

**TO: NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD  
BOARD MEETING  
MAY 27, 2025**

***PUBLIC SESSION***

**TOPIC: UNAPPROVED MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE  
WHOLE MEETING OF MAY 13, 2025**

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**RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT the** Niagara Catholic District School Board receive the unapproved Minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of May 13, 2025, as presented.

The following recommendations are being presented for the Board's consideration from the Committee of the Whole Meeting of May 13, 2025:

**7.1.1 Larkin Estate University/College Admission Awards**

**THAT** the Niagara Catholic District School Board approve the payment of \$6300.00 for the Larkin Estate University/College Admission Awards for eligible students, as presented.



# MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING TUESDAY, MAY 13, 2025

Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee of the Whole of the Niagara Catholic District School Board, held on Tuesday, May 13, 2025 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 Turner.

### 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	✓			
<b>Student Trustees</b>				
Emilio Geremia	✓			
Taylor Sexton	✓			

The following staff were in attendance:

**Camillo Cipriano**, Director of Education; **Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells**, **Kim Kinney**, **Gino Pizzoferrato**, **Pat Rocca**, **Domenic Massi**, **Joseph Zaroda**, Superintendents of Education; **Giancarlo Vetrone**, Superintendent of Business & Financial Services; **Julia Tiessen**, Executive Officer of Human Resources; **Anna Pisano**, 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 May 13, 2025, 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 April 8, 2025**

Moved by Trustee Huibers

**THAT** the Committee of the Whole approve the Minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of April 8, 2025, as presented.

**CARRIED**

**6. Consent Agenda Items**

**6.1 Larkin Estate University/College Admission Awards**

**THAT** the Committee of the Whole recommend that the Niagara Catholic District School Board approve the payment of \$6300.00 for the Larkin Estate University/College Admission Awards for eligible students, as presented.

**6.2 Staff Development Department Professional Development Opportunities**

Presented for information.

**6.3 In Camera Items G1**

Moved by Trustee Di Lorenzo

**THAT** the Committee of the Whole adopt consent agenda items.

**CARRIED**

**B. PRESENTATIONS**

**1. FACS Niagara Foundation Social Media Toolkit Letter 2025**

Vice-Chair Burkholder highlighted the letter from FACS Niagara Foundation.

## C. COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS

### 1. New Beamsville School Naming Request

Gino Pizzoferrato, Superintendent of Education presented the New Beamsville School Naming Request report.

Moved by Trustee Joyner

**THAT** the Committee of the Whole recommend that the Niagara Catholic District School Board approve the Naming Request – St. Carlo Acutis Catholic Elementary School for the new Beamsville site, as presented.

Following discussion, a recorded vote was request.

NAME	YEA	NAY	OBSTAIN
Natalia Benoit	✓		
Joseph Bruzzese			✓
Rhianon Burkholder	✓		
Danny Di Lorenzo		✓	
Larry Huibers		✓	
Doug Joyner		✓	
Jim Marino		✓	
Paul Turner		✓	
<b>STUDENT TRUSTEES (Non-Binding)</b>			
Emilio Geremia	✓		
Taylor Sexton	✓		

**DENIED**

The motion was amended to;

Moved by Trustee Joyner

**THAT** the Committee of the Whole recommend that the Niagara Catholic District School Board approve the Naming Request – St. Luke Catholic Elementary School for the new Beamsville site, as presented.

A recorded vote was request.

NAME	YEA	NAY
Natalia Benoit		✓
Joseph Bruzzese	✓	
Rhianon Burkholder		✓
Danny Di Lorenzo	✓	
Larry Huibers	✓	
Doug Joyner	✓	
Jim Marino	✓	
Paul Turner	✓	
<b>STUDENT TRUSTEES (Non-Binding)</b>		
Emilio Geremia		✓
Taylor Sexton		✓

**CARRIED**

**2. Education Development Charge (EDC) 101**

Giancarlo Vetrone, Superintendent of Business & Financial Services provided background information on the Education Development Charge and introduced Jack Ammendolia, Managing Partner, Watson and Associates.

Mr. Ammendolia provided a review of the EDC for Trustee information.

Mr. Ammendolia answered questions of Trustees.

**3. Research Collaborations in Niagara Catholic District School Board 2024-2025**

Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells, Superintendent of Education presented the report on Research Collaborations in the Niagara Catholic District School Board for 2024-2025.

**4. Monthly Updates**

**4.1 Student Trustees' Update**

Emilio Geremia and Taylor Sexton, Student Trustees, presented a brief verbal update on the current activities of the Student Senate as well as a recap of student highlights.

**4.2 Senior Staff Good News Update**

Senior Staff highlights included:

**Superintendent Forsyth-Sells**

- Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Catholic Elementary School received a \$5,000 grant from the Canadian Olympic Committee. Olympian cyclist Jackie Boyle and lacrosse player Challen Rogers gave motivational presentations.
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- St. Alfred Catholic Elementary School raised over \$700 for Development and Peace through a ThinkFast event organized by the Student Council.
- St. Theresa Catholic Elementary School received a \$2,600 grant from the S'Cool Life Fund, acquiring new musical instruments to enhance their music program.
- Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School Grade 9 Visual Arts students participated in activities for Catholic Education and Mental Health Week, creating mixed media art to raise mental health awareness.
- Saint Michael Catholic High School held its 2nd Annual Wellness Fair on May 8, with over 15 community partners engaging with students.
- Denis Morris Catholic High School hosted Dr. Jean Clinton, who presented on children's well-being to parents/guardians. Her presentation was recorded and will be shared with staff.

