

West Northumberland Public School Board Trustees

Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board



Municipal Elections

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The Ontario government passed significant legislation and other changes affecting local school boards. What do you propose to do going forward to maintain community and parent control over schools and curriculum?

Over the past year, the Ontario government has passed legislation that significantly reshapes how local school boards operate. Much of the authority that once rested with trustees and local communities has been centralized at the provincial level. Decisions about curriculum, capital projects, and even board governance are now more tightly controlled by Queen's Park.

But here's the truth: while our formal powers have changed, our responsibility to our communities has not. As your trustee, I remain committed to ensuring that parents and local voices continue to shape the education our children receive.

I will use every remaining accountability tool available to trustees. That means asking hard questions in public meetings, demanding transparency from the board and the Ministry, and ensuring that decisions affecting our children are explained clearly and openly. It is our job to ensure that the community understands the impact of Ministry directives and more importantly, has a voice in how those directives are to be implemented locally.

What is the ideal class size in your mind? How will you keep student/teacher ratios under control?

Under the Education Act and Ontario Regulation 132/12, the province structures its class sizes based on a mix of hard limits and board-wide averages.

In our Full-Day Kindergarten classes, the Board-average is to be 26 or fewer pupils. However, the challenge is in areas that creep up to the 29 per classroom where enrolment does not allow for two separate classrooms. Ideally, a lower average per classroom would be ideal (25 or less) but that is a centrally-bargained item as that is how it is funded in Boards.

Our Primary grades currently have a hard cap of 20 students with a 10% allocation for mid-year enrolments to a max of 23 pupils. For this age group, this is an appropriate number of pupils in a classroom.

Our Junior and Intermediate grades are funded at 24.5 students per classroom but because there is no hard cap, many classrooms are in the high 20's if not low 30's. If there was a hard cap at - say 24 - it would be better for students and educators both.

Secondary classrooms are funded differently by the type of subject being taught. For example an automotive class can not have as many students as an English class for safety reasons, for example.

The challenge is adhering to what is negotiated at the central bargaining table. Class sizes are included in those contacts. As you know, Trustee Associations have been removed from the bargaining process with the introduction of Bill 101 and so that voice is lost at the table.

Trustees, at present, still do sit on local bargaining committees which will give us the opportunity to share community input into local initiatives and challenges.

What is your plan to maintain schools property/buildings and meet the demands of an increasing and fluctuating population in Northumberland County?

Local school boards operate under strict frameworks established by Ontario's Ministry of Education.

School boards manage infrastructure through annual Capital Budgets and School Renewal Grants.

KPR passed a budget of \$60,766,353 for 2026-2027 projects to fund systematic updates like modern lighting, window replacements, roof maintenance, and boiler upgrades. This keeps aging infrastructure functional and energy-efficient.

When a school building is determined to be beyond its efficient lifespan or severely over capacity, boards leverage Ontario's Capital Priorities Program to submit business cases for major expansions, extensions, or brand-new builds. We have been successful in receiving monies for new builds and/or additions most recently locally in Cobourg at Merwin Greer Public School (addition) as well as new builds in Newcastle and Millbrook and an addition to Buckhorn Public School.

In West Northumberland, we are excited about an upcoming addition to Merwin Greer Public School in Cobourg. This \$10.5 million dollar investment by the Provincial government will mean an additional 129 pupil placements and 73 new licenced daycare spaces to accommodate the continued growth on the east side of Cobourg.

Boards utilize a Long-Term Accommodation Plans (LTAP) to balance student populations without prematurely building permanent structures. Our current LTAP is from 2025-2030 with additional population growth watches to 2035.

We also have the ability to utilize boundary adjustments where necessary; use a targeted school grade restructuring model whereby shifting grade cohorts (such as converting a school from a JK-6 to a JK-8 model, or vice versa) allows boards to utilize empty classrooms in under-capacity buildings to relieve pressure on overcrowded ones and the use of temporary accommodations such as portables. Annual funding allocations are set aside for the purchase, leasing, and moving of portables. Portables serve as a flexible buffer to accommodate short-to-medium-term enrollment surges while protecting the long-term capital budget.

Does the local school board trustee have a role under the current policy direction of the Ontario government? If so, describe in detail what it is and what areas it impacts?

Yes, local school board trustees still have a role, but under the Ontario government's current policy directions—specifically defined by the Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026, the role has changed.

The Ministry of Education's direction moves the province away from local school board autonomy and toward a highly centralized, business-focused model. Trustees are no longer the ultimate directors of school board operations; instead, their mandate has been narrowed primarily to representing parents and advocating for students.

