Facilitators will be offering virtual sessions to support transition and communication skills. Similar planning for the Secondary EA's is in progress. We extend a thank to our Niagara College community partners and Student Support teams for providing this valuable opportunity.
- Kindergarten transition meetings are wrapping up this month. Student Support staff have been involved in numerous transitions to assist students/families with a successful transition to kindergarten. Our staff will continue to support schools and monitor students in the Fall with recommendations and strategies for a successful start. Niagara Catholic looks forward to any new families who also join our schools in September.
- KeyMath3 assessment training was held for select schools with Educational Resource Teachers from those locations participating in a half-day training session to support mathematics programming. A further implementation and ERT training for this resource is planned for September.
- Empower lessons may be completed or coming to an end in most elementary schools. Empower teachers will be closing the program for this school year and considering candidates for their next Empower group in 2026-2027.
- Lexia will be made available to students with a license throughout the summer months. A memo will be distributed shortly to school principals regarding this information and can also distribute a letter to families for their awareness

4. Superintendent Pizzoferrato – Gino Pizzoferrato

Superintendent Pizzoferrato reported:

- Appreciation for the committee, its members, and the work done on SEAC.

J. TRUSTEE REPORTS - Trustee Marino/Trustee Benoit

Trustee Marino reported:

- The opportunities Trustees have had to visit schools and experience athletic events, scholarship awards and artistic showcases.
- Upcoming events include a retirement recognition dinner and graduation ceremonies.

K. NIAGARA CATHOLIC PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

1. Catholic School Council Funding Applications

For the 2025-2026 school year Catholic School Councils had the opportunity to apply for additional funding to support parent engagement activities. Fifteen elementary and 3 secondary Catholic School Councils received additional funding to support parent engagement activities focusing on Internet Safety, Raising Resilient Students, Mental Health Workshops-Stress Reduction, Digital Reset for Parents and guest speakers to promote Black History Month.

2. Niagara Catholic Student and Family Support Office-September 2026

The Ontario government announced that it is requiring all school boards in the province to establish a “Student and Family Support Office”, with the purpose of providing parents/guardians/caregivers with a mechanism to escalate concerns and resolve complaints. The establishment of “Student and Family Support Offices” in school boards forms part of the government’s broader accountability agenda as articulated in Bill 33, *Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025*.

The “Student and Family Support Office” will serve as an additional resource for families after the initial engagement with their child’s teacher or school principal.

The “Niagara Catholic Student and Family Support Office” will be established by September 1, 2026.

Niagara Catholic will ensure that the office meets the following service standards:

1. to acknowledge any inquiries within two business days, and
2. to aim to provide a response to inquiries within five business days

3. Niagara Catholic Student Achievement Plan

The updated Niagara Catholic Student Achievement Plan is available to all parents/guardians on the Board website, under the Board tile, Reports, Strategic Plans and System Priorities, Board Planning.

4. Niagara Catholic Volunteers AOP (800.9)

The Niagara Catholic *Volunteering in Catholic Schools AOP (800.9)* and the Niagara Catholic *Volunteer Drivers AOP (302.4)* were amalgamated into one AOP entitled [Niagara Catholic Volunteers AOP \(800.9\)](#).

The new requirements for Niagara Catholic volunteers were distributed to all principals and vice-principals to share with all staff, Catholic School Councils and school communities.

1. Niagara Catholic volunteers will be required to provide an original and satisfactory Police Vulnerable Sector Check, dated within six months of submission on a 5-year renewable cycle. In subsequent years, volunteers will be required to sign and submit a Volunteer Offence Declaration by September 1. The offence declaration will stand as a legally binding document, in accordance with Regulation 521/01, as amended by Regulation 298/25.
2. Niagara Catholic volunteers are now required to complete a one-time training on accessibility, and provide proof of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation Certificate of Training and the Ontario Human Rights Commission Certificate of Completion, in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Commission: Working Together Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.
5. NCPIC Meeting Dates 2026-2027 are as follows:
 - September 10, 2026
 - November 5, 2026
 - January 7, 2027
 - March 11, 2027
 - May 6, 2027

L. NEW BUSINESS/AGENDA ITEMS

No report.

M. NEXT MEETING: Wednesday September 9, 2026 at 6:30 p.m., at the Catholic Education Centre.

N. CLOSING PRAYER/MOMENT OF SILENCE: Grace Brochu led the closing prayer.

O. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by: Michelle Toy

Seconded by: DJ Holmes

THAT the June 3, 2026 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee be adjourned.
CARRIED

This meeting was adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

**TO: NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
BOARD MEETING
SEPTEMBER 22, 2026**

PUBLIC SESSION

**TITLE: MINUTES OF THE NIAGARA CATHOLIC PARENT
INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE (NCPIC) MEETING OF
MAY 7, 2026**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Niagara Catholic District School Board receive the Minutes of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee (NCPIC) Meeting of May 7, 2026 as presented for information.



**MINUTES OF THE
NIAGARA CATHOLIC PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
MAY 7, 2026**

Minutes of the Meeting of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee, held on Thursday, May 7, 2026 at 6:30 p.m., in the Father Kenneth Burns csc Board Room, at the Catholic Education Centre, 427 Rice Road, Welland, ON.

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reminded all those in attendance that the meetings of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee are recorded, livestreamed and posted on the Board website.

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

A. ROUTINE MATTERS

1. Land Acknowledgement and Opening Prayer

Fr. Paul MacNeil led the Land Acknowledgement and Opening Prayer.

2. Roll Call:

Parent Members	Present In-person	Present Electronically	Excused	Absent
Brenda Annen				√
Julie Bateman	√			
Rose Heron	√			
Sara Ivicic	√			
Michael McKnight	√		√	
Laura Thomas				
Carrie Vernelli	√			
Bishop/Diocesan Representative				
Fr. Paul MacNeil	√			
Ontario Association for Parents in Catholic Education (OAPCE)				
Jennifer Pilzecker				√
Secondary Student Senate Representative				
Ella Colaneri		√		
Trustees				
Joe Bruzzese	√			
Larry Huibers	√			

The following staff attended:

Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells, Superintendent of Education, **Chris McLean**, Secondary Vice-Principal, **Yvonne Anderson**, Administrative Assistant/Recording Secretary.

Regrets Received: Laura Thomas and Maria Solomon

3. **Approval of the Agenda**

Moved by: Carrie Vernelli

THAT the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee approve the agenda of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee Meeting of May 7, 2026 as presented.

CARRIED

4. **Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

No declarations of conflict of interest were declared with any item on the agenda.

5. **Approval of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee Meeting Minutes of January 8, 2026**

Moved by: Michael McKnight

THAT the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee approve the minutes of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee Meeting of January 7, 2026 as presented.

CARRIED

B. POLICY

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported that the following policies are currently being vetted.

1. Attendance Support Program Policy (201.16)
 2. Employee Workplace Harassment Policy (201.7)
 3. Employee Workplace Violence Policy (201.11)
 4. Occupational Health and Safety (201.6)
- Feedback to be submitted on behalf of the NCPIC is to be sent to Yvonne Anderson, no later than 12:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 27, 2026.
 - Feedback that is being submitted as an individual is to be sent directly to Anna Lisa Conidi, no later than 12:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 28, 2026.

C. REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESIGNATE, SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported:

1. Ministry of Education: Conversation with PIC Chairs/Co-Chairs and Board Leads-January 22, 2026
 - [Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025-PowerPoint Presentation](#)
 - [Ontario.ca: Helping Parents Navigate Public Education-PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported that on January 22, 2026 the Ministry of Education held a virtual meeting with PIC Chairs/Co-Chairs and Board Leads. The Ministry of Education presented two presentations. The links to the presentations have been included in the agenda for information.

