



YORK CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

*In Faith,
We Educate*



NOMINATION CANDIDATE

**Denys
PETIKA**

CATHOLIC SCHOOL TRUSTEE

MARKHAM – WARDS 1, 2, 3 & 6

Faithful Leadership • Strong Schools • Bright Futures



**CATHOLIC
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Promoting Catholic
values and faith-filled
learning for every
student.



**STUDENTS
FIRST**

Supporting every
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their God-given
potential.



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SCHOOLS**

Building safe,
welcoming schools
where every child
belongs.



**PARENT & COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIP**

Listening to families
and working together
for stronger schools
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Strength in our community.
Hope for our children.*



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*Together, we can build
a better Markham.*



OUR COMMUNITY.



OUR HOME.

OUR FUTURE.

*Let your light shine before others,
that they may see your good deeds
and glorify your Father in heaven.*

— Matthew 5:16





The objective of this platform is therefore practical: School is more than the classroom. Students should have opportunities to meet, compete, create, serve, lead and learn from one another across our Catholic school communities. I will support stronger communication about student opportunities and practical ways to expand inter-school events, academic competitions, STEM and trades activities, arts, athletics, Catholic service, career exploration and student leadership. The objective of this platform is therefore practical: restore accountability where the system failed, protect the things that matter to Catholic families, and make responsible decisions today for the students who will graduate tomorrow.

I. FIX WHAT FAILED

Problems should not simply be acknowledged after they become crises. The experience of the previous Board period demonstrates why financial management, governance, leadership and long-term risk planning require serious trustee oversight. The purpose of this part of the platform is not to create an endless list of individual problems. The issues fall into four principal categories.

1. Financial Accountability

A school board controls significant public resources. Those resources must ultimately support students, classrooms and the long-term stability of Catholic education. Financial accountability includes:

- Deficits
- Depleted reserves
- Financial management
- Realistic financial assumptions
- Financial forecasting
- Spending controls
- Financial recovery planning
- Protection of classroom resources
- Transparent financial reporting

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." - 1 Corinthians 4:2 (KJV)

A budget is more than a document that balances numbers at a particular meeting. Trustees must understand whether assumptions are realistic, whether spending is sustainable, whether reserves are being depleted, and whether financial problems are being postponed into future years. The objective should be straightforward: understand where the money is going, identify problems early, protect classroom resources, and require realistic financial planning.

2. Governance & Oversight

Trustees are elected to govern. That requires more than receiving reports from administration. Trustees must understand those reports, ask appropriate questions, examine evidence, monitor performance and ensure that major decisions are properly explained. Governance and oversight include:

- Trustee oversight
- Accountability of administration
- Governance concerns
- Transparent decision-making
- Public accountability
- Clear responsibilities
- Monitoring Board performance
- Clear reporting to the public

Provincial intervention and supervision should not be treated as another campaign category. They are evidence of how serious governance and financial problems can become when ordinary governance mechanisms no longer resolve them. The objective is to restore a governance culture where problems are identified and addressed before outside intervention becomes necessary.



3. Leadership & Stability

Large educational organizations require continuity and clear responsibility. Repeated leadership changes can affect financial planning, implementation of Board decisions, staff confidence, institutional knowledge and accountability. This category therefore includes:

- Leadership changes
- Continuity of leadership
- Institutional stability
- Clear responsibility
- Accountability for decisions
- Early identification of problems
- Acting before problems become crises

Trustees should know who is responsible for implementing major decisions and should be able to determine whether promised corrective action actually occurred. Stable leadership does not mean avoiding change. It means creating an organization in which responsibility is identifiable and decisions continue to be implemented regardless of changes in personnel.

4. Risk & Long-Term Planning

Good governance should look beyond the current school year. School boards face predictable and unpredictable pressures involving enrolment, buildings, transportation, technology, staffing and economic conditions.