As Trustees, our strongest leverage lies in:

- Community coalitions
- Public transparency
- Strategic motions
- Community programming
- Media engagement
- Political advocacy

This is how trustees remain influential even under a centralized provincial model.

With the school year starting and no new contract in place, what are some of the specific changes you would like to see in the Ontario teacher's and education workers contract provincially and locally?

The challenges surrounding sick time needs to be addressed. Boards are not adequately funded for the coverage required in our schools to cover those who are off on sick time or extended leave. Instead, this money comes directly out of classroom budgets and creates shortfalls in classroom resources. This has to be a key focus in this negotiation cycle.

Funding for Special Education has to be addressed; there is a significant shortfall within this envelope of funding as we strive to carry out the specialized programming that our students require.

In addition, smaller class sizes would be beneficial for the students in our classrooms.

What are your views on the broadened ministerial takeover powers implemented by the Ontario government? Are you concerned the local school board may be taken over? What would you do, if that happened?

The reality is that the Ontario government used challenges evident in larger boards and painted the province with the same brush. This was grossly unfair and does not reflect the reality in many boards across the province.

At KPRDSB, we have always had a collegial Board of Trustees. While we do not always agree, we are all concerned with and focused on student and achievement and the best outcomes for students.

I have no immediate concerns that our local school board will be taken over. We have worked hard on our budgeting process and fiscal responsibilities and have created budget that fall within compliance. We also do not have the in-fighting that a number of the larger boards were experiencing.

If KPRDSB was to be taken over, my ability to be a Trustee immediately stops. However, my ability to volunteer in schools and follow what's going on as a concerned community member would not change. I would continue to advocate for public education, community voice and local democracy.

What are three issues you are hearing from parents and residents when you are talking to them during the campaign? What do you say in response?

Class sizes: I reiterate the bargaining approach that has to be taken at the central level and speak to the fact that Trustee Associations have been removed from the conversation;

Violence in Classrooms: we hear about this on a regular basis. We can trace this back, definitely, to the shortage of special education funding that Boards are receiving. We are working hard so that every dollar we do spend provides students with the most impactful support possible, but we need the provincial government to step up and fund the system properly."

Transportation: from walk distances to inconvenient pick-up locations to no pick-up locations. This remains a bone of contention for a lot of KPR's families. In Northumberland county, where a large portion of our students are rural-based, this is often a sticky point. We also have to contend with driver shortages in some areas which leads to delays and route cancellations. If the Ministry provided a more comprehensive funding model that addressed the uniqueness of rural communities vs. urban centres, we would be able to address some of the challenges that we face. As a Trustee, I will always share parental concerns with STSCO and the route-planning staff, recognizing that this does not always mean families get the answers/results they want.

Identify one or more things you intend to introduce that that is not included in this survey that you will accomplish before the end of your term?

An area of consideration for me is:

A More Focused Rural-Urban Service Parity Shield. When boards face budget deficits, specialized regional programs (like psychological assessment clinics, speech pathology, or enrichment programs) are historically clustered in urban tech hubs or dense population centres. Rural families are left to drive further or sit on much longer waitlists.

The Initiative: I will query a Rural Service Parity Shield dynamic into our resource-allocation model. This policy would legally dictate that mobile board resources—specifically special education resource teams and technology deployment squads—must rotate their operational baselines equally across county quadrants.

How It Would Be Accomplished: We would establish fixed, local satellite hubs in communities like Campbellford, Port Hope, and Cobourg. Rather than forcing a high-needs student to travel to Peterborough or wait for a centralized board staff member to commute out, specialists would be embedded in Northumberland hubs on a fixed, predictable schedule. By establishing these tangible operational mandates, we will hold the board legally accountable to the geographic realities of the families paying property taxes in Northumberland, ensuring that "equity" is measured by physical access, not just language in a strategic plan.

What are your thoughts on the closure of the International Baccalaureate Program at Cobourg Collegiate Institute? How would you provide enhanced programming for students who may wish to be challenged by the curriculum?

While the International Baccalaureate Program (IB) is a well-respected program, it's equity of access was limited. The closure highlights a difficult balancing act between equity, financial sustainability, and academic excellence.

Students across our secondary schools are successful in being able to study both in-province, inter-province and internationally based on the education they receive in our secondary schools across the jurisdiction.

The reality of the IB program in Cobourg was that more than 50% of the students entering the program did not complete it or graduate with an IB recognition. In addition, many students used it as an excuse to find a way to leave their home school for what they perceived as a bigger and more vibrant learning experience. In addition, the low class sizes required to run the IB program, pulled resources away from the broader student population.