2. School Mental Health Ontario: [Free webinars for parents/caregivers](#)-March 2026
Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported that on February 10, 2026, a system memo was shared with the elementary and secondary principals, vice-principals, Catholic School Council Chairs/Co-Chairs and the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee.

The memo was to bring awareness to the School Mental Health-Ontario four-part parent/caregiver webinar series focusing on key mental health and substance use health topics identified by parents/caregivers in Ontario, hosted by School Mental Health-Ontario.

Sessions started in March, will continue until June and are available on the [By Your Side Learning Hub](#).

3. Catholic School Council Funding Applications
Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported that 15 elementary and 3 secondary Catholic School Councils have applied for, and received additional funding to support parent engagement activities focusing on Internet Safety, Raising Resilient Students, Mental Health Workshops-Stress Reduction, Digital Reset for Parents and guest speakers to promote Black History Month.
4. Niagara Catholic Student and Family Support Office-September 2026
Superintendent Forsyth-Sells shared on November 13, 2025, the Ontario government announced that it is requiring all school boards in the province to establish a “Student and Family Support Office”, with the purpose of providing parents/guardians/caregivers with a mechanism to escalate concerns and resolve complaints. The establishment of “Student and Family Support Offices” in school boards forms part of the government’s broader accountability agenda as articulated in Bill 33, *Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025*.

The “Student and Family Support Office” will serve as an additional resource for families after the initial engagement with their child’s teacher or school principal.

The “Niagara Catholic Student and Family Support Office” will be established by September 1, 2026.

Niagara Catholic will ensure that the office meets the following service standards:

1. to acknowledge any inquiries within two business days, and
 2. to aim to provide a response to inquiries within five business days
5. Niagara Catholic Student Achievement Plan
Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported that the updated Niagara Catholic Student Achievement Plan is available to all parents/guardians on the Board website, under the Board tile, Reports, Strategic Plans and System Priorities, Board Planning.
 6. Niagara Catholic Volunteers AOP (800.9)
Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported that the Niagara Catholic *Volunteering in Catholic Schools AOP (800.9)* and the Niagara Catholic *Volunteer Drivers AOP (302.4)* were amalgamated into one AOP entitled [Niagara Catholic Volunteers AOP \(800.9\)](#).

The new requirements for Niagara Catholic volunteers were distributed to all principals and vice-principals to share with all staff, Catholic School Councils and school communities. Superintendent Forsyth-Sells highlighted key changes:

1. Niagara Catholic volunteers will be required to provide an original and satisfactory Police Vulnerable Sector Check, dated within six months of submission on 5-year

renewable cycle. In subsequent years, volunteers will be required to sign and submit a Volunteer Offence Declaration by September 1. The offence declaration will stand as a legally binding document, in accordance with Regulation 521/01, as amended by Regulation 298/25.

2. Niagara Catholic volunteers are now required to complete a one-time training on accessibility, and provide proof of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation Certificate of Training and the Ontario Human Rights Commission Certificate of Completion, in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Commission: Working Together Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

A brief Q&A followed.

7. 2026-2027 NCPIC Membership: Call for Nominations
Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported that on March 10, 2026 a system memo was shared with elementary and secondary principals, vice-principals and Catholic School Council Chairs/Co-Chairs and the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee.

The memo was to inform parents/guardians that the Niagara Catholic District School Board is seeking to appoint up to three community representatives and to fill the available parent/guardian positions on the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee for the 2026-2027 school year.

The memo included:

- A Newsletter Insert
- The 2026-2027 NCPIC Nomination Form for Parents/Guardians
- The 2026-2027 NCPIC Community Representative Application Form

Interested parents/guardians are to complete and submit the parent/guardian nomination form ***no later than 4:00 p.m., on Friday, May 15, 2026***. Nomination forms are available at the school and on the Board website, under the Parent Tile-Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee.

8. 2026-2027 School Year Calendar
Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported that the 2026-2027 School Year Calendar approved by the Ministry was approved by the Board at the April 28, 2026, Board meeting. The 2026-2027 School Year Calendar is posted on the Board website under the Parent tile.
9. 2026-2027 NCPIC Meeting Dates
Superintendent Forsyth-Sells shared the 2026-2027 NCPIC Meeting Dates.
 - September 10, 2026
 - November 5, 2026
 - January 7, 2027
 - March 11, 2027
 - May 6, 2027
10. NCPIC Financial Report
Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported on the finances of the NCPIC.

D. SECONDARY STUDENT SENATE REPRESENTATIVE REPORT-*Ella Colaneri*

Ella Colaneri reported:

- All Niagara Catholic secondary schools are heading into the summer months, proms are coming up and there are many exciting things happening for graduates.

Currently, secondary schools are participating in ‘Mother Mary’s Baby Shower’ started by Student Senate that will continue until May 26. This is a donation drive fundraiser that will allow us to support young women and mothers in need during the month of May. Donations such as non-perishable food, hygiene products, diapers, and new clothing will be accepted and given to STRIVE Niagara at the end of the month by the Niagara Catholic Student Senators.

- This week, elementary school councils and senators were able to participate in the annual leadership symposium held by Student Senate. All elementary school students were able to communicate with each other, outside of their schools and in an environment with like-minded student leaders. It allowed students in younger grades to observe the communications and relationships that will enhance their interpersonal skills in secondary and post-secondary life. This annual conference enhanced students' togetherness, creativity, knowledge about equity, and all students left inspired and ready to lead their schools.
- The Niagara Catholic Student Senate just held our annual symposium conference with the theme focused on equity and solidarity, paralleling Lead Out Loud and going more in depth for all councils and senators in our board. This event was highly anticipated and held great success once again for our senate. It taught us as senators how we can lead with solidarity, and how we can teach those skills in our future school leaders as well.
- Niagara Catholic senators are holding the “Time to Shine” Special Education semi-formal on May 15. The theme this year is “Diamonds and Disco”. Special Education students from every school are invited to enjoy a day of fun, laughter, and creativity at Saint Francis Catholic Secondary School. We are beyond excited to hold this event and are looking forward to seeing everyone shine.

E. DIOCESAN REPORT- *Fr. Paul MacNeil*

Fr. Paul MacNeil reported:

- The St. Carlos Acutis Project: Innovation in Faith
Niagara Catholic students were invited to participate the St. Carlos Acutis Challenge, to create a project that highlighted the aspects of Catholic faith that they are passionate about and share it in a way that is engaging and effective using modern technology to share the Light of the Gospel.

32 submissions were received and showcased on Saturday, May 2, 2026 at Denis Morris Catholic High School. The level of creativity and ingenuity shown by the students in documenting and presenting various aspects of our Catholic faith was truly moving, proving that technology can be used as a powerful tool for connection and spiritual growth. The project successfully modeled how our young people can be “Digital Missionaries”, following in the footsteps of a Saint who spoke their language. A video of the event was also presented.

- **Diocesan Stewardship: Investing in the Future**
The Diocese is currently in the midst of a significant “Light the Way Fundraising Campaign” specifically designed to bolster the frontline efforts of parishes around “Evangelization” and Youth Ministry.
- **Strengthening the Parish-School Connection**
The final draft of a new guiding document focused on Parish-School Relationships has been completed. This document provides clear, thoughtful guidelines to enhance the collaboration between the Diocese parishes, pastors and schools. By aligning expectations and communication strategies we ensure that students and families experience a unified community of faith. It moves relationships from a series of “transactions” to a true “partnership in mission”.

