

### ROLE OF THE TRUSTEE

The role of the trustee is to contribute to the Board as it carries out its mandate in order to achieve its mission and goals. The oath of office taken by each trustee when s/he assumes office binds that person to work diligently and faithfully in the cause of public Catholic education.

The Board of Trustees is a corporation. The decisions of the Board in a properly constituted meeting are those of the corporation. Individual trustees exercise an effective decision making role in the context of corporate action. A trustee who is given authority by Board motion to act on behalf of the Board may carry out duties individually but only as an agent of the Board. In such cases, the actions of the trustee are those of the Board, which is then responsible for them. A trustee acting individually has only the authority and status of any other citizen of the Division. Individual trustees do not have the authority to direct the Division's administration and staff.

Alberta's Catholic schools exist to offer Catholic parents a distinct education for their children. The trustees of a Catholic school board are empowered by the community to fulfill both the educational requirements set forth by the government and the vision of the faith community.

This presents Catholic school trustees with a unique, dual challenge. They must ensure that all students are provided an education, which includes literacy and numeracy skills, the ability to interpret and communicate information, to analyze quickly and creatively, and to solve problems effectively. At the same time, the Board must ensure that Catholic values and principles are reflected at all times in its policies and practices.

As leaders in the faith community, Catholic trustees require an understanding, a willingness to grow and a commitment to bearing daily witness to the faith. To meet this challenge, Catholic trustees are entrusted with certain denominational school rights, powers and privileges enshrined in the Canadian Constitution. They exercise these rights with the religious guidance of parish and diocesan authorities.

#### **Specific Responsibilities of Individual Trustees**

1. Become familiar with Division policies and procedures, meeting agendas and reports in order to participate in Board business.
2. Provide for the engagement of parents, students, staff and various communities.
3. Respectfully bring forward and advocate for local issues and concerns.
4. Refer matters not covered by Board policy, but requiring a corporate decision to the Board for discussion.
5. Refer administrative matters to the Superintendent.

6. The trustee, upon receiving a complaint or an inquiry from a parent, staff member or community member about operations, will refer the parent, staff member or community member back to the teacher, Principal or department and will inform the Superintendent or designate of this action.
7. Keep the Superintendent and the Board informed in a timely manner of all matters coming to his/her attention that might affect the Division. Personnel matters are to be brought to the attention of the Superintendent only.
8. Assist the Superintendent with counsel and advice, providing the benefit of the trustee's judgment, experience and familiarity with the local school(s) and the community.
9. Attend Board meetings, and committee meetings as assigned, prepared to participate in, and contribute to, the decisions of the Board in order to provide the best solutions possible for education within the Division.
10. Model the values and requirements of a practicing Catholic and participate in parish and church activities.
11. Ensure that Catholic values and principles are reflected in the Board's policies and practices.
12. Recognize his/her fiduciary responsibility to the Division and act in the best interests of the Division understanding that Division needs are paramount.
13. Accurately represent Board decisions and convey key messages.
14. When delegated responsibility, will exercise such authority within the defined terms of reference in a responsible and effective way.
15. Participate in Board/trustee development sessions so the quality of leadership and service in the Division can be enhanced.
16. Be cognizant of provincial, national and international educational issues and trends.
17. Share the materials and ideas gained with fellow trustees at a Board meeting following a trustee development activity.
18. Strive to develop a positive and respectful learning and working culture both within the Board and the Division.
19. Liaise with local Parish Council(s).
20. Liaise with School Council(s) as assigned.
21. Attend Division or school community functions when possible.
22. Become familiar with, and adhere to, the Trustee Code of Conduct.

23. Report any violation of the Trustee Code of Conduct to the Board Chair, or where applicable, to the Vice-Chair.

## **Orientation**

As a result of elections, the Board may experience changes in membership. To ensure continuity and facilitate smooth transition from one Board to the next following an election, trustees must be adequately briefed concerning existing Board policy and practice, statutory requirements, initiatives and long-range plans.

The Board believes an orientation program is necessary for effective trusteeship.

1. In the year of an election, the Division will host a preliminary orientation session for all elected candidates prior to the Organizational Meeting which will include a review of and an expression of interest in Board assignments and committees.
2. The Division will offer an orientation program for all trustees that provides information on:
  - 2.1 Role of the trustee and the Board;
  - 2.2 Board policy, agendas and minutes;
  - 2.3 Organizational structures and procedures of the Division;
  - 2.4 Existing Division initiatives, annual reports, budgets, financial statements and long-range plans;
  - 2.5 Division programs and services;
  - 2.6 Board's function as an appeal body;
  - 2.7 Statutory and regulatory requirements, including responsibilities with regard to conflict of interest;
  - 2.8 Trustee remuneration and expenses; and
  - 2.9 Trustee Code of Conduct.
3. The orientation program may also include:
  - 3.1 A tour of the offices and the opportunity to meet EICS Central Learning Services staff.
  - 3.2 A tour of the schools and the opportunity to meet principals and staff.
4. The Board Chair and Superintendent are responsible for ensuring the development and implementation of the Division's orientation program for trustees. The Superintendent shall provide each trustee with access to the references listed in Policy 3 Appendix at the Organizational Meeting following a general election or at the first regular meeting of the Board following a by-election.
5. The Division will provide support within the Board governance budget for trustees attending provincial association sponsored orientation seminars.

6. Incumbent trustees are encouraged to help newly elected trustees become informed about history, functions, policies, procedures and issues.

Legal Reference: Section 33, 34, 51, 52 53, 64, 67, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96  
Education Act

Section 6 Commissioner of Oaths Act

## **SERVICES, MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT PROVIDED TO TRUSTEES**

Trustees shall be provided with the following services, materials and equipment from within the Board governance budget while in office:

**1. Reference**

Access to:

- The School Act, the Regulations and related documents
- Board Policy Handbook and Administrative Procedures Manual
- Current Division documents
  - Budget
  - Capital Plan
  - Three-Year Education Plan/Report
  - Collective Agreements
  - Audited Financial Statements
- School year and meeting calendars
- Current telephone listings of schools and principals
- List of School Council officials
- Alberta Catholic Schools Trustees' Association (ACSTA) Materials
- Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) membership services

**2. Communications/Public Relations**

- Notification of significant media events
- Name tags, business cards and lapel pins
- Key messages as required
- Individual and Board photographs (for Division use)

**3. Administrative/Secretarial Services through the Superintendent**

- Access to interoffice mail
- Conference registration, travel and accommodation arrangements
- E-mail address and service support
- Photocopying and related secretarial services
- Coordination of events sponsored by the Board

**4. Equipment**

- Appropriate technology and support within Division standards

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Education Act

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