**Superintendent Massi**

- Juliette Sullivan, a Grade 10 student at Saint Paul Catholic High School, was one of just 50 students from across Canada selected to attend the HIP'S Youth to Youth experience at Acadia University in Nova Scotia—an all-expense-paid, week-long program focused on deepening non-Indigenous students' understanding of Indigenous culture. Juliette immersed herself in rich cultural teachings and shared her reflections

in the board's Chronicle newsletter. She was also recently interviewed by YourTV Niagara, with more to come in The Vineyard in June.

**Superintendent Zaroda**

- This year, all eight of our secondary schools came together to raise an impressive \$7,534 for the Canadian Catholic School Trustees Association's *Toonies for Tuition* campaign, helping support families in need of assistance with school tuition

**Director Cipriano**

- The Terry Fox Foundation recognized our schools for raising \$50,398 in 2024. Over 33 years, our school communities have contributed an incredible \$1.3 million to cancer research. Special thanks to Alexander Kuska Catholic Elementary School, Notre Dame College, and Lakeshore Catholic High School for their long-time support!

**Chair Di Lorenzo**

- The Celebrating Excellence was a proud moment for Niagara Catholic, highlighting the outstanding achievements of our students, alumni, and staff. Thanks to the dedication of senior administration, teachers, and support staff, the event truly showcased the best of our community.

**D. GOVERNANCE POLICIES**

1. **Governance Policies for Recommendation to the Board**
2. **Governance Policies Prior to Vetting**
3. **Governance Policy Review Schedule**

**E. INFORMATION**

1. **Trustee Information**
  - 1.1 **Graduation Dates 2025**

Director Cipriano highlighted the 2025 Graduation dates.

- 1.2 **Book Fair Selection Process**

Director Cipriano highlighted the process for Book Fair book selections.

**F. OTHER BUSINESS**

1. **General Discussion to Plan for Future Action**

Nil

**G. BUSINESS IN CAMERA**

Moved by Trustee Turner

**THAT** the Committee of the Whole move into the In Camera Session.

**CARRIED**

The Committee of the Whole moved into the In Camera Session of the Committee of the Whole Meeting at 8:25 p.m. and reconvened at 8:50 p.m.

## **H. REPORT ON THE IN-CAMERA SESSION**

Moved by Trustee Turner

**THAT** the Committee of the Whole report the motions from the In Camera Session of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of May 13, 2025.

**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 April 8, 2025, as presented.

**CARRIED (Item G1)**

Trustees were provided with staff moves.

Personnel performance was discussed.

## **I. ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by Trustee Huibers

**THAT** the May 13, 2025 Committee of the Whole Meeting be adjourned.

**CARRIED**

This meeting was adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

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Minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of the Niagara Catholic District School Board held on **May 13, 2025.**

Approved on **June 10, 2025.**

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Rhianon Burkholder  
Vice-Chair of the Board

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Camillo Cipriano  
Director of Education/Secretary -Treasurer

**TO: NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD  
BOARD MEETING  
MAY 27, 2025**

***PUBLIC SESSION***

**TITLE: LARKIN ESTATE UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE ADMISSION  
AWARDS**

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**RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT** the Niagara Catholic District School Board approve the payment of \$6300.00 for the Larkin Estate University/College Admission Awards for eligible students, as presented.

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Prepared by: Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells, Superintendent of Education

Presented by: Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells, Superintendent of Education

Recommended by: Committee of the Whole

Date: May 27, 2025



## **REPORT TO THE BOARD MAY 13, 2025**

### **LARKIN ESTATE UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE ADMISSION AWARDS**

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#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The funding for the Larkin Estate University/College Admission Awards is a bequest from the estate of Maria Eveleen Larkin and Aimee Theresa Larkin. The awards have been administered annually since 1969.

The Larkin Estate University/College Admission Award is a four-year renewable bursary available to Niagara Catholic graduates who are enrolled in post-secondary education at St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, at a school of nursing, or social work, or at a college or university offering such a program.

As of April 30, 2025 the undistributed earnings and the balance of the scholarship fund amounted to \$34,109.36 with projected dividends and interest in the amount of \$6,000.00 to the end of 2026.

- The first installment of the award is predicated upon the receipt of a letter of confirmation of full-time registration in Nursing or Social Work, or proof of full or partial tuition paid.
- Subsequent installments of the award are predicated upon receipt of the following:
  - an official transcript as evidence of successful completion of previous year's courses; and
  - proof of full-time registration in Nursing or Social Work, or proof of full or partial tuition paid.

The Larkin Estate University/College Admission Award will be awarded to eight recipients for the 2024-2025 school year.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT** the Committee of the Whole recommend that the Niagara Catholic District School Board approve the payment of \$6,300.00 for the Larkin Estate University/College Admission Awards for eligible students, as presented.

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Prepared by: Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells, Superintendent of Education

Presented by: Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells, Superintendent of Education

Recommended by: Camillo Cipriano, Director of Education/Secretary-Treasurer

Date: May 13, 2025

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**TO: NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD  
BOARD MEETING  
MAY 27, 2025**

***PUBLIC SESSION***

**TOPIC: APPROVED MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC) MEETING OF  
APRIL 2, 2025**

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**RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT** the Niagara Catholic District School Board receive the Approved Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of April 2, 2025, as presented for information.



## MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

**APRIL 2, 2025**

Minutes of the Meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee, held on Wednesday, April 2, 2025 at 6:30 p.m., at the Catholic Education Centre, 427 Rice Road, Welland, ON L3C 7C1

Chair Monique Somma called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

### A. ROUTINE MATTERS

1. **Land Acknowledgement**  
Susy Walsh led the Land Acknowledgment
2. **Opening Prayer**  
Gino Pizzoferrato led the opening prayer
3. **Roll Call**

Members	Affiliations	Present In-person	Present Electronically	Excused	Absent
Jessica Thomas	Autism Ontario Niagara Region		X		
Alyson Wilson	Bethesda Services		X		
Monique Somma (CHAIR)	Community Living (Pelham/Welland)	X			
Christine Bowers	Community Living (Port Colborne/Wainfleet)				X
Andrea Pede	Down Syndrome Niagara		X		
Madeline Cipriano	Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara				X
Erica Simmanivong-Elizarraras	Mainstream				X
Chris Tawil	Niagara Children's Centre		X		
Linda Vespoli	Pathstone		X		
<b>Community Representative</b>					
Krystine Donato			X		
<b>Indigenous Representative</b>					
Cindi Lee Ecker-Flagg				X	
<b>Secondary Student Senate Representative</b>					
Kate Bishop			X		
<b>Trustees</b>					
Trustee, Rhianon Burkholder		X			
Trustee, Jim Marino		X			

The following staff were in attendance:

**Gino Pizzoferrato**, Superintendent of Education, **Susy Walsh**, Elementary Principal,  
and **Jenna Young**, Recording Secretary/Administrative Assistant.

Regrets received: Adele Filece, Cindi Lee Ecker-Flagg

Guests/Staff Resources in attendance: Ann Marie Criddle, Grace Brochu, Ashley Prohaszka,  
Kelly Keighan, Janet Rylett, Vincent Mancuso, Julia Nemcko

4. **Approval of the Agenda**

Moved by: Trustee Burkholder

Seconded by: Jessica Thomas

**THAT** the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the agenda of the  
Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of April 2, 2025 as presented.

**CARRIED**

5. **Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

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

6. **Approval of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes of  
February 5, 2025**

Moved by: Trustee Marino

Seconded by: Christine Donato

**THAT** the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the minutes of the Special  
Education Advisory Committee Meeting of February 5, 2025 as presented.

**CARRIED**

\*No minutes to approve for March 6, 2025 as this was an information session, and an un-official meeting.

**B. PRESENTATIONS – Ashley Prohaszka**

Ashley presented:

The new AOP, designed to support the diverse needs of students through specialized Sensory and Movement Rooms. These rooms aim to promote self-regulation and physical movement as they cater to the specific needs of our students who benefit from physical activity, self-regulation and physical mobility in a fun and safe setting.

The AOP ensures quality and consistency by providing a framework for day-to-day operations. It provides guidelines for making efficient use of the rooms, monitoring student development, and keeping spaces and equipment safe and clean.

### C. CHAIR'S REPORT-*Chair Somma*

Chair Somma discussed:

1. Documents shared with SEAC regarding changes to the Special Education Plan:
  - SEAC Special Education Plan Fact Sheet
  - Special Education Plan Executive Summary
2. Letter to SEACs from the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario regarding questions to school boards in terms of goals and planning for students.
3. Future offsite meetings:
  - May 7 – Community Living (Pelham/Welland)
  - June 4 – Bethesda Services
4. Potential guest speakers/presentations for the remainder of this year and/or next year.

### D. AGENCY REPORTS

#### 1. **Autism Ontario Niagara Region-** *Jessica Thomas*

Jessica Thomas reported:

##### **Celebrate the Spectrum (CTS)**

The excitement continues throughout the month! To find out more, how to participate, visit:

<https://celebratethespectrum.com/>

#### • **Municipal Flag Raising Events – April 2, 2025**

Autism Ontario invites the local community to take part in flag-raising ceremonies across Ontario on April 2, 2025, including in your municipality. These events are more than just raising a flag—they celebrate the strength of our community and the meaningful connections we share.

We encourage everyone to embrace the Celebrate the Spectrum campaign's tie-dye theme, highlighting the beauty of individuality and the unique spirit of every autistic person.

Bring your friends and family, and join us as we proudly raise our flags together. Let's make World Autism Day a memorable celebration that truly reflects the heart of our community!

<https://celebratethespectrum.com/municipal-flag-raising-events/>

#### • **Celebrate the Spectrum Events**

Join us as we **Celebrate the Spectrum** with community partners in your area. These events offer a wonderful opportunity to connect with others, have fun, discover local resources, and honour the unique qualities of every individual with autism.

<https://celebratethespectrum.com/celebrate-the-spectrum-events/>

- **The Celebrate the Spectrum School Giving Challenge**

Your school could win a profile in Autism Ontario's *Autism Matters* magazine and widespread recognition on our social media! From April 1st to 30th, participating schools will compete for a \$500 pizza lunch prize for the Top Fundraising School of 2025 and be entered in a random draw for a \$200 Dollarama gift card!