These guidelines will serve as a foundational tool for pastors and school leadership to deepen their connection and support for one another. The document has already been approved by senior staff at the board level and local deans and will be presented to the Council of Priests on May 20, 2026. The document will be made public once final approval has been received from Bishop Bergie and Director Cipriano.

F. ONTARIO ASSOCIATION FOR PARENTS IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION REPORT

Nil report.

G. SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC) REPORT

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells provided a report on behalf of SEAC highlighting:

- May is Speech and Hearing Month
- Elementary Gifted Education Modules: “How We Communicate”
- Student Support Symposium
- Spring Fling Event-Saint Michael and Saint Paul Catholic High Schools
- Netherlands Visit

A handout was provided with further details.

H. STAFF REPORTS-Maria Solomon and Chris McLean

Secondary Vice-Principal, McLean provided the elementary report on behalf of Principal Solomon:

1. Formation and Religious Observances:

Faith-based learning is embedded throughout each day which is highlighted during this week of Catholic Education. Schools across Niagara Catholic collectively focused on celebrating faith, community, and student well-being through integrated learning experiences. This was demonstrated by:

- Deepening faith and Catholic identity through daily prayer, liturgies, saints’ teachings, and sacramental celebrations
- Promoting student voice and leadership via performances such as” Niagara Catholic’s Musical Festival, school assemblies, symposiums such as the Student Leadership, and recognition of student and staff achievement through Niagara Catholic’s Celebrating Excellence Awards Ceremony.
- Engaging in community and service activities that foster connection, outreach, and social justice awareness

- Integrating mental health and well-being practices such as mindfulness, reflection, and wellness activities into daily routines
- Highlighting holistic education by combining faith formation, academics, arts, and physical activity into a unified celebration of learning

Elementary schools also regularly attend monthly school masses reinforcing parish-school connections and significant liturgical celebrations and sacraments supporting student spiritual growth. Faith development remains continuous and highly integrated into school programming, aligning with the Catholic identity of the school community.

2. Academic Programming and Assessment continues to be a focus:
 - EQAO Assessments will begin later this month along with a continued focus on using a three-tiered approach to support student learning.
3. Kindergarten Open Houses and school transitions are scheduled during the month of May.
 - Student Well-Being and School Climate include numerous initiatives aimed at fostering inclusion, wellness, and positive school culture such as:

Mental Health Week (May 3–8) emphasized student wellness.

- Awareness events including:
- Pink Shirt Day (anti-bullying) in February
- Epilepsy Awareness (March)
- Down Syndrome Awareness (March)

Community-building initiatives:

- Kids Helping Kids Week (February)
- Faith Play Day (May).

Schools throughout Niagara Catholic demonstrate an ongoing commitment to inclusivity, empathy, and student well-being through targeted awareness campaigns and community-building events.

4. Indigenous Education and Equity Initiatives
Schools continue to prioritize Indigenous education and culturally responsive programming:
 - Multiple visits by Niagara Catholic Indigenous teams and participation in the Circle of Friends Pilot Programs
 - Niagara Catholic Indigenous Youth Gatherings (Grade 7 students in April)
 - Learning opportunities centered on Indigenous teachings and community engagement occurred across several months. Indigenous perspectives were meaningfully integrated through recurring visits, experiential learning, and student participation in regional initiatives.
5. Environmental and Eco Initiatives
Environmental stewardship was strong and consistent. At the end of this week, the ECO Schools Applications are due.
6. Extracurricular Activities and Athletics
A wide range of athletic and extracurricular opportunities were offered:

- Basketball tournaments (intermediate and junior levels) in March
- Handball tournaments (April)
- Track and Field event at Oakes Park (May)
- Flag Football (May)

Additional activities:

- Chess Tournament (March)
- Boccia Ball and musical participation (May)
- Students had access to diverse physical, competitive, and skill-based experiences that supported teamwork and engagement beyond the classroom.

7. Community, Family, and Outreach Engagement: The school maintained strong partnerships with families and the wider community through:
 - Catholic School Council meetings
 - Parent engagement events
 - Kindergarten orientation sessions and open houses
 - Fundraising and outreach

Secondary Vice-Principal, McLean provided the secondary report:

- OSSLT ended April 20. All first time eligible and 2nd attempts were completed for the 2025-2026 school year. Results will be available by the end of May.
- Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics window for writing is from Thursday, May 28 to Wednesday, June 24, 2026.
- The COMPASS Survey was administered during March and April. Questions in the survey dealt with different health topics including: physical activity, healthy eating, smoking, alcohol and drug use, sedentary behaviour, and mental health. The COMPASS survey will help researchers from the University of Waterloo to gather information about health topics among Canada's youth. The information is used to help plan new initiatives and evaluate current programs at our secondary schools.
- Midterm reports went out during the week of April 20, followed by Parent-Teacher Interviews which concluded at the end of April. Parent-Teacher Interviews offer a great opportunity for parents to meet their child's teachers and connect over their academic achievements.
- Catholic Education Week and Mental Health Week
 - Many events occur during this week from school masses, liturgies, and wellness fairs.
 - OCSTA (Ontario Catholic Student Youth Day) occurred on May 6th for Grades 7-12 students. All students in grades 7-12 were invited to attend and participate in this year's virtual event. Guest speaker topics dealt with Balancing the Heart & Mind and "Pilgrims of Hope: Sowers of Seeds" along with a Provincial Mass celebrating CEW.
 - Elementary and secondary schools, under the leadership of the Child and Youth Worker(s), were asked to promote, and participate in the CEW and Mental Health Week contest using the theme of "Pilgrims of Hope on the Path to Holiness" answering the question, "How Will You Be a Messenger of Hope?" Students shared how hope and faith inspire them and positively impact their health and well-being. All submissions must be sent to mentalhealth@niagaracatholic.ca by Friday, May 29.

- SKILLS Ontario was held in Toronto on May 4 and 5. Many participants from Niagara Catholic competed in the events. One notable mention from Denis Morris Catholic High School was Alessandra Maddalena, who won gold in hairstyling. Alessandra will be moving on to Nationals held in Toronto on May 28-29.
- Every year during Catholic Education Week, Niagara Catholic recognizes the very best of our students, staff, and alumni during our Celebrating Excellence Awards. The awards were presented on May 5, at the Central Community Centre in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The awards celebration takes place in three parts: the Distinguished Alumni Awards, recognizing graduates who have a notable contribution to their field or the community, the Inspiration Awards, presented to staff for exemplary service to their students, colleagues, and Niagara Catholic, and the Catch the Spirit Student Awards of Excellence, presented each year to a student from each Niagara Catholic elementary and secondary school, as well as from alternative education and continuing education.
- Niagara Catholic Athletic Association is hosting their Track and Field Championship on Wednesday, May 13, at the Niagara Olympic Club.
- The Nationals Musicfest Canada is being held in Niagara Falls from May 11-15. Many of our secondary schools will be competing. Schedules can be found at www.musicfest.ca

I. TRUSTEE REPORT

Trustee Huibers reported:

- The Ontario Catholic School Trustee Association Conference was held last weekend Chair Di Lorenzo and Vice-Chair Burkholder attended along with the Director of Education and student trustees. Obviously, the impact of the new legislation was a concern and a consideration, not to make it a political conversation, but relative to this group, I would be concerned to ensure that the policy approval process does honour the local engagement and has that ability rather than centralizing it to a ministerial level and losing the local conversations. Secondly, would be the role of the student trustees. We have been very blessed at this board to have very, strong student trustee representation that adds immensely to the organization and activities and focus of the Trustees, as well as senior staff. I would want to ensure that doesn't get lost in the movement towards whatever this new legislation is as the devil will be in the details and it will be a matter of understanding how that goes.
- The Niagara Catholic Foundation held its Catholic Education Award of Distinction and our own Jim Marino, current trustee and also long-time Catholic advocate, as well as posthumously Joe McDonald, who was an OECTA President locally, were recognized for contributions to Catholic education.
- There is an Area Attendance Review going on in Niagara Falls currently the for realignment of school attendance areas based on three factors:
 - the French Immersion program and where to allocate that space, and best utilize that space
 - what happens when the new school at Niagara Falls comes on board?
 - the degree of overcrowding and underutilization across the Niagara Falls sector

There have been a number of meetings. There will be two more public meetings, one on May 11, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. at Saint Michael Catholic High School, and then again on May 19, 2026 at Saint Paul Catholic High School. A recommendation will be presented to the Committee of the Whole on June 9, for implementation. It's anticipated that the implementation would be for the following academic year, not for September 2026, but September 2027. Some of that may be in flux dependent upon the success of getting the new school in place. If anyone has any input, they are welcome to provide input at those meetings, and the information is also available online.

J. NEW BUSINESS/AGENDA ITEMS-DISCUSSION FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported that the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) is offering free webinars for parents/guardians. The information was shared with principals and vice-principals to share with Catholic School Councils and school communities. Superintendent Forsyth-Sells highlighted the date and topics. A handout was provided with further details.

May 13, 2026, 6:30 p.m.: [EQAO Math Night for Parents and Guardians \(Grades 3, 6 and 9 assessments\)](#)

May 20, 2026, 12:00 p.m.: [EQAO Math Sessions for Parents and Guardians of Grade 9 students](#)

June 3, 2026, 6:00 p.m.: [EQAO Literacy Session for Families-Focus on Reading](#)

June 9, 2026, 6:00 p.m.: [Screen Time & Academic Achievement on EQAO Assessments](#)

June 11, 2026, 12:00 p.m.: [EQAO Literacy Session for Families-Focus on Reading](#)

K. NEXT MEETING: Thursday, September 10, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. at the Catholic Education Centre. This will be the first meeting of the 2026-2027 school year.

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells acknowledged Carrie Vernelli for her commitment and dedication to Catholic education over the past 14 years, as a parent, Catholic School Council member and parent representative on the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee.

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells also thanked all members of the NCPIC for their dedication and support of Catholic education, parent engagement and student achievement in the Niagara Catholic District School Board.

L. CLOSING PRAYER: Fr. Paul MacNeil led the closing prayer.

M. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by: Carrie Vernelli

THAT the May 7, 2026 meeting of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee be adjourned.

CARRIED

This meeting was adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

**TO: NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
BOARD MEETING
*SEPTEMBER 22, 2026***

PUBLIC SESSION

**TOPIC: APPROVED MINUTES OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE
MEETING OF JUNE 10, 2026**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Niagara Catholic District School Board receive the Approved Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting of June 10, 2026, as presented for information.



MINUTES OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING PUBLIC SESSION

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10, 2026

Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting (public session) of the Niagara Catholic District School Board, held on Wednesday, June 10, 2026, in the Father Kenneth Burns c.s.c. Board Room at the Catholic Education Centre, 427 Rice Road, Welland.

The meeting was called to order at 10:01 a.m. by Giancarlo Vetrone, Interim Director of Education.

A. ROUTINE MATTERS

1. Opening Prayer

Opening Prayer was led by Interim Director, Vetrone.

2. Roll Call

<u>Trustee Committee Members</u>	Present	Present Electronically	Absent	Excused
Trustee Natalia Benoit		✓		
Trustee Joe Bruzzese		✓		
Trustee Larry Huibers	✓			
<u>External Committee Members</u>	Present	Present Electronically	Absent	Excused
Nicole Liew		✓		
Charles Skelton		✓		

Resources to the Audit Committee were in attendance:

Giancarlo Vetrone, Interim Director of Education
Andrea Eltherington, Regional Internal Audit Manager

Staff in attendance:

Grant Frost, Chief Information Officer

William Mancini, IT Engineer

John Forte, Privacy and Risk-Advisor

Shari Bush, Recording Secretary/Administrative Assistant, Business and Financial Services

3. Approval of Agendas of June 10, 2026

Moved by Trustee Benoit

THAT the Niagara Catholic Audit Committee approve the agendas of the Audit Committee Meeting of Wednesday, June 10, 2026.

CARRIED

4. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

4.1 Declaration of Conflict of Interest re: Agenda (verbal)

No Declarations of Conflicts of Interest were declared with any items on the agenda.

5. Approval of Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting (Public Session)

5.1 Wednesday, March 11, 2026

Moved by Trustee Benoit.

THAT the Niagara Catholic Audit Committee approve the Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting (Public Session) of March 11, 2026.

CARRIED

B. REPORTS

1. Regional Internal Audit Status Report

1.1 2026-2027 Regional Internal Audit Plan

Andrea Eltherington presented the 2026-2027 Regional Internal Audit Plan to the committee members for approval.

Moved by Trustee Bruzzese.

THAT the Niagara Catholic Audit Committee approve the 2026-2027 Regional Internal Audit Plan.

CARRIED

C. BUSINESS IN CAMERA

Moved by Trustee Benoit.

THAT the Niagara Catholic Audit Committee move into the In Camera Session

CARRIED

The Niagara Catholic Audit Committee moved into the In Camera Session of the Committee Meeting at 10:07 a.m. and reconvened at 10:16 a.m.

D. REPORTS ON THE IN-CAMERA SESSION

Moved by Nicole Liew, External Committee Member.

THAT the Niagara Catholic Audit Committee approve the Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting (Public Session) of March 11, 2026.

CARRIED

Moved by Charles Skelton, External Committee Member.

THAT the Niagara Catholic Audit Committee receive the Regional Internal Audit Status Report and Open Findings as presented by Andrea Eltherington, Regional Internal Audit Manager.

CARRIED

E. FUTURE MEETINGS

Next Audit Committee Meeting is Thursday, September 17, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.

F. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Committee Member, Liew.

THAT the June 10, 2026 meeting of the Niagara Catholic Audit Committee be adjourned.

CARRIED

Meeting was adjourned at 10:18 a.m.

**TO: NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
BOARD MEETING
SEPTEMBER 22, 2026**

PUBLIC SESSION

**TITLE: WEST OF CENTRAL REGIONAL INTERNAL AUDIT TEAM
ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026**

The West Central Regional Internal Audit Team Annual Report 2025-2026 is presented
for information.

Prepared by: Audit Committee

Presented by: Audit Committee

Approved by: Audit Committee

Date: September 22, 2026

West of Central Regional Internal Audit Team Annual Report – 2025-26

Introduction

The West of Central Regional Internal Audit Team (RIAT) provides independent and objective assurance and advisory services to ten school boards: (1) Halton Catholic District School Board, (2) Halton District School Board, (3) Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board, (4) Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, (5) Niagara Catholic District School Board, (6) District School Board of Niagara, (7) Waterloo Catholic District School Board, (8) Waterloo Region District School Board, (9) Wellington Catholic District School Board, and (10) Upper Grand District School Board.

