

## School Trustees—Who Will Be Our Gatekeepers?

**Rod Taylor**

Leader, CHP Canada

Across Canada—in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, New Brunswick and the Northwest Territories—local government elections will be held between October 24 (Ontario) and December 12 (NWT).<sup>1</sup> Most of those elections will involve the election of municipal officers (mayors and councillors) and school trustees.

Historically, many voters who care about the BIG issues (protection of innocent human life, defence of traditional family values and issues of conscience and free speech) have focused on federal and provincial elections. Municipal elections tend to have even lower voter turnouts than the appallingly low turnouts in general elections. In Ontario in 2018, only 38.3% of voters showed up to decide who should manage their cities and run their schools.

Why is this? It is partly the perception that the actions of local governing bodies will have less far-reaching impacts on peoples' lives. Of course, there is much less coverage by national media. There are more positions to be filled on the ballots, so the number of candidates for various positions can be somewhat overwhelming. Also—ironically—while many voters in a local election may know one or more of the candidates personally, the candidates' views on many larger social issues are not well known. Voters tend to assume that a village councillor's position on abortion or same-sex marriage won't matter at a local level.

Nothing could be further from the truth. It is local governments that make decisions on things like rainbow crosswalks and flying the rainbow flag at city hall. Important issues like the approval of business licences and gender inclusivity often happen first at the local level. We have expressed, in the past, our disappointment that not one MP rose in the house to challenge the lightning-swift and unanimous passage of Bill C-4, which banned Conversion Therapy. However, the essence of that bill had already been approved on a local level by municipal governments in Calgary, Vancouver, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Fort MacMurray, Kingston and many others.<sup>2</sup>

In the case of school board trustees, the importance of electing men and women who will defend a biblical world view is tremendously important. These are the folks that actually implement curriculum. While provincial legislators and ministry bureaucrats set the tone for the province, local trustees can still exercise significant influence. But it's not a cakewalk. In 1997, Heather Stilwell, a member of the Surrey (BC) School Board fought to protect kindergarten children from books promoting homosexuality.<sup>3</sup> In more recent years, Chilliwack (BC) School Trustee, Barry Neufeld, found himself embroiled in controversy after referring to the province's SOGI program (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) as "child abuse." He has not shrunk from the conflict but is taking his case all the way to the Supreme Court. He's doing that for all of us and for our children. He needs us to stand with him. You can watch my recent interview with Barry and his lawyer, Paul Jaffe, here.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Teresa Pierre is the founder and president of PAFE (Parents as First Educators).<sup>5</sup> Through PAFE, Dr. Pierre has worked tirelessly in Ontario to protect children from former Premier Kathleen Wynne's radical sex-ed curriculum and to defend parental rights. She is currently working hard to recruit and train candidates for Ontario's upcoming municipal and school board elections, men and women who are willing to go against the flow and to represent the best interests of students and parents. She says, "The right trustee can make the difference between creating the schools we want or having the current schools more and more parents are choosing to avoid."

When asked about the recruiting process, she had this to say: "I think we are seeing a strong response this time around from candidates who have had it with all the levels of atrocious ideologies that are like the layers of an onion. This latest blow of having legislators try to pass a bill in the spring to cement