Join the challenge by [registering your school](#) and rally your students around this limited-time, Ontario-wide competition, all for a good cause!

<https://celebratethespectrum.com/celebrate-the-spectrum-events/>

### **New & Upcoming Resources**

- **About Autism.** Fact Sheet. <https://www.autismontario.com/media/2760>

- **Through education, we find allyship. Understanding autism.** Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qmZeReaV9j4>

- **Understanding Special Education: Workshop for Caregivers of Autistic Learners**

Are you new to special education in Ontario? Not sure about where to start? This 90-minute live session will share information and tools to help you support your child's learning needs.

You will learn about how schools support autistic students, the different options available, and how to work with the school team to help your child succeed. *(Note: Registration opens 30 days prior to the workshop.)*

[April 23, 2025, from 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM](#)

May 20, 2025, from 12:00 PM to 1:30 PM

June 4, 2025, from 12:00 PM to 1:30 PM

- **Pathways to Special Education Support: Meet & Greet for Families**

Are you interested in learning more about supports to help you navigate special education? Join us for an informative and interactive virtual meet-and-greet, where you can connect with the Autism Ontario team and volunteer SEAC representatives. During this session, you'll discover the programs and supports available in your region and understand the role of SEACs in advising school boards on special education. It's also a great opportunity to share your school-related experiences and connect with others in your community. *(Note: Registration opens 30 days prior to the workshop.)*

- [April 29, 2025, from 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM](#)

- May 28, 2025, from 12:00 PM to 1:30 PM

**2. Bethesda Services-Alyson Wilson**

Alyson reported:

- The Spring service guide is available on the homepage of Bethesda's website
- Recently hosted a dental clinic in partnership with the Dental Hygiene Program at Niagara College
- Friday April 4, 2025 will be hosting a PD Day Camp at Niagara College, supported by Bethesda and students from the Autism Behaviour Science Program
- Bethesda will be in attendance at the Easter Egg Hunt at Fireman's Park in Niagara Falls, providing a quieter, sensory friendly area for families
- In honor of Autism Awareness Day, Bethesda attended the Thorold and Lincoln flag raising ceremonies
- Michael Jacques will be presenting at a caregiver event on April 25, 2025 at Bethesda

**3. Community Living (Pelham/Welland)-Chair Somma**

No report.

**4. Community Living (Port Colborne/Wainfleet)-Christine Bowers**

No report.

**5. Down Syndrome Niagara-Andrea Pede**

Andrea reported:

- Thanks to Niagara Catholic for efforts put forth with World Down Syndrome Day
- Upcoming Trivia night on Saturday April 12, 2025 at Merritton Community Centre, 6-10 p.m. The night will include trivia, a 50/50 draw, silent auction, pizza and a cash bar. Full details available at [www.downsyndromeniagara.ca](http://www.downsyndromeniagara.ca)

**6. Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara-Madeline Cipriano**

No report.

**7. Mainstream-Erica Simmanivong-Elizarraras**

No report.

**8. Niagara Children's Centre-Chris Tawil**

Chris reported:

- Entry to School (ETS) program started in March in partnership with Bethesda

- Spring Guide has been released and can be found on Niagara Children's Centre website or at the centre
  - Highlights
    - Challenger baseball registration is open, the program starts at the end of May
    - Accessible Egg hunt – April 12<sup>th</sup>
    - Robotics Club – Welland YMCA
    -
- Change in managers
  - School-Based Rehab Services SLP Manager - Kylee Daley
  - School-Based Rehab Services OT/PT Manager – Chris Tawil
  - Michelle Maxwell has taken on a Project Manager role
- Currently working with the Student Support Coordinators to determine what equipment will be supported by the NCDSB to ensure that OT's and PT's are recommending appropriate equipment in the sensory rooms, movement rooms and classrooms

**9. Pathstone Mental Health – Linda Vespoli**

Linda reported:

Children's Mental Health Awareness week is May 4 -11, 2025. To kick off the week, on Sunday May 4, 2025 the Youth Advisory Committee will be hosting a Mental Health Wellness Funfair at the Pen Centre. In addition, Pathstone will be raising flags at City Halls across the region, and illuminating the Welland Bridge and Peace Bridge in green, the official colour of the Mental Health Awareness week. Pathstone offered to set up information booths regarding Mental Health for any schools that are interested.

**E. COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE REPORT-Krystine Donato**

No report.

**F. INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATIVE REPORT-Cindi Lee Ecker-Flagg**

No report.

**G. SECONDARY STUDENT SENATE REPRESENTATIVE REPORT-Kate Bishop**

Kate reported:

- Planning Time to Shine Formal for all Special Education students within the Board to celebrate their own personal semi-formal

## H. STAFF REPORTS

### 1. Elementary Principal-Susy Walsh

Susy reported:

Transitioning our students continues with kinder parent information nights - they are currently being scheduled as the end of the school year approaches. During these meetings we provide valuable information to parents - from routines, expectations, the structure of our faith based program...and more.

This had me thinking... that this is yet another opportunity to share the wonderful resources provided by not only Niagara Catholic, but the extended support community within Niagara.

Ask community members if there is any information that you would like elementary principals to share that you would deem valuable, and helpful to our families to our future students as they embark on this new leaning journey, please reach out to me and I will happily share the info to elementary principals.

### 2. Secondary Principal-Adele Filice

No report.