RIAT's work is guided by two main sources:

- The Regional Internal Audit Charter (Charter) (see Appendix A)
- Mandatory elements of the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF), including the Global Internal Audit Standards¹ (Standards) and Topical Requirements (containing mandatory requirements for evaluating and assessing the effectiveness of governance, risk management, and control processes on specific risk topics²).

The IIA's newest standards came into effect on January 9, 2025. The West of Central RIAT has been working toward full implementation in 2025/26 having identified gaps between the current and previous versions of the standards.

In following this guidance, the West of Central RIAT has prepared an Annual Report to the Audit Committee for 2025-26. This report communicates information required by the Charter and/or IPPF (along with other relevant information), including:

- A description of RIAT's mandate and function
- RIAT's mission, vision and strategy
- Annual confirmation of RIAT's independence
- Professional development undertaken
- Quality assurance activities undertaken and results of these

¹ Further details on the IPPF and its mandatory elements can be found on the [IIA website](#).

² As of October 31, 2025, Topical Requirements have been issued for Cybersecurity and Third Party

Further, it supports the Audit Committee's duties related to internal audit, as outlined in subsection 9(3) of Ontario Regulation 361/10 (Audit Committees)³.

Purpose Statement, Mandate and Charter

RIAT's purpose statement and mandate are defined in the charter adopted by all English-language RIATs across the province. The charter has been revised to incorporate the new Standards and is based on the model public sector charter developed by the IIA (with modifications made based on RIAT's specific circumstances). The updated charter has been presented for agreement/approval by the Audit Committee.

The charter will also be presented annually as a refresher (Appendix A) and should be re-signed where there is a change in one or more of the charter's signatories (Audit Committee Chair, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and/or Regional Internal Audit Manager).

Mission, Vision and Strategy

IIA Standard 9.2 (Internal Audit Strategy) now requires RIAT to develop and implement a strategy for the regional internal audit function and present this to the Audit Committee and senior management periodically.

A province-wide strategic plan was developed for RIAT, including common goals, based on work previously completed by MNP on behalf of the RIATs.

See Appendix B for the Strategic Plan, which captures RIAT's mission, vision and strategy.

Annual Independence Confirmation

In accordance with IIA Standard 7.1 (Organizational Independence) and RIAT's charter, we confirm that RIAT is organizationally independent and free from interference in determining the scope of internal audits, performing work, and communicating results.

To ensure organizational independence, RIAT reports:

- Functionally to each Audit Committee of the ten boards in the West of Central Region; and
- Administratively to the Senior Business Official of the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (the host board).

In addition to the above reporting structure, the Regional Internal Audit Manager meets with the ten School Business Officials (SBO's) 1-2 times a year to assist in the coordination of the

³ [Ontario Regulation 361/10: Audit Committees](#)

regional internal audit initiative for the West of Central boards and to facilitate discussions and action where required. Two meetings were held in 2025-26.

RIAT Structure & Staffing

RIAT consists of the:

- Regional Internal Audit Manager – Andrea Eltherington, CIA, CRMA, CISA
- Senior Regional Internal Auditor – Cathy DeLuca, CPA, CA
- Senior Regional Internal Auditor – Don Luce CIA, CISA, CRISC, CISM, CC, PMP
- Senior Regional Internal Auditor – Brad Sisson, CIA candidate
- Internal Audit Consultant (through Mason staffing) – John Mocarski

All staff are appropriately qualified. The senior auditors report directly to the manager.

Beginning in the 2025-26 fiscal year, the Ministry of Education has increased the annual funding for regional internal audit teams provincially. As a result, the West of Central expanded its headcount, as follows:

- One FTE for a Senior Regional Internal Auditor (permanent)

This position was filled in January 2026 by Brad Sisson.

In addition to the staff noted above, RIAT allocates a portion of its budget toward consulting fees, which allows the flexibility to co-source or outsource when a specialist or additional capacity is required. In 2025-26, RIAT engaged the following consultant to complete or assist in the following engagements:

- MNP – Business Continuity Planning (outsourced)
- MNP – 2 Strategic Risk refreshes (outsourced)

Annual funding from the Ministry of Education was sufficient to support the West of Central RIAT's approved audit plans in 2025-26 which are resource based. However, as the budget is set by the Ministry there is no opportunity to increase funding or resources as required by IIA standard 10.1 and 10.2 creating a limitation for these standards.

Professional Development and Memberships

IIA Standard 3.2 (Continuing Professional Development) requires internal auditors to maintain and continually develop their competencies to improve the effectiveness and quality of internal audit services through continuing professional development. This includes fulfilling the requirements applicable to certifications held by auditors (minimum number of continuing

professional development hours annually, including an ethics training requirement). All RIAT staff have confirmed that they met the continuing education requirements of their respective certifications for 2025-2026. RIAT staff in 2025-2026 participated in a variety of courses that covered a number of relevant topics. Training courses listed by staff member are listed in Appendix C.

Staff continue to be members of the OASBO Internal Audit Committee, the Municipal Internal Auditors Association (MIAA) and the IIA.

Quality Assurance and Improvement Program

Both the charter and Standards require RIAT to report on the quality assurance and improvement program (QAIP), which includes ongoing internal assessments and a periodic external assessment to assess conformance with the Standards. The following is an update on RIAT's progress in these areas:

- Internal Assessments – Quality is assessed internally through ongoing monitoring and review activities, both at the engagement level and overall. Annually, RIAT undertakes an internal self-assessment on its conformance with the Standards. The current year's self-assessment took the form of an update to the gap assessment to the new Standards. This involved comparing existing operations to the updated requirements and developing action plans to close gaps and achieve conformance. There was a gap presentation to each of the ten Audit Committees between January and June 2025. An update to the gap assessment was presented to the 10 boards' School Business Officials in February 2026.
 - There were three significant gaps noted that affect conformance with three of the fifty-two standards. Action plans have been developed to address these. See Appendix D.
- External Assessment – A contractor was engaged to perform an assessment for the common RIAT elements (see Appendix E). The result of the assessment is that we are in general conformance with the standards which is a pass. The RIATs are investigating becoming QA trained to be able to perform file reviews between the regions. This is likely to occur in 2026-2027.

RIAT Plan & Activities

The Ministry of Education issued guidance in May 2016 (memorandum 2016: B10), requiring that each school board receive a minimum of two assurance or advisory engagements a year from the RIAT (or a comprehensive engagement covering at least two processes), in addition to follow-up activities on recommendations or management's action plans from previously issued reports. For each board in the region, RIAT prepares an annual audit plan based on a risk assessment that also considers feedback from management and the Audit Committee. The plan



is presented to the Audit Committee for recommendation to the Board of Trustees for approval.

An update is provided at each Audit Committee meeting to communicate the progress toward completing planned engagements, as well as an update on any follow-up activities.

Engagements Completed Across the Region in 2025-26

RIAT was impacted by a staffing shortage in 2025-26 (down 1.0 FTE). Given the additional funding announced (as noted above), this has now been addressed.

The following engagements were started/completed in the West of Central Region in 2025-26:

- Entity Level Assessment
- Business Continuity (outsourced)
- Legislative Compliance
- Equity Audit Readiness Assessment
- Strategic Risk Assessment Refresh (outsourced) - 2
- Human Resources and Payroll
- Student Mental Health
- Community Use of Schools
- Attendance Support
- Strategic Risk Assessment (outsourced) – deferred until 26/27
- Staff Mental Health & Wellness

Some of the audits listed above were deemed the equivalent of two audits as they addressed multiple risks. In addition to the engagements listed above, RIAT completed follow-up procedures, risk assessments and audit plans at each of the ten boards.

