

***On Nov. 19, 2024, Amy Collard, Chair of the Halton District School Board, delivered the following remarks at the Board's inaugural meeting upon being acclaimed as Chair for the 2024-2025 school year.***

Thank you, Director Ennis.

Last year, I made a commitment that we would build a Multi-Year Strategic Plan that's aspirational, flexible and firmly rooted in Equity, Collaboration, Accountability, Transparency, Integrity, and Empathy. Each of you was actively engaged in creating a Plan that speaks to the high standards we embrace at our board. Each of us owns this plan, and I will ensure we incorporate it into the governance of our board.

I promised to continue to look for ways to create even greater efficiency at our meetings, and encouraged you to continue sharing your ideas on increasing the effectiveness of our work. Last year we made incredible progress in this regard and I am looking forward to further enhancements to our processes.

We worked as a collaborative team on many issues, and while we may not always have agreed, our debates and discussions helped us reach decisions that benefit our students, staff and community. I look forward to many more productive meetings, where we bring our expertise to the forefront and discover new ways to enhance and strengthen the HDSB.

I engaged and consulted with you in a meaningful and thoughtful manner, and will continue to have an open door policy, listen to you, give guidance when you ask for it, and come to you when I need your wise counsel.

I have supported opportunities to enhance our communication and collaboration with our communities, and this has given greater voice to the community and demonstrated our commitment to open and transparent processes, leading to greater public confidence in the accountability and integrity of our board.

About 18 months ago, many of us around this table participated in the Building Community Challenge facilitated by I-Think, where we explored the importance of a positive mindset. We worked on framing things using affirming language. The facilitators demonstrated the powerful impact of using Pro Pro phrasing, instead of Pro Con. I will be challenging all of us to bring this technique to our communications with each other and the public we serve.

Our discussions and debates need to happen in safe spaces, where everyone can share their thoughts freely. By practicing Pro Pro phrasing, I believe we will be better able to focus on the important issues before us. As Trustee Danielli is fond of saying, let's be tough on the issues and gentle on the people.

Lastly, I'd like to comment on our most recent Governance PD session, where we discussed the role of the Chair as the spokesperson of the Board. I have always, and will always, take this part of the role very seriously. Everything I do as a Trustee, and especially as Chair, comes from my very deeply rooted belief that what we do matters. We should always be striving to support our students, staff and communities. Let's work together toward a better and brighter future for everyone in the HDSB.