### 3. Student Support

Anne Marie Criddle reported:

#### **World Down Syndrome Day (WDSD)**

The date for WDSD--the 21st day of the 3rd month--was selected to signify the uniqueness of the triplication (trisomy) of the 21st chromosome, which causes Down syndrome. Niagara Catholic schools marked this year's event by beginning the day with a special prayer and participating in the #LotsOfSocks Campaign where students and staff wore colorful, fun socks on Friday, March 21, to help raise awareness of Down syndrome, what it means to have Down syndrome, and how people with Down syndrome play a vital role in our lives and our communities. Staff was also encouraged visit the Canadian Down Syndrome Society website for access free resources and a K-6 teaching plan to incorporate the significance of the day into their teaching.

**Today is World Autism Day**, and Niagara Catholic schools were encouraged to use a series of educator resources provided by Autism Ontario to introduce activities and videos into classrooms that focus on acceptance of diversity and the lived experience of autistic people.

Student Support and the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region (LDANR) have collaborated to offer an In-Person Learning Transition Program for grades seven and eight. The **SOAR Secondary program** will support students focusing on preparation and transition to secondary education. The program begins the week of Monday, April 28, 2025, and will run for six sessions, ending the week of Monday, June 2, 2025.

As well Niagara Catholic and LDANR are collaborating to offer a one-day workshop titled **TIPS for Post-Secondary** to support Grade 11 and 12 students with preparation for a transition to post-secondary education. This workshop will take place on Wednesday, May 14, 2025, at Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School from 9:30 am – 3:00 pm.

**Annual Special Education Plan review**

In adhering to the Education Act's requirement for school boards to undertake an annual review of their Special Education Plan, we are distributing a *Special Education Fact Sheet* which includes links to Niagara Catholic's current Special Education Plan along with Ministry resources for your review. As well, a detailed executive summary of this year's changes is being distributed to all SEAC members for your review. Jim Di Gioia will address any questions about the changes at the May meeting, at which point SEAC will be asked to vote on the two motions required for the annual review, found at the bottom of the executive summary document.

Superintendent Pizzoferrato added an ERT meeting will be held at White Oaks in May, to which community partners will also be invited, to discuss student transitions and supports within the schools.

**I. TRUSTEE REPORTS-Trustee Burkholder/Trustee Marino**

Trustee Burkholder reported:

- Progress being made in the Five-Year Strategic Plan; updates can be found on the Board website.

**J. NIAGARA CATHOLIC PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT**

No report.

**K. NEW BUSINESS/AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

No report.

**L. NEXT MEETING:** Wednesday, May 7, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. at Community Living (Welland/Pelham)

**M. CLOSING PRAYER:** Chair Somma led the closing prayer.

**N. ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by: Trustee Burkholder

Seconded by: Trustee Marino

**THAT** the March 6, 2025 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee be adjourned.

**CARRIED**

This meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

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**TO: NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD  
BOARD MEETING  
MAY 27, 2025**

***PUBLIC SESSION***

**TITLE: MINUTES OF THE NIAGARA CATHOLIC PARENT  
INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE (NCPIC) MEETING OF  
MARCH 6, 2025**

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**RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT** the Niagara Catholic District School Board receive the Minutes of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee (NCPIC) Meeting of March 6, 2025 as presented for information.



# MINUTES OF THE NIAGARA CATHOLIC PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MARCH 6, 2025

Minutes of the Meeting of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee, held on Thursday, March 6, 2025 at 6:30 p.m., in the Father Kenneth Burns csc Board Room, at the Catholic Education Centre, 427 Rice Road, Welland, ON.

Chair Thomas called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

## A. ROUTINE MATTERS

### 1. Opening Prayer

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

### 2. Roll Call:

Parent Members	Present In-person	Present Electronically	Excused	Absent
Brenda Annen			√	
Julie Bateman	√			
Rose Heron			√	
Kate Hingston	√			
Sara Ivicic			√	
Jacqueline Kelly	√			
Caroline Polgrabia			√	
Laura Thomas	√			
Carrie Vernelli		√		
<b>Ontario Association for Parents in Catholic Education (OAPCE)</b>				
Jennifer Pilzecker	√			
<b>Bishop/Diocesan Representative</b>				
Fr. Paul MacNeil	√			
<b>Community Representatives</b>				
Josie Rocca-St. Vincent de Paul			√	
Alexandra Gonzalez				√
<b>Secondary Student Senate Representative</b>				
Ella Colaneri			√	
<b>Trustees</b>				
Trustee, Larry Huibers				√
Trustee, Joe Bruzzese	√			

The following staff were in attendance:

**Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells**, Superintendent of Education and **Yvonne Anderson**, Recording Secretary/Administrative Assistant.

Regrets received: Brenda Annen, Sara Ivicic, Caroline Polgrabia, Ella Colaneri, Josie Rocca, Maria Solomon and Kevin Timmins

**3. Approval of the Agenda**

Moved by: Julie Bateman

**THAT** the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee approve the agenda of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee Meeting of March 6, 2025 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 9, 2025**

Moved by: Kate Hingston

**THAT** the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee approve the minutes of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee Meeting of January 9, 2025 as presented.