Based on the approved audit plans, 14 audit or advisory engagements are expected to be completed across the region in 2026-27, along with follow-up activities at each board. In year audit plan approvals could occur if necessary.

Appendix A – Regional Internal Audit Charter

Purpose

The purpose of the regional internal audit team is to strengthen the ability of the district school boards in the West of Central Region to create, protect, and sustain value by providing the Audit Committee of the Board of Trustees (Audit Committee) and management with independent, risk-based, and objective assurance, advice, insight, and foresight.

The regional internal audit function enhances the district school board's:

- Successful achievement of its objectives.
- Governance, risk management, and control processes.
- Decision-making and oversight.
- Reputation and credibility with its stakeholders.
- Ability to serve the public interest.

The regional internal audit function is most effective when:

- Internal auditing is performed by competent professionals in conformance with The IIA's Global Internal Audit Standards™, which are set in the public interest.
- The regional internal audit team is independently positioned with direct accountability to the Audit Committee.
- Regional internal auditors are free from undue influence and committed to making objective assessments.

Commitment to Adhering to the Global Internal Audit Standards

The regional internal audit team will adhere to the mandatory elements of The Institute of Internal Auditors' International Professional Practices Framework, which are the Global Internal Audit Standards and Topical Requirements. The Regional Internal Audit Manager will report annually to the Audit Committee and senior management regarding the regional internal audit team's conformance with the Standards, which will be assessed through a quality assurance and improvement program.

Mandate

Authority

The regional internal audit function is established by the Ministry of Education through the annual Core Education Funding. The role of the Audit Committee towards the regional internal audit function is established by Ontario Regulation 361/10, "Audit Committees", subsection 9(3).

The regional internal audit team's authority is created by its direct reporting relationship to the Audit Committee. Such authority allows for unrestricted access to the Audit Committee.

The Audit Committee authorizes the regional internal audit team to:

- Have full and unrestricted access to all functions, data, records, information, physical property, and personnel pertinent to carrying out internal audit responsibilities. Regional internal auditors are accountable for confidentiality and safeguarding records and information.
- Allocate resources, set frequencies, select subjects, determine scopes of work, apply techniques, and issue communications to accomplish the regional internal audit function's objectives.
- Obtain assistance from the necessary personnel of the district school board and other specialized services from within or outside the district school board to complete internal audit services.

Independence, Organizational Position, and Reporting Relationships

The internal audit function follows a regional model. The function consists of a Regional Internal Audit Manager responsible to district school boards in one of the eight regions in the province of Ontario as identified by the Ministry of Education.

The Regional Internal Audit Manager (acting as the Chief Audit Executive (CAE) and/or Head of Internal Audit) will be positioned at a level in the school board that enables internal audit services and responsibilities to be performed without interference from management, thereby establishing the independence of the regional internal audit team. (See "Mandate" section.) The Regional Internal Audit Manager will report functionally to each audit committee in the region and be administratively (for example, day-to-day operations) supported by a host school board Senior Business Official. This positioning provides the organizational authority and status to bring matters directly to senior management and escalate matters to the Audit Committee, when necessary, without interference and supports the regional internal auditors' ability to maintain objectivity.

The functional reporting relationship between the Regional Internal Audit Manager and each Audit Committee will be further demonstrated by each Audit Committee performing the following functions for their Board:

- Approve the regional internal audit charter;
- Recommend for approval the risk based internal audit plan;
- Receive information from the Regional Internal Audit Manager about the internal audit activity performance to plan and other relevant matters;
- Inquire of the Regional Internal Audit Manager whether there are resource or scoping limitations; and
- Review annually the performance of the regional internal audit activity and provide the Board of Trustees with their comments regarding the performance of the Regional Internal Audit Manager.

The Regional Internal Audit Manager will interact directly with the Audit Committee, including in-camera sessions and between audit committee meetings as appropriate.

The Regional Internal Audit Manager will confirm to the Audit Committee, at least annually, the organizational independence of the regional internal audit team. If the governance structure does not support organizational independence, the Regional Internal Audit Manager will document the characteristics of the governance structure limiting independence and any safeguards employed to achieve the principle of independence. The Regional Internal Audit Manager will disclose to the Audit Committee any interference regional internal auditors encounter related to the scope, performance, or communication of internal audit work and results. The disclosure will include communicating the implications of such interference on the regional internal audit team's effectiveness and ability to fulfill its mandate.

Changes to the Mandate and Charter

Circumstances may justify a follow-up discussion between the Regional Internal Audit Manager, Audit Committee, and senior management on the regional internal audit mandate or other aspects of the regional internal audit charter. Such circumstances may include but are not limited to:

- A significant change in the Global Internal Audit Standards.
- A significant reorganization within the district school board.
- Significant changes in the Regional Internal Audit Manager, Audit Committee, and/or senior management.
- Significant changes to the district school board's strategies, objectives, risk profile, or the environment in which it operates.
- New laws or regulations that may affect the nature and/or scope of internal audit services.

Audit Committee Oversight

To establish, maintain, and ensure that the regional internal audit function has sufficient authority to fulfill its duties, the oversight role of the Audit Committee over the regional internal audit function is outlined in Ontario Regulation 361/10, "Audit Committees", subsection 9(3).

Further, subsection 10(c) of the regulation allows private meetings between the regional internal audit team and the Audit Committee members without senior management present.

Note: Funding for the regional internal audit function is determined by the Ministry of Education annually through the Core Education Funding.

Regional Internal Audit Manager Roles and Responsibilities

Ethics and Professionalism

The Regional Internal Audit Manager will ensure that regional internal auditors:

- Conform with the Global Internal Audit Standards, including the principles of Ethics and Professionalism: integrity, objectivity, competency, due professional care, and confidentiality.
- Understand, respect, meet, and contribute to the legitimate and ethical expectations of the organization and be able to recognize conduct that is contrary to those expectations.
- Encourage and promote an ethics-based culture in the organization.
- Report organizational behavior that is inconsistent with the organization's ethical expectations, as described in applicable policies and procedures.

Objectivity

The Regional Internal Audit Manager will ensure that the regional internal audit function remains free from all conditions that threaten the ability of regional internal auditors to carry out their responsibilities in an unbiased manner, including matters of engagement selection, scope, procedures, frequency, timing, and communication. If the Regional Internal Audit Manager determines that objectivity may be impaired in fact or appearance, the details of the impairment will be disclosed to appropriate parties.

Regional internal auditors will maintain an unbiased mental attitude that allows them to perform engagements objectively such that they believe in their work product, do not compromise quality, and do not subordinate their judgment on audit matters to others, either in fact or appearance.

Regional internal auditors will have no direct operational responsibility or authority over any of the activities they review. Accordingly, regional internal auditors will not implement internal controls, develop procedures, install systems, or engage in other activities that may impair their judgment, including:

- Assessing specific operations for which they had responsibility within the previous year.
- Performing operational duties for the district school board or its affiliates.
- Initiating or approving transactions external to the regional internal audit function.
- Directing the activities of any district school board employee that is not employed by the regional internal audit function, except to the extent that such employees have been appropriately assigned to the regional internal audit team or to assist regional internal auditors.

Regional internal auditors will:

- Disclose impairments of independence or objectivity, in fact or appearance, to appropriate parties and at least annually, such as the Regional Internal Audit Manager, Audit Committee, management, or others.
- Exhibit professional objectivity in gathering, evaluating, and communicating information.
- Make balanced assessments of all available and relevant facts and circumstances.
- Take necessary precautions to avoid conflicts of interest, bias, and undue influence.