Long-term planning therefore includes:

- Early identification of financial risks
- Early identification of operational risks
- High-risk financial assumptions
- Realistic forecasting

RISK & LONG-TERM PLANNING

"The prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself." - Proverbs 22:3 (KJV)

- Enrolment changes
- Capital pressures
- Infrastructure pressures
- Transportation costs
- Technology costs
- Long-term financial planning
- Avoiding unrealistic assumptions

Problems should be identified when they are manageable-not after they become emergencies. That principle carries directly into the third campaign pillar, Prepare for What's Next.

II. PROTECT WHAT MATTERS

Fixing failures does not mean assuming that everything within Catholic education has failed. There are successful students, teachers, programs, schools and communities throughout the system. The objective should therefore be: Protect what works in our classrooms; fix what failed in governance.

1. Catholic Faith & Identity

Catholic education must remain recognizably Catholic. That includes:

- Protection of Catholic education
- Catholic values and identity
- Faith formation
- Religious education
- Relationships between schools, families and parishes
- Catholic School Councils
- Catholic community involvement



- Human dignity
- Service
- Responsibility
- Preservation of the distinctive purpose of Catholic schools

Catholic identity should not exist merely in the name of the school or on a website. Faith, service, human dignity, responsibility and Catholic community should remain meaningful parts of the educational environment.

2. Students & Classroom Education

Students are the central purpose of the school system. Resources and Board decisions should therefore be evaluated according to their effect on students and classrooms. Priorities include:

- Student achievement
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Classroom resources
- Special education
- Educational supports
- Mental-health supports
- Successful academic programs
- Support for teachers and classroom staff
- Keeping resources focused on students

Student achievement must remain measurable. When programs are working, the Board should understand why they are working and determine how those successes can be protected.

PARENTS, FAMILIES & COMMUNITY VOICE

"Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." - James 1:19 (KJV)

3. Parents, Families & Community Voice

Parents should not have to understand the entire school-board bureaucracy simply to determine who is responsible for their concern. A stronger voice for families means:

- Regular trustee updates
- Accessible trustee representation
- Attendance at Catholic School Council meetings
- Community meetings across Wards 1, 2, 3 & 6
- Clear explanations of important Board decisions
- Understandable summaries of major budget decisions
- A clear process for parents to raise concerns
- Follow-up rather than simply forwarding complaints
- Bringing recurring school-level concerns to the Board
- Consultation before major local changes
- Early communication concerning construction, boundaries, transportation, and programs

- Listening directly to students where decisions affect them

Parents deserve clear information, meaningful access, and a Board that listens.

Student, Family & Community Connection

Strong Catholic school communities should also provide opportunities for students to connect beyond their individual classrooms and schools through learning, activities, service, leadership, and community participation.

- Student events & activities - more opportunities for students from different schools to meet, participate, collaborate, and build connections.
- Academic, STEM & skills events - math, science, robotics, AI, technology, and skilled-trades competitions and showcases.
- Arts & athletics - sports, music, theatre, visual arts, and other inter-school activities.

STUDENT, FAMILY & COMMUNITY CONNECTION

"Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."

- James 1:19 (KJV)

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- Catholic faith & service - parish connections, charitable initiatives, volunteering, service projects, and Catholic student leadership.
- Student opportunities - leadership, mentorship, scholarships, volunteering, co-op, careers, and community involvement.
- Student voice - forums and appropriate opportunities for students to contribute ideas about their schools and the Board.
- Family participation - Catholic School Councils, community meetings, and activities involving parents and families.
- Communication - clearer ways for students and families to find events, programs, deadlines, activities, and opportunities across the Board.
- Participation & belonging - making it easier for students from different schools and communities to participate and feel connected to the broader Catholic school community.

4. Safe, Respectful & Supportive Schools

Students cannot achieve their potential if they do not feel safe and supported. This includes:

- Student safety
- Bullying prevention
- Violence prevention
- Mental-health supports
- Attendance
- Accessibility
- Respect and belonging
- Appropriate discipline
- Safe learning environments
- Support for vulnerable students

SAFE, RESPECTFUL & SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." - Matthew 5:9 (KJV)

Safety includes physical safety, but it also involves creating an environment where students can learn effectively and families know that concerns will be addressed.