**CARRIED**

**B. REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESIGNATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION**

**1. Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education Gala**

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported that the Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education with Honourary Guest, Most Reverend Gerard Bergie, Bishop of the Diocese of St. Catharines, and the presentation of the Niagara Catholic Award of Distinction will take place on Thursday, March 27, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. at Club Roma in St. Catharines.

Niagara Catholic is pleased to announce that former trustees and Board Chairs, Kathy Burtnik and Frank Fera, and retired Director of Education John Crocco, are the 2025 recipients of the Niagara Catholic Education Award of Distinction. Kathy Burtnik, Frank Fera, and John Crocco will join a long list of exceptional contributors to Niagara Catholic and Catholic education in Ontario and in Canada. They will also be recognized on the Niagara Catholic Wall of Distinction.

Tickets are still available for the Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education's Annual Benefit Gala. You can purchase tickets through the link on the Foundation Gala banner on the Board website.

**2. School Mental Health Ontario (SMH-ON): By Your Side Parent/Caregiver resources to support mental health learning and well-being for every family.**

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported that the **By Your Side Parent/ Caregiver Learning Hub** is an online resource centre designed to meet the needs of Ontario's families. Resources and supports are made available in multiple formats—including web content, PDFs, videos and webinars to ensure families can access information and strategies that promote mental health and well-being at home.

**Key topics in the Parent/Caregiver Learning Hub include:**

- understanding mental health
- promoting mental health at home
- supporting mental health at school
- stress and anxiety management
- substance use prevention
- navigating digital technology use
- reaching out for help

These resources aim to support mental health and well-being by providing accessible, research-informed, culturally responsive supports tailored to a wide-range of learning preferences. Further resources will be added over time, in response to parent identified needs.

**3. NCPIC Financial Report**

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported on the finances of the NCPIC.

**4. Niagara Catholic OAPCE Regional Director**

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells introduced Jennifer Pilzecker and reported that Niagara Catholic is pleased to announce that Jennifer Pilzecker has been approved as the Niagara Catholic OAPCE Regional Director and invited Jennifer to provide a brief bio and report.

**C. ONTARIO ASSOCIATION FOR PARENTS IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION (OAPCE) REPORT**

Jennifer Pilzecker provided a brief bio and shared that she was officially sworn in by Bishop Mathieu at the OAPCE Board of Directors meeting on February 1, 2025. Jennifer also shared that she was pleased to be acclaimed as the Niagara Catholic OAPCE Regional Director.

Jennifer reported that she as well as parents/guardians from Niagara Catholic participated in the OAPCE virtual regional representative meeting on February 13, 2025 and provided a subsequent meeting recap for representatives who were unable to attend.

Dr. Josephine Lombardi led an insightful session on the Jubilee Year of Hope, exploring its significance in Catholic faith. She discussed the Virtue of Hope, based on St. Paul's teachings, and the importance of joy in enduring difficult times. Dr. Lombardi explained the origins of the Jubilee Year, from its Jewish roots of reconciliation and forgiveness to its establishment in Catholic tradition by Pope Boniface VIII in 1300. She emphasized the importance of confession, indulgences, and the symbolism of the Holy Door as a pilgrimage act. To participate in the Jubilee Year, Dr. Lombardi recommended spiritual practices like fasting, almsgiving, and visiting sacred sites.

**OAPCE 86<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**

Jennifer reported that OAPCE was pleased to announce that they will be hosting the OAPCE 86<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Niagara this year at Saint Michael Catholic High School on Saturday, May 24, 2025. All parents/guardians are invited to attend. This is an incredible opportunity to connect with Catholic parent leaders, educators, and community members as we explore important topics in education, faith, and advocacy. There is no cost to Niagara Catholic, Catholic School Council OAPCE

Representatives and a minimal registration fee will apply to participants. Further details will be forthcoming.

- Chair Thomas proposed that the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee cover the fees associated with the community use of schools for the OAPCE Conference held on May 24, 2025 at Saint Michael Catholic High School not to exceed \$2500.00 through parent engagement funding.  
Approved by consensus.
- Trustee Bruzzese also stated that as a previous Director of OAPCE the conference is an incredible event. One of the highlights is the vendor market place which are fundraising groups and ancillary groups that support Catholic education. Trustee Bruzzese invited all parents to submit any names of any individuals or groups that may be interested in participating in the conference as a vendor or have displays i.e., Niagara College, Brock University, Branches Catholic Book Store etc., directly to Annalisa or Joe at OAPCE, Jennifer or himself. Promotion of this event with all Niagara Catholic parents/guardians will only enhance the conference.

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

Chair Thomas provided a report on behalf of Ella:

- Niagara Catholic elementary and secondary schools are preparing for the Lenten season. Staff and students will not be participating in any fundraisers or big activities for the next 40 days to hold space for Jesus and to maintain a humble tone through Lent.
- During Catholic Education Week, secondary schools will be promoting Luce, an animated character who is almost a mascot for the jubilee year, showing the pilgrimage journey for the year. The schools have creative freedom with what they want to do with the concept of Luce, but most are using her to hold a scavenger hunt or a version of “Elf on the Shelf” with Luce rather than an elf.
- Grade 8 students will have a final visit to their feeder secondary schools after Lent and before secondary exams in June. The students may be participating in fun pep rallies or activities to cultivate school spirit and preparation for the transition into summer and then, grade 9. Most grade 8 students have finalized courses at their respective elementary schools and are starting to prepare for confirmation and graduation.
- The Niagara Catholic Student Senate is meticulously planning their annual symposium conference, which is a leadership conference with all the school councils and senate. At this event, a guest speaker will talk about the importance of confidence and leadership, school student councils can communicate and share ideas. The elementary school senate election will also be held, and the secondary student senate trustee will be elected for the 2025-2026 school year. This conference is an opportunity for all schools to incorporate new creative activities into their schools, and to meet like-minded peers.

