



**District School Board
Ontario North East**

Schumacher Board Office

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153 Croatia Avenue, Schumacher, ON P0N 1G0

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P.O. Box 1020, Timmins, ON P4N 7H7

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198022 River Road

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Dr. Jonathan D Byer
153 Croatia Avenue
Schumacher, ON P0N 1G0
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October 1, 2025

The Honorable George Pirie
Member of Provincial Parliament - Timmins
Unit G681 Algonquin Blvd. East
Timmins, ON
P4N 8S6
George.Pirie@pc.ola.org

Honorable George Pirie,

I am writing to you as Chair of District School Board Ontario North East about Minister of Education Paul Calandra's recent comments suggesting that Ontario's elected school trustees may be removed from the governance model of public education.

Local voices are essential in shaping our community, and I firmly believe that school board trustees play a pivotal role in our community by representing parents and students in education. The continued presence of democratically elected school board trustees, whose role is vital to ensuring transparency, accountability, and community engagement in our schools should not understated.

While principals and superintendents are employees of the school board who operate within the directives of the Ministry of Education, trustees provide an independent voice that ensures local concerns are heard at the decision-making table. A parent may reach out to a trustee when they feel their issue is not being addressed fairly within the school system, or when the concern involves board-wide policies, funding, or access to programs, areas that administrators cannot change on their own. Trustees act as a bridge between the community and the board, ensuring that parents have a direct avenue to raise concerns, seek guidance, and influence decisions that affect their children's education.

Eliminating trustees would silence local input and concentrate decision-making at Queen's Park, removing the democratic voice that parents and communities count on. Trustees provide a critical check and balance:

- Trustees do not control how much funding a board receives; the province does. Trustees oversee how that funding is allocated to best meet local needs.
- School boards have long been recognized internationally as a strength of Ontario's system, balancing consistency across the province with responsiveness to local circumstances.
- At a time when parents are asking for more engagement and transparency in schools, removing trustees would have the opposite effect.



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If a community does not agree with a trustee's actions, statements, and viewpoints during their term, they have the perfect opportunity – by voting in the municipal and school board elections – to turn the page.

If this proposal goes ahead, the impact will be real. Communities would lose their local voice, and parents would lose the people who speak up for them. Other provinces have already attempted to run their education systems without elected school board trustees and have been relatively short-lived.

I am asking you to:

1. Publicly oppose any plan to remove elected school trustees.
2. Communicate to Minister Calandra and Cabinet that communities like ours need more – not less – local voice in education.
3. Support a transparent, evidence-based dialogue about governance, one that strengthens local democracy instead of undermining it.

Please stand up for the voice of parents, students, and communities in Ontario's public education system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Jonathan D Byer'.

Dr. Jonathan D Byer
Chair, District School Board Ontario North East