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### **Chairperson Barbara Holland's Address to the Board**

First, I thank each and every one of you for trusting me enough to allow me to serve in the capacity of Chairperson for the coming year. I have always looked upon the role of trustee as a calling, a form of ministry which allows us to use the gifts we have each been given to ensure that each child in our care receives an outstanding Catholic Education. It is an honour that I do not take for granted, to be chosen by you to serve as Chair to:

- communicate the goals and vision of the Board to our community partners and ratepayers;
- ensure you receive the information you need to make an informed decision;
- act as spokesperson for the Board on public policy issues and events; and
- represent Catholic Education in this region on your behalf.

It has been my experience that when you run for political office, it's because you feel strongly about a subject, have a vision of what can be and the will to see it through. There are those that may suggest that politics is a lot like herding cats. I would disagree. Give me a strong, intelligent, committed group of people to work with anytime. It is through vibrant discussion, by airing every possible concern and question that the best option is found for our kids. When differing opinions can be shared respectfully, as they are at our table, then collective wisdom is found. With that wisdom comes courage and with courage you can achieve anything. And we have.

- Our structural deficit is gone.
- Our capacity issues are solved.
- Our budget is well under control.
- New teacher hires to celebrate.
- Our major labour issues appear to be resolved.
- Our innovative program offerings are filling a gap clearly articulated by parents and solid enrolment figures support that.

So now what? Well, I would suggest that we look again at the strategic plan we adopted at our last meeting of 2015 for the years 2016 to 2019 and challenge ourselves to live out and implement those goals. In the year ahead, we have the opportunity to:

- Blend three outstanding new communities into a new St. Bernard.
- Work closely with our community to imagine the possibilities and envision what a new Catholic Central can mean for our system and for the city - especially our families in the downtown core.

*"Learning together in faith and service"*

- Continue collaborative efforts with the University of Windsor, St. Clair College and Industry to ensure that we fulfill our mission to create a culture of innovation that embraces the realities of a rapidly changing world. And in doing so, we will ensure that our students are empowered with the “knowledge and skills they need to live purposeful, meaningful lives in a variety of sectors.”
- Realize the importance of continuing our work to understand and know each student, guiding them towards pathways that work best for them while always focusing on the success of our most vulnerable.
- Continue to be prudent, wise and responsible stewards of our resources and focus those resources on evidence based student achievement initiatives that can lead to exciting new learning opportunities.
- Continue to provide meaningful professional development to our teams and foster a culture where we celebrate the success of our staff and our students by recognizing their achievement.
- Continue, as a Board of Trustees, to set a respectful, collaborative tone and create an atmosphere that nurtures mutual respect while remaining true to our core Catholic principles while strengthening connections.

I am excited by this vision of the future and the strategic priorities we have put in place to guide us in the year ahead. We have made difficult decisions this past year - in fact, in the past five years, but because of that, we are now in a position to create even more opportunities for our students. Student Achievement has always been central to what we do and I look forward to building on what we have done.

We have been together as a legally constituted board of trustees since 2014 and in that time we have worked collaboratively with the Director, his fine team of Superintendents, senior managers, principals, teachers, support staff, our parents, parish teams and community partners and through that work, we have always tried to respectfully resolve issues in the best interests of our school communities, work intended to give our students wings. There are amazing things happening in our system right now due to the collaborative effort of all. Every person in this Board should be proud of that. I am proud of that.

There is a quote somewhere about trustees that suggests “*we have the opportunity to hold something in our care for a period of time before passing it on undiminished to those who follow.*” I would say we have surpassed that and can look forward to a new year knowing that our system is stronger than it has ever been. Our children are experiencing an outstanding Catholic Education and I know that we will be celebrating much more good news with our community and for the children entrusted to our care.

I am looking forward to working with you as we continue this good work and thank you sincerely for your trust in me.