**E. BISHOP/DIOCESAN REPORT-Fr. Paul MacNeil**

Fr. Paul reported that:

- Parishes across the diocese celebrated Ash Wednesday on March 5, 2025 marking the beginning of Lent.
- March also heralds the beginning of Spring. This season is often associated with cleaning. After a long winter our homes can be musty, cluttered, and dusty. A good ‘spring cleaning’ is usually in order. Jesus reminds us that the same is true in the spiritual life. The season of Lent is a wonderful time to focus on the interior life and do a little ‘spring cleaning’. We need to look at what is in our hearts and get rid of the bad and embrace the good. As Jesus reminds us in the Gospel, we need to overcome our spiritual blindness, hypocrisy, and pride. We say no to our sinful inclinations, wants and desires, and yes to God and to the needs of our brothers and sisters. This is achieved through the traditional pillars of Lent - prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Going to confession also helps when we humbly admit we are sinners in need of God’s mercy. Committing ourselves to forty days of spiritual renewal is not easy; however, the words of Sirach can help: “Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.”
- 2025 is a Jubilee year. A year in which Pope Francis invites us to “forgive the debts of countries that will never be able to repay them.” (Spes non confundit, 16).
- Development and Peace — Caritas Canada is responding to this call through the global Turn Debt into Hope ShareLent campaign. A mini-magazine to is available to use during Lent describes the teaching of debt forgiveness in a jubilee year, as well as some information on some of the 79 projects supported by Development and Peace in 34 countries throughout the world. Inside there is also a solidarity calendar to use as part of your Lenten journey.
- Thursday, March 27 - Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education Annual Benefit Gala 6:00 p.m. at Club Roma. Tickets are \$100.00 per person payment due by March 18<sup>th</sup>.
- Saturday, April 5-Confession is available in all of our parishes from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
- A note on the meaning of fast and abstinence:
  - **Can.1251** Abstinence from meat, or from some other food as determined by the Episcopal Conference, is to be observed on all Fridays, unless a solemnity should fall on a Friday. Abstinence and fasting are to be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.
  - **Can.1252** The law of abstinence binds those who have completed their fourteenth year. The law of fasting binds those who have attained their majority (age 18 – C.97), until the beginning of their sixtieth year. Pastors of souls and parents are to ensure that even those who by reason of their age are not bound by the law of fasting and abstinence, are taught the true meaning of penance. The law of abstinence forbids the use of meat, but not of eggs, the products of milk or condiments made of animal fat.

- The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops' 2025 Journey through Lent video series, which includes reflections on the readings for Ash Wednesday and each Sunday in Lent including Palm Sunday, is now available on the CCCB website: English: <http://www.cccb.ca/lent> and in French: <http://www.cecc.ca/careme>. This series is designed for individuals, families, and communities, providing spiritual inspiration and guidance on how to prepare for the Easter Season. It is a joint project between three CCCB offices (the Office national de liturgies, the National Liturgy Office, and the Office for Evangelization and Catechesis).
- The MESSAGES OF HOPE Speaker Series is a special Jubilee 2025 initiative designed to engage those living in the Diocese of St. Catharines to learn about hope, and together, reflect and explore ways to restore a climate of hope in our world that desperately yearns for it. Each month, in venues around the diocese, a speaker has been invited to give a talk that explores some messages and themes that Pope Francis highlighted in this Jubilee's Bull of Indiction - *SPES NON CONFUNDIT*: Hope does not disappoint. Please visit the 'Around the Diocese' page of the diocesan website or Facebook page for dates and more information. March 18, 2025: Speaker: Nick Ali, Director of Evangelization
- Pope Francis Prayer Intention for the Month of March
- April 30, 2025: Speaker: Father Peter Rowe, Pastor, St. Vincent de Paul Parish
- For families in crisis: Let us pray that broken families might discover the cure for their wounds through forgiveness, rediscovering each other's gifts, even in their differences.

**F. COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE REPORT- Alexandra Gonzalez and Josie Rocca**

- Nil Reports

**G. SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC) REPORT**

Chair Thomas provided a report on behalf of SEAC

**1. Community Living - Anne Stafford Light Up the Future Bursary Application Opportunity**

The Anne Stafford Light Up the Future Bursary 2025 is open to all residents of Ontario aged 18 years and older who identify as having an intellectual disability. The goal of the bursary is to help recipients in their pursuit of an educational program or personal interest course or activity. The application process is currently open and will be accepted until Friday, April 25th, 2025 at 5pm EDT.

Please contact Community Living Ontario: [bursary@communitylivingontario.ca](mailto:bursary@communitylivingontario.ca) or by telephone: 416-447-4348 ext. 235 for more information.

**2. Invitation for Niagara Catholic schools to attend Team Canada Para Hockey Game**

Hockey Canada will host a series of Para Hockey games featuring Canada vs. USA. Canada is the reigning World Champion from 2024, while the United States earned the silver medal. Para

Hockey is a sport for individuals with lower limb disabilities, played in a seated position in a sled, and a part of the Winter Paralympic Games Program.