Managing the Regional Internal Audit Function

The Regional Internal Audit Manager has the responsibility to:

- At least annually, develop a risk-based regional internal audit plan that considers the input of the Audit Committee and senior management. Discuss the plan with the Audit Committee and senior management and submit the plan to the Audit Committee for review and approval.
- Communicate the impact of resource limitations on the regional internal audit plan to the Audit Committee and senior management.
- Review and adjust the regional internal audit plan, as necessary, in response to changes in the district school board's business, risks, operations, programs, systems, and controls.
- Communicate with the Audit Committee and senior management if there are significant interim changes to the regional internal audit plan. Submit all proposed major changes to the regional internal audit plan to the Audit Committee for approval.
- Ensure internal audit engagements are performed, documented, and communicated in accordance with the Global Internal Audit Standards.
- Follow up on engagement findings and confirm the implementation of recommendations or action plans and communicate the results of internal audit services to the Audit Committee and senior management as available.
- Ensure the regional internal audit function collectively possesses or obtains the knowledge, skills, and other competencies and qualifications needed to meet the requirements of the Global Internal Audit Standards and fulfill the regional internal audit mandate.
- Identify and consider trends and emerging issues that could impact the district school board and communicate to the Audit Committee and senior management as appropriate.
- Consider emerging trends and successful practices in internal auditing.

- Establish and ensure adherence to methodologies designed to guide the regional internal audit function.
- Ensure adherence to the district school board's relevant policies and procedures unless such policies and procedures conflict with the regional internal audit charter or the Global Internal Audit Standards. Any such conflicts will be resolved or documented and communicated to the Audit Committee and senior management.
- Coordinate activities and consider relying upon the work of other internal and external providers of assurance and advisory services. If the Regional Internal Audit Manager cannot achieve an appropriate level of coordination, the issue must be communicated to senior management and if necessary escalated to the Audit Committee.

Communication with the Audit Committee and Senior Management

The Regional Internal Audit Manager will report annually to the Audit Committee and senior management regarding:

- The regional internal audit function's mandate.
- The regional internal audit plan and performance relative to its plan.
- Significant revisions to the regional internal audit plan.
- Potential impairments to independence, including relevant disclosures as applicable.
- Results from the quality assurance and improvement program, which include the regional internal audit function's conformance with The IIA's Global Internal Audit Standards and action plans to address the regional internal audit function's deficiencies and opportunities for improvement.
- Significant risk exposures and control issues, including fraud risks, governance issues, and other areas of focus for the Audit Committee that could interfere with the achievement of the district school board's strategic objectives.
- Results of assurance and advisory services.
- Resource requirements.
- Management's responses to risk that the regional internal audit function determines may be unacceptable or acceptance of a risk that is beyond the district school board's risk appetite.

Quality Assurance and Improvement Program

The Regional Internal Audit Manager will develop, implement, and maintain a quality assurance and improvement program that covers all aspects of the regional internal audit function. The

program will include external and internal assessments of the regional internal audit function's conformance with the Global Internal Audit Standards, as well as performance measurement to

assess the regional internal audit function's progress toward the achievement of its objectives and promotion of continuous improvement. The program also will assess, if applicable, compliance with laws and/or regulations relevant to internal auditing. Also, if applicable, the assessment will include plans to address the regional internal audit function's deficiencies and opportunities for improvement.

Annually, the Regional Internal Audit Manager will communicate with the Audit Committee and senior management about the regional internal audit function's quality assurance and improvement program, including the results of internal assessments (ongoing monitoring and periodic self-assessments) and external assessments. External assessments will be conducted at least once every five years by a qualified, independent assessor or assessment team from outside the district school boards served by the regional internal audit team; qualifications must include at least one assessor holding an active Certified Internal Auditor® credential.

Scope and Types of Internal Audit Services

The scope of internal audit services covers the entire breadth of the district school board, including all of the district school board's activities, assets, and personnel. The activities and processes within the scope are captured in the audit universe. The scope of internal audit activities also encompasses but is not limited to objective examinations of evidence to provide independent assurance and advisory services to the Audit Committee and management on the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management, and control processes for the district school board.

The nature and scope of advisory services may be agreed with the party requesting the service, provided the regional internal audit function does not assume management responsibility. Opportunities for improving the efficiency of governance, risk management, and control processes may be identified during advisory engagements. These opportunities will be communicated to the appropriate level of management.

Internal audit engagements may include evaluating whether:

- Risks relating to the achievement of the district school board's strategic objectives are appropriately identified and managed.
- The actions of the district school board's officers, directors, management, employees, and contractors or other relevant parties comply with the district school board's policies, procedures, and applicable laws, regulations, and governance standards.
- The results of operations and programs are consistent with established goals and objectives.
- Operations and programs are being carried out effectively, efficiently, ethically, and equitably.

- Established processes and systems enable compliance with the policies, procedures, laws, and regulations that could significantly impact the district school board.
- The integrity of information and the means used to identify, measure, analyze, classify, and report such information is reliable.
- Resources and assets are acquired economically, used efficiently and sustainably, and protected adequately.



Approved by the Audit Committee of the *Niagara Catholic District School Board* at its meeting on Thursday, September 17, 2026.

Acknowledgments/Signatures

(insert your title here)

Date

Audit Committee Chair

Date

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or designate

Date

APPENDIX B – RIAT Strategic Plan, as developed province-wide for RIAT that includes Mission, Vision and Strategy (as per IIA Standard 9.2)

Mission Statement: The mission of the RIAT model is to provide independent, objective assurance and advisory services that support the achievement of each school board's objectives by providing them with reasonable assurance on the reliability of their internal controls, the management of their risks and the quality of governance processes.

Vision Statement: Increase collaboration and information sharing across all RIATs to increase efficiency, ensure timely, high-quality service delivery and demonstrate our value as a key partner to the school boards we serve, as well as to Audit Committees.

Strategy:

The West of Central Team has developed 5 goals (see below) and a detailed action plan for each goal.

1. Develop common tools and methodologies that can be utilized by all RIATs.
2. Identify and develop collaboration opportunities with school boards and Audit Committees.
3. Develop a shared schedule of professional development activities for all RIATs.
4. Enhance the timeliness of engagement completion, while clearing the backlog of prior-year engagements.
5. Achieve general conformance with the Global Internal Audit Standards.

APPENDIX C – Training by RIAT Staff Member in 2025/26

Objective:

1. To report on RIAT compliance to Global Internal Audit Standards, January 2024, Standard 3.2 Continuing Professional Development.
2. To define training plans to develop and maintain professional competencies.