5. Protect Successful Programs

Reform should not destroy programs that are producing good results. Before successful programs are eliminated or substantially changed, trustees should understand their educational value and the consequences for students. This means:

- Identify programs producing measurable results
- Preserve successful academic initiatives
- Protect effective special-education supports
- Protect successful enrichment opportunities
- Maintain programs valued by students and families
- Examine evidence before eliminating or substantially changing programs

The principle is: Not everything needs to be changed. What works should be identified, protected and strengthened.

III. PREPARE FOR WHAT'S NEXT

Education cannot be designed only around today's circumstances. A student entering Grade 1 in 2026 will graduate into a world shaped by technologies, occupations and economic conditions that will change substantially during their education. Schools therefore need to prepare students for more than examinations. They need to help students develop knowledge, skills, judgment, adaptability and multiple pathways toward a successful future. This pillar has four principal categories.



1. Academic & Career Readiness

Strong Foundations

Every future pathway begins with strong fundamentals. Students need:

- Literacy
- Writing
- Mathematics
- Numeracy
- Problem-solving
- Analytical skills
- Critical thinking
- Communication skills

These foundations support university, college, skilled trades, entrepreneurship and employment.

Financial Literacy

Students will eventually encounter financial decisions involving:

- Budgeting
- Banking
- Credit
- Interest
- Taxes
- Saving
- Investing
- Borrowing
- Household finances
- Business finances

FINANCIAL LITERACY & STEM

"The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge." - Proverbs 18:15 (KJV)

Financial literacy should help students understand the real financial decisions they will encounter after graduation.

STEM Opportunities

Students should have meaningful exposure to:

- Science
- Technology
- Engineering
- Mathematics
- Coding
- Robotics
- Hands-on problem-solving

STEM should connect classroom knowledge with practical applications.

Skilled Trades

Students should understand that skilled trades represent serious professional and economic opportunities. Examples include:

- Carpentry
- Electrical
- Plumbing
- HVAC
- Automotive
- Welding
- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Robotics and mechatronics
- Green-energy technologies

Apprenticeships



Students interested in skilled careers should understand pathways such as:

- Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program opportunities
- Apprenticeships
- Certifications
- Co-operative education
- College trades programs
- Workplace training
- Employer connections

These options should be introduced early enough for students to plan appropriately.

College & University Preparation

Students considering post-secondary education should receive clear information concerning:

- Prerequisites
- Applications
- Programs
- Scholarships
- Costs
- Career outcomes

Students should not reach Grade 12 before discovering that an earlier course decision closed an important pathway.

Entrepreneurship

Students interested in creating businesses should be exposed to practical concepts such as:

- Business planning
- Budgeting
- Marketing
- Innovation

ENTREPRENEURSHIP & EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

"In all labour there is profit." - Proverbs 14:23 (KJV)

- Contracts
- Customer service
- Financial responsibility
- Entrepreneurship

Experiential Learning

Learning should also occur beyond textbooks. Opportunities can include:

- Co-op
- Job shadowing
- Mentorship
- Workplace visits
- Competitions
- Practical projects
- Employer partnerships
- Community partnerships

Multiple Pathways to Success

There is no single correct pathway for every student. University, college, apprenticeship, entrepreneurship and skilled employment should all be treated as legitimate pathways toward success.

2. AI, Technology & Digital Readiness

Artificial intelligence is already changing education and employment. Preparing students for AI does not simply mean giving students access to an AI application. Students need to understand the technology and develop the judgment necessary to use it responsibly.