This event not only highlights a different way to play Canada's game but also promotes awareness and appreciation for inclusivity and adaptive sports. Niagara Catholic schools have been invited to cheer on team Canada on Wednesday, March 26th at the Canada Games Park in St. Catharines. The game begins at 12:00pm. The spectator area is fully accessible.

### **3. April 2, 2025 – World Autism Day**

#### **What is “Celebrate the Spectrum”?**

Celebrate the Spectrum is an opportunity for positive action to provide spaces of support and advocacy for our diverse communities, while learning about autism and how we can all make our communities better and more inclusive places for autistic people.

There are so many fun ways to Celebrate the Spectrum on World Autism Day across Ontario. Find out how to get involved leading up to April 2, 2025, and throughout the month of April by visiting the website [celebratethespectrum.com](https://celebratethespectrum.com).

#### **Who is Autism Ontario?**

Autism Ontario is the province's largest collective voice representing the autism community, supporting thousands of families across the province through its seven Regions, who provide committed and skilled expertise and guidance to their local communities. They provide information on autism, support autism research, implement programs and services for the autism community, and aim to support and advocate for all children, youth, and adults on the autism spectrum and their families across the province, regardless of race, ethnicity, income, religion, or gender identity. Visit [autismontario.com](https://autismontario.com) for more information.

## **H. STAFF REPORTS**

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells on behalf of Secondary Principal, Kevin Timmins reported that:

Secondary schools are hubs of learning and growth where we pride ourselves in developing the whole student in Mind, Body and Soul.

Soul:

- Deep connection with our parish priest who is right across the parking lot. Fr. Ronald is always available.
  - classroom visits,
  - prayer services
  - Fr. Ronald is a big sports fan and he regularly watches games and prays with teams.
- Full- time Chaplain to nourish the day to day needs of our community.
- Weekly Mass in our chapel.
- Monthly whole school masses in the church.
- Weekly prayer of the Rosary over the lunches.
- Shrove Tuesday/Ash Wednesday and Lent

- Choose Life Dinner

Mind:

- NCDSB Skills Competition
  - Carpentry
  - Auto
  - Hairstyling
  - Aesthetics
  - Baking
  - Culinary
  - Horticulture
  - Animation
  - Beats Music
- Black History Month – BHM Committee
  - Lezlie Harper/Pinball Clemons
  - Food Fest
  - Spoken Word, Step, Fashion Show
  - Canvas and Culture
  - Future Black Leaders Mentorship Program w/ Brock
- Student Vote – NDP sweep.
- Pink Shirt Day-Wednesday, February 26
- Kids Helping Kids Campaign – Niagara Children’s Centre
- Report Cards-Week of February
- Course Selection Process
  - Advanced Placement Courses
- Transition from Sem 1 to Sem 2
- PA Day-February 14-School Improvement, Supporting Social Emotional Needs of Our Students and Equity/Diversity Talk – BHM
- Exams
- EQAO Math/ OSSLT Spring Write
- SHSM Experiential Opportunities and Certifications

Niagara Public Health Vaccination Clinics in All High Schools

Transition Events:

- Gr. 7 Hockey Game Canada Games Park
- Gr. 8 Visit DM for a drama performance – Radium Girls
- Gr. 8 Open House – Open the doors to all of our Feeder Students and School Families
- Jr. Semi-formal

Body:

Very Rich Co-Curricular Program:

- Winter Season for sports: boys’ basketball, girls’ volleyball, rowing, hockey, curling, swimming, ski club all wrapped up
- Spring sports are ramping up: soccer, boys lacrosse, badminton, track and field, baseball, slow pitch.

Clubs:

High Voltage Robotics – Competing at Niagara College this weekend.

- Reach, WelPac, Student Council, BioBuddies, Art Club, Drama Club, Drumline

**I. TRUSTEE REPORT-*Joe Bruzzese***

- Nil Report

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

1. Superintendent Forsyth-Sells shared that the the Serra Club of St. Catharines Promoting Catholic Vocation is hosting a Murder Mystery Dinner to support vocations. A flyer with further details has been included in the package.

**MURDER MYSTERY DINNER:**

Saturday, May 3, 2025 Club Roma

Doors open at 5:30 p.m.

Event begins at 6:30 p.m.

\$65.00 per person-includes: one drink ticket, dinner and the murder mystery

Maximum of 8 per table

Tickets may be purchased through e-transfer at [events@serrastc.ca](mailto:events@serrastc.ca)

For more information, please contact Deedee Alexandre at 905.732.4782

2. Superintendent Forsyth-Sells shared that Dr. Jean Clinton, MD, Clinical Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences at McMaster University, division of Child Psychiatry will be presenting to Niagara Catholic parents about increasing parent/caregiver awareness and knowledge about problematic addictive behaviours among youth on Monday, May 5, 2025 at 7:00 p.m., at Denis Morris Catholic High School. Information about this parent engagement event will be shared with Catholic School Councils.

**K. NEXT MEETING:** Thursday, May 1, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. at the Catholic Education Centre.

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

**M. ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by: Jennifer Pilzecker

**THAT** the March 6, 2025 meeting of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee be adjourned.

**CARRIED**

This meeting was adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

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