Completed 2025-26

Auditor	Training Focus	Date
All Auditors	1. OASBO Internal Audit 2. Relevant seminars/websites on fraud, ethics, privacy and IT Security offered by the various institutes.	On-going and when relevant throughout the year
Andrea Eltherington	1. Maximizing Internal Audit Quality, Performance and Value 2. Harnessing the Power of AI in Internal Audit 3. Emerging Trends and Strategic Opportunities that Maximize Internal Audit's Value 4. MIAA Fall Conference 5. Guardians of Integrity: The Critical Role of Internal Audit in Ethics and Fraud 6. RIAT Conference 7. Strategic Insights into Audit Planning and Risk Assessments in the Public Sector 8. Transforming Internal Audit with Intelligent Analytics 9. OASBO Finance Conference 10. Innovative Procurement Auditing: Third Party Risks 11. Health Sleep Habits 12. 2026 AI CyberSecurity Summit 13. MIAA Spring Conference 14. Closing the Decision Gap: How Risk-Informed Decisions build Digital Trust 15. ISACA Toronto Annual Summer Conference 16. HWDSB Leadership Learning Lab (focussed on AI)	1. September 17, 2025 2. September 23, 2025 3. September 23, 2025 4. October 22-24, 2025 5. November 20, 2025 6. December 3-5, 2025 7. January 21, 2026 8. February 10, 2026 9. March 5, 2026 10. April 15, 2026 11. April 20, 2026 12. April 21, 2026 13. April 27, 2026 14. May 28, 2026 15. June 17-18, 2026 16. August 27, 2026
Dondon Luce	1. Certified Information Security Manager Exam	1. September 14, 2025

	2. Cybersecurity for Critical Infrastructure Protection	2. November 7, 2025
	3. Understanding AI Audits: Key Risks and Best Practices	3. November 10, 2025
	4. Implementing a Central AI Management System: Navigating ISO 42001 Compliance	4. November 11, 2025
	5. Scenario Planning 101: From uncertainty to actionable insight and executive buy-in	5. November 12, 2025
	6. The Road Ahead: Top Five Cybersecurity Predictions for 2026	6. November 12, 2025
	7. Responsible AI: Navigating Privacy, Security, and Accountability in Modern AI Systems	7. December 16, 2025
	8. Strategic Insights into Audit Planning and Risk Assessments in the Public Sector	8. January 21, 2026
	9. Cybersecurity: From Cost Center to Competitive Advantage	9. January 27, 2026
	10. AI and Cybersecurity in 2026: What Auditors, Implementers, and Organizations Must Prepare For	10. January 29, 2026
	11. Navigating the New Risk Landscape: AI, Governance and the Path to Maturity	11. February 4, 2026
	12. Smarter Audit Reports in the Age of AI	12. February 18, 2026
	13. Project Management Professional Exam Preparation	13. March 22, 2026
	14. Applying AI to Streamline Communication and Reporting	14. March 26, 2026
	15. Project Management Professional Certification	15. March 31, 2026
	16. Stop Chasing Alerts: Automating Email Security with Behavioral AI Roundtable	16. April 9, 2026
	17. Securing Remote and Hybrid Workforces Without Killing Productivity	17. April 15, 2026
	18. Planning and Performing Audits of Suppliers and Contractors	18. April 15, 2026
	19. IIA Topical Requirements: Tips and Tricks from CAEs for Conforming and Performing	19. April 15, 2026
	20. Beyond the Cybersecurity Topical Requirement: What Public Sector Internal Auditors Should be Asking	20. April 29, 2026
	21. Ethical Resilience in Internal Auditing: A Research-Based Framework to Reduce Bias	21. May 21, 2026
	22. Mastering Presentation Skills for Auditors & Managers	22. June 9, 2026

	23. Agentic AI: How Internal Audit Should Be Preparing 24. Resilience in Action: From Compliance Checkbox to Strategic Continuity 25. The agentic blueprint: Architecting secure multi-agent workflows for modern GRC 26. Governing the autonomous enterprise: Balancing AI agent innovation with accountability 27. Beyond the heat map: Transitioning to continuous and proactive risk reporting 28. The continuous chain: Managing third-party risk in an interconnected ecosystem 29. Implementing and Reporting on AI Governance 30. AI for NIST, ISO 27001, and CMMC Compliance: Opportunities and Pitfalls 31. The Authentic Auditor: Elevating Value through Inclusion 32. Algorithmic Accountability- What Internal Auditors Need to Know About Auditing AI Systems	23. June 10, 2026 24. July 8, 2026 25. July 8, 2026 26. July 8, 2026 27. July 9, 2026 28. July 9, 2026 29. July 28, 2026 30. July 30, 2026 31. August 4, 2026 32. August 20, 2026
Cathy DeLuca	1. Nudging your way to faster and more effective improvements to internal controls 2. Cybersecurity and IIA Standards: A Practitioner's Perspective 3. Beyond automation: The role of AI in modern internal auditing 4. 2025 MIAA fall workshop 5. Microsoft 365 Copilot QuickStart 6. Understanding AI audits: Key risks and best practices 7. Internal controls: What works, what doesn't and how to plug the holes 8. It's 2026! Five internal audit resolutions to navigate the year ahead 9. Automating the grind: Transforming control testing with innovative IA solutions 10. The top 5 GenAI use cases for internal audit	1. September 24, 2025 2. September 30, 2025 3. October 7, 2025 4. October 23 & 24, 2025 5. October 30, 2025 6. November 10, 2025 7. November 18, 2025 8. January 7, 2026 9. January 14, 2026 10. January 21, 2026

	11. How small audit teams can achieve big results 12. AI-generated audit evidence: The digital counterfeit 13. Navigating 2026: Top emerging risk for audit, risk, and compliance executives 14. 2026 MIAA spring workshop 15. Beyond audit: How leading organizations are connecting audit, risk, compliance, and cyber 16. Anatomy of a breach 17. Bill 72, Buy Ontario Act: What this means for Ontario DSBs and the road ahead 18. Workplace law update: AI, criminal records, and more! 19. Mastering presentation skills for auditors and managers 20. Ethics in action: real decisions, real consequences 21. From quiet potential to bold impact: unlocking leadership in internal audit	11. January 22, 2026 12. March 5, 2026 13. March 31, 2026 14. April 27, 2026 15. May 6, 2026 16. May 14, 2026 17. May 14, 2026 18. May 14, 2026 19. June 9, 2026 20. June 29, 2026 21. July 14, 2026
Brad Sisson	1. CIA Designation Part 1 a. Foundations of Internal Auditing b. Ethics and Professionalism c. Governance, Risk Management, and Control d. Fraud Risks 2. CIA Designation Part 2 a. Engagement Planning b. Information Gathering, Analysis, and Evaluation c. Engagement Supervision and Communication 3. OASBO Finance and IA Workshop	CIA Part 1 - completed May 2026 CIA Part 2 – ongoing March 4, 2026 – March 5, 2026

Planned 2026-27

Auditor	Training Focus	Date
All Auditors	1. OASBO Internal Audit 2. Relevant seminars/webinar on fraud, ethics, privacy and IT Security offered by the various institutes. 3. MIAA fall training	On-going and when relevant throughout the year



**INTERNAL
AUDIT TEAM**
West of Central Region

Acronyms

ACFE – Association of Certified Fraud Examiners

IIA – Institute of Internal Auditors

ISACA – Information System Audit and Control Association

CIA – Certified Internal Auditor

CPA – Chartered Professional Accountant

CISA – Certified Information Systems Auditor

MIAA – Municipal Internal Auditors Association

AICPA – Association of International Certified Professional Accountants

IMA – Institute of Management Accountants

APPENDIX D – RIAT Gap Analysis to Latest Institute of Internal Auditors Standards

Per presentation to SBO's, February, 2026:

Gap	Standard	Proposed Action	Update as of September 2026
External Quality Assessment	4.1 Conformance with the Global Internal Audit Standards 4.2 Due Professional Care 8.3 Quality 8.4 External Quality Assessment 11.2 Effective Communication 12.1 Internal Quality Assessment	Investigate the cost of an External Quality Assessment	This is underway and the common elements report is included as Appendix E.
RIAM meets with the AC independently – not at all boards	6.3 Board and Senior Management Support 7.1 Organizational Independence	Work with SBO's to ensure that there a mechanism to fulfill this requirement	In progress
Resource Limitations	10.1 Financial Resource Management 10.2 Human Resources Management	Document limitation as per Public Sector exceptions to the Standards	Complete. Documented in the RIAT Structure & Staffing section of this document.



APPENDIX E – Common Elements QA report