We are proud of the course offerings we have across the multiple areas of KPR, including Northumberland County, and the variety of course offerings students can participate in. There are career pathways for ALL of our students, regardless of the route they choose.

What specifically needs to be done to meet the needs of students seeking accommodations, providing details as the goals you would plan to meet during the upcoming term?

To effectively meet the needs of students seeking accommodations in Ontario, we must operate strictly within the framework of the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Education Act, and the Learning for All guidelines. With Ontario's school boards facing severe special education funding shortfalls, our approach for the upcoming term must focus on cutting provincial red tape, leveraging existing board resources, and maximizing direct student support.

Areas of focus need to be: Clear the PPM 140 (Students with Autism) & Psychological Assessment Backlog - this has been a focus of our Special Education Department, particularly in the past two years; ensure that Special Education Amount (SEA) funding for assistive devices is distributed quickly after provincial approval and that there are adequately trained staff for hardware/software rollouts; Ontario's Learning for All document champions a tiered approach to prevention and intervention. KPR was early in the ring by implementing these strategies and by strengthening Tier 1 (Universal Design for Learning in the regular classroom). What this does is reduces the strain on specialized resources. This naturally accommodates students with mild executive dysfunction or learning disabilities.

How do you intend to meet the fiscal demands of the Ontario government, schools in Northumberland and concerns of ratepayers, giving specifics to your plans to achieve your goals?

School boards in Ontario do not have independent taxing power; our revenue is strictly tied to the provincial Core Education Funding framework (formerly the Grants for Student Needs) and localized education property taxes. Meeting fiscal demands requires squeezing maximum value out of every administrative dollar to shield the classroom.

Areas I wish to consider:

1. Protect classroom funding first - ensure that resources reach students directly.
2. Strengthen financial transparency - I will push for clearer public reporting, easy-to-read budget summaries and open conversations with respect to spending decisions. Transparency builds trust and helps us to make better choices.
3. Advocate for fair provincial funding - I will continue to press the Ministry and our local MPP to provide funding that reflects the realities being faced by the schools in Northumberland County.
4. Prioritize smart, targeted investments - if we focus on areas of greatest impact: early literacy, mental-health supports, safe, well-maintained facilities, arts and music programming, our students will benefit across the board.
5. Partnerships - work together with community organizations, municipalities and local businesses to help expand programming without increasing the burden on taxpayers. Joint initiatives serve all stakeholders well.
6. Community involvement - fiscal responsibility works best when families and community are part of the conversation.

What makes you uniquely qualified to be a school board trustee?

My love for public education and children - the two are intertwined and not mutually exclusive.

I have been a Trustee for the past 16 years and have seen huge amounts of change over those years including, but not limited to:

1. The geography of the area I serve - with the addition of Trent Hills into the area that I (we) represent, we are responsible for 21 school sites. I have ensured that I have visited each site often during the term.
2. My role in leadership - during this past term, I served as Chairperson of the Board for two years as well as Vice-Chairperson of the Board for one. In addition, I served on the Ontario Public School Board Association's Executive Council as Chair of the Central East Region including Toronto DSB, Durham DSB, York DSB, Trillium Lakelands DSB, Simcoe DSB as well as KPR and a number of school authorities.
3. My passion for public education has led me to sit on the Special Education Advisory Committee (past Chair) and the Supervised Alternative Learning Committee - both vital avenues in ensuring students receive the resources needed in our classrooms.
4. Other Experience at a Board Level - Program Committee (past Chair); Resource Committee; hiring panels for Chief Education Officer (and former Directors of Education), Chief Education Officer (former Associate Director), Superintendents; Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee; Parent Involvement Committee; Port Hope Education Network liaison and others
5. The increase of technology in the classroom - desktop computers have become virtually obsolete as classrooms move towards chromebooks, ipads, tablets and other technology devices. The world is "virtually" at students' fingertips in a way that it has never been before.

When I began this journey, my son was in middle school. He is now the married father of a little girl that I hope to share my love of public education with.

I have the knowledge to serve this changing landscape of education in Ontario and within this Board. We will have a very different Board of Trustees moving forward with only 1 out of 11 Trustees guaranteed to return.

I have lived and worked most of my adult life in Northumberland County. I understand the nuances that each region has, the concerns that don't necessarily reach areas uniformly. I will listen and be responsive to the community and families that make up West Northumberland and Trent Hills.

I look forward to continuing to advocate for the residents of Northumberland County in the area of local democracy in education.

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