



**District School Board
Ontario North East**

Schumacher Board Office

Street Address

153 Croatia Avenue, Schumacher, ON P0N 1G0

Mailing Address

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

705-360-1151

New Liskeard Board Office

198022 River Road

New Liskeard, ON P0J 1P0

705-647-7394

Dr. Jonathan D Byer
153 Croatia Avenue
Schumacher, ON P0N 1G0
Jonathan.Byer@dsb1.ca

October 1, 2025

Honorable Paul Calandra
Ministry of Education
15th Floor
438 University Ave
Toronto, ON
M7A 2A5

Honorable Paul Calandra,

I am writing to you as Chair of District School Board Ontario North East about 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. Personally, I ran for the position of school board trustee as a foundational step in my political engagement, motivated by the desire to apply the knowledge and expertise gained during my time in education both nationally and internationally for the direct benefit of our local education system.

Eliminating trustees would silence local input and centralize decision-making away from the communities where they are needed most, 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.



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- 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.

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, it would be a significant loss for the province. 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.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan D Byer'.

Jonathan D Byer, PhD
Chair, District School Board Ontario North East