AI Literacy

Students should understand:



- What artificial intelligence is
- What it can do
- What it cannot reliably do
- How AI systems generate answers
- Why AI can produce incorrect information
- How AI is changing workplaces

Responsible AI Use

Students should learn when AI can appropriately support learning and when work must be completed independently. Potential educational uses include:

- Tutoring
- Brainstorming
- Language practice
- Coding assistance
- Research assistance
- Accessibility support

Verification & Critical Thinking

Students must not automatically accept an AI-generated answer. They should learn to:

- Check sources
- Verify claims
- Compare information
- Identify unreliable outputs
- Exercise independent judgment

AI should strengthen critical thinking rather than replace it.

Academic Integrity

RESPONSIBLE AI & ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

"Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." - 2 Corinthians 8:21 (KJV)

Schools need understandable expectations regarding:

- AI-generated assignments
- Plagiarism
- Citations
- Independent work
- Examinations
- Appropriate classroom use

Students, parents and teachers should understand the rules.

AI & Future Careers

Students should see how AI is beginning to affect areas such as:

- Engineering
- Construction
- Medicine
- Business
- Finance
- Law
- Design
- Manufacturing
- Science
- Technology

The purpose is not to predict exactly which jobs will exist. The purpose is to help students understand how occupations are changing.

Teacher Preparedness

Teachers also require appropriate guidance and professional development. A Board should avoid a situation where every classroom develops completely different expectations concerning emerging technology.



Privacy & Data Protection

Technology decisions must consider what information students are providing to outside systems. Schools should consider:

- Student data
- Privacy
- Third-party platforms
- Cybersecurity
- Appropriate technology procurement

Catholic Perspective on Technology

Technology should serve people-not the reverse. AI and digital technology should be approached consistently with:

- Human dignity
- Responsibility
- Ethical judgment
- Human relationships
- Catholic values
- The common good

Broader Digital Skills

Technology readiness also includes:

- Coding
- Computational thinking
- Robotics
- Digital design
- Cybersecurity awareness
- Online safety

DIGITAL SKILLS & MODERN SCHOOLS

"Let all things be done unto edifying." - 1 Corinthians 14:26 (KJV)

- Media literacy
- Recognizing misinformation
- Productivity software
- Digital research
- Accessibility technology

3. Modern Schools & Long-Term Infrastructure

Students cannot be prepared for tomorrow in facilities that are allowed to deteriorate through poor planning. Modern facilities do not mean spending money simply because something new is available. They mean maintaining existing assets responsibly and investing where there is a demonstrated educational or operational need.

Maintain Schools Before Problems Become Expensive

Preventive maintenance should consider:

- Roofs
- Windows
- Building envelopes
- Heating and cooling
- Plumbing
- Electrical systems
- Accessibility
- Washrooms
- Classrooms
- Gyms
- Athletic facilities
- School grounds

The principle is:

SCHOOL CAPACITY & INFRASTRUCTURE

"Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost?"

- Luke 14:28 (KJV)



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Maintain responsibly before deterioration creates a larger and more expensive problem.

Plan School Capacity Properly

Planning should consider:

- Current enrolment
- Projected enrolment
- New residential development
- Population changes
- Portable classrooms
- Underused school space
- Program locations
- Transportation consequences

School capacity decisions can affect families for many years and therefore require long-term planning.

Modern Learning Infrastructure

Modern education increasingly depends on appropriate infrastructure, including:

- Reliable internet
- Appropriate classroom devices
- Secure networks
- Modern science laboratories
- Robotics and technology spaces
- Skilled-trades learning environments
- Accessibility technology
- Cybersecurity infrastructure
- Adequate electrical capacity

Responsible Construction & Procurement

Capital projects require strong oversight.

RESPONSIBLE CONSTRUCTION & PROCUREMENT

"A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight."

- Proverbs 11:1 (KJV)

That includes:

- Realistic budgets
- Competitive procurement
- Clear scopes of work
- Cost controls
- Change-order oversight
- Project schedules
- Contractor accountability
- Transparent reporting
- Lifecycle-cost consideration

Major construction decisions should consider not simply the initial price, but the long-term value to students and taxpayers.

