

East Northumberland Public School Board Trustees

Colborne, Cramahe, Brighton, Trent Hills



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?

I don't believe control is the right word, but there is power in understanding the process. Parents should not have to get lost in a bureaucratic maze just to find out who made a decision, what can be changed, or what their next step might be.

Ontario sets the curriculum, but school boards still make important local decisions. Parents should know what the board can change, what the province requires, who is responsible for a decision, and what options are available if they disagree.

If elected, I will help families understand whether an issue belongs with the school, the principal, senior administration, the board, the Student and Family Support Office, or the province and what appeal or next step is available if it is not resolved.

Parents may not always get the answer they hoped for, but they should always get a clear, timely and honest answer, and they should understand it.

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

There isn't one perfect number for every classroom, but research shows that smaller classes matter, especially in the early years. Teachers have more time to work individually with students, respond to different needs, and deal with behaviour before it becomes a bigger issue.

In my ideal world where education is funded appropriately, early elementary classes would be around 20 or less. For Grades 4–8, Ontario currently averages 24.5. My concern with an average is that it can look reasonable on paper while individual classrooms can still have 30 or more students. I would rather see the government implement a reasonable hard cap that limits how large any one class can get.

As a trustee, I will always use my voice to advocate for the funding needed to keep classes manageable and safe.

I also don't think numbers tell the whole story. A class of 25 with several children who need additional support is very different from another class of 25. Class size needs to be looked at alongside EAs, special education resources, and the other supports teachers and students actually need in the classroom.

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

Maintaining the schools we already have should be a priority. As a trustee, I won't decide which roof gets fixed, but I can ask whether we are putting enough money into maintenance, what we're prioritizing, and why. I would rather we address problems before they get bigger and more expensive.

We also need to work with our municipalities and pay attention to where new development is happening. We shouldn't be waiting until subdivisions are built and schools are overcrowded before we start planning.

Sometimes portables or boundary changes will be necessary, especially when enrolment fluctuates, but they shouldn't become the permanent answer. My role would be to ask the questions, plan for the long term and advocate to the province for additions or new schools when the numbers show we need them.

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, absolutely. The role of a trustee still matters, but trustees need to understand exactly where their authority begins and ends.

The province sets curriculum, funding rules and many of the policies boards must follow. Bill 101 has also expanded provincial oversight in several areas.

But trustees still have an important governance role. We approve budgets, policies and strategic priorities, scrutinize recommendations from senior administration, and bring the concerns of students, families and staff to the board table.

This is where my previous governance experience is a real strength. I have served in elected office before, worked with complex budgets and competing priorities, and I understand the difference between governing, managing and holding administration accountable.

If the same concerns keep coming up around transportation, special education, safety, staffing or buildings, trustees should be asking whether policy or resources need to change. And when the solution sits with the province, we should use local data and evidence to advocate for change.

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?

A lot of the major issues in teacher and education worker contracts are now decided provincially, not by individual school boards. That means trustees have much less direct control over things like compensation and other central terms, although there is still an important local bargaining role.

Provincially, I would like to see contracts that help us recruit and retain qualified staff, provide appropriate supports for increasingly complex classrooms, and recognize the important work of education workers as well as teachers.

Locally, my focus would be on working respectfully with employee groups on the issues we can influence, including working conditions, communication, safety and how resources are used to support students and staff.

My role as a trustee would also be to bring clear local evidence to the province. If KPR is seeing staffing shortages, unmet student needs or pressures that provincial decisions are creating, I think we should be documenting that and advocating strongly for change

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?

I am concerned about any expansion of provincial powers that weakens local democratic accountability.

At the same time, the Minister himself has moved away from the idea of eliminating trustees altogether. And I think that matters, because removing elected trustees only from the public system while leaving other systems with local representation would create an imbalance and make an already complicated education system feel even less fair.

If KPR were ever placed under supervision, I would continue advocating publicly and constructively for our students, families and communities. I would make sure the province was flooded with clear local data, evidence and advocacy about what our students actually need.

Families should always know who is making decisions, why they are being made and how they can be heard.

Local democracy matters, and our communities should never become invisible to Queen's Park.

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

Three issues come up repeatedly in my conversations with parents and residents.

First is whether students are getting the support they need. Families are concerned about special education, mental-health supports, classroom resources and opportunities for students who need greater academic challenge. Schools cannot meet increasingly complex needs without adequate staffing and resources.

Second is student safety and well-being, including transportation. A five-year-old should not have to spend three hours a day on a school bus, yet that is the reality for some students. Even KPR's policy allowing ride times of up to 75 minutes is too long for young children. Long rides affect sleep, family time and well-being. The province needs to review how student transportation is funded so boards can provide service that puts children first.

Third is communication and accountability. Families often tell me they don't know who is responsible for a decision, where to turn when there is a problem, or whether their concerns are being heard.

Families want a school system that is responsive, transparent and properly resourced, and trustees who will listen locally and advocate to the province when funding and policy decisions are not meeting students' needs.

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?

I support providing students with opportunities to be challenged and to pursue different pathways, including enriched academics, skilled trades and specialty programming.

At the same time, public education should not depend on a family's ability to pay. Students should have access to enhanced learning based on their interests and abilities, not their parents' income.

With IB discontinued, I would support strong, accessible alternatives such as enriched or Advanced Placement courses, dual credits, mentorships and partnerships with colleges, universities and community organizations.

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

Students and families shouldn't have to fight through a complicated system to get the accommodations they need.

Accommodations are broader than an Individual Education Plan. They can involve disability, medical needs, accessibility, learning supports, transportation, or other barriers to participating fully at school.

I want families to know where to turn, and when the same problems keep coming up, I want the Board looking at the bigger picture. That means asking for data, reviewing whether our policies and resources meet student needs, and using that evidence to push for changes locally or advocate to the province when needed.

As your trustee, I will ask whether accommodations are actually working for students, not simply whether they exist on paper.

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?

My approach is to understand what funding is restricted, what costs are fixed and where trustees actually have discretion.

I would focus available resources on the areas that have the greatest impact on students while carefully reviewing spending and challenging assumptions. My municipal and regional government experience has taught me how to work within restricted funding and competing priorities.

For Northumberland, I would also use strong local data on transportation, rural schools, staffing and special education to advocate to the province when funding does not reflect local needs.

Responsible budgeting is not simply about cutting. It is about making informed choices and ensuring limited dollars are used where they make the greatest difference for students.

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?

There are three things I would like to accomplish. First, I want public board meetings to remain easily accessible online after they happen, so families and residents who cannot watch live can still hear the discussion and understand how decisions were made.

Second, I want to expand partnerships with municipalities, YMCAs and other community organizations. Schools should be connected to their communities, and there are opportunities to work together on youth programming, recreation, facilities and supports for families.

Third, when the same issue keeps coming up, I want us to look beyond the individual case and ask whether there is a systemic problem. That means reviewing our own policies, changing them when necessary, and advocating to the province when the issue is outside the board's authority, as I have done previously around PPM 161.

For me, the goal is not just solving one problem at a time, but improving the system when those problems reveal something bigger.

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

What makes me uniquely qualified is the combination of experience and perspective I bring to the role.

I have served in municipal and regional government, worked as a child and youth advocate, run a business, and advocated for families navigating the education system.

I'm stepping back into public service with a clear purpose: to put my experience to work for our kids, our families and our public schools.

I understand governance, budgets and accountability, but I also understand how decisions made at the board table affect families, kids and staff in real life. I would bring both perspectives to the role and keep students at the centre of every decision.

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