4. Economic & Community Resilience

Schools operate within the broader Ontario and Canadian economy. Economic uncertainty can affect family employment, construction prices, technology costs, transportation, operating expenses and government finances. The Board cannot control international trade or national economic policy. It can, however, prepare responsibly for their consequences.

Preparing Students for a Changing Economy

Students should understand that industries and occupations change. Education should therefore strengthen transferable capabilities:

- Mathematics
- Literacy
- Critical thinking
- Technology
- Financial literacy



- Communication
- Problem-solving
- Adaptability
- Practical skills

Economic Pressures

Long-term planning should recognize potential pressures involving:

- Inflation
- Construction costs
- Energy costs
- Supply chains
- Technology costs
- Employment changes
- Canadian and Ontario economic conditions
- Canada-U.S. economic and trade pressures where they materially affect education

The principle is not to turn international politics into a school-board issue.

The principle is: economic uncertainty makes responsible school-board planning more important, not less.

Community Partnerships

Schools do not need to prepare students alone. Meaningful partnerships can involve:

- Local employers
- Skilled-trades organizations
- Colleges
- Universities
- Community organizations
- Catholic organizations

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour."

- Ecclesiastes 4:9 (KJV)

- Parishes
- Professionals
- Mentors

These relationships can create practical educational and career opportunities for students.

Resilient Schools

Long-term planning should prepare for:

- Enrolment changes
- Inflation
- Construction-cost increases
- Supply-chain disruptions
- Technology changes
- Energy costs
- Infrastructure failures
- Economic uncertainty
- Unexpected financial pressures

The principle is: Plan early. Maintain responsibly. Spend wisely. Keep schools ready for change.

IV. FOR MARKHAM'S STUDENTS

A Campaign Grounded in Students, Families and Catholic School Communities Every Board decision eventually reaches a classroom, a student, a family or a school. My approach is to judge decisions by their practical effect on:

- Student achievement
- Catholic education
- Classroom resources
- Special education

A STRONGER VOICE FOR FAMILIES

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works."

- Matthew 5:16 (KJV)



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- Student safety
- Accessibility
- Families
- Long-term strength of our schools

V. A STRONGER VOICE FOR FAMILIES

A Trustee Platform for Markham's Catholic School Community Parents deserve clear information, meaningful access and a Board that listens. A stronger voice means regular communication, accessible representation, meaningful consultation and follow-up when families raise concerns. The responsibilities a Catholic trustee can influence include: Student achievement - literacy, mathematics, graduation, pathways and measurable educational outcomes. Special education - appropriate supports, accommodations and communication with families. Safe schools - bullying prevention, student safety, mental health, attendance, discipline and belonging. Transportation - safety, reliability, costs, route planning and communication. Facilities - maintenance, repairs, accessibility, capacity, capital projects and long-term planning. Budgets - realistic forecasting, spending controls, reserves, classroom priorities and transparent reporting. Staffing priorities - directing limited resources toward positions and services that effectively support students. Catholic education - faith formation, Catholic identity, human dignity, service, relationships with families and parishes, and protection of publicly funded Catholic education. Accountability - trustees asking questions, reviewing evidence, monitoring administration and explaining important decisions. Communication - giving families understandable information before major decisions whenever possible, rather than explaining decisions only afterward.

STUDENTS, FAMILIES & ACCOUNTABILITY FIRST

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works." - Matthew 5:16 (KJV)

VI. PUT STUDENTS, FAMILIES & ACCOUNTABILITY FIRST

This campaign is about more than identifying problems. It is about understanding what went wrong, protecting what our Catholic schools do well, and preparing students for what comes next. Financial responsibility. Strong Catholic education. Better communication with families. Safe and supportive schools. Modern learning. Practical skills. Responsible technology and AI. Real opportunities for every student. And everything comes back to the three commitments: FIX WHAT FAILED. PROTECT WHAT MATTERS. PREPARE FOR WHAT'S NEXT. Denys Petika Candidate for York Catholic District School Board Trustee Markham Wards 1, 2, 3 & 6 A practical, community-minded campaign for Markham's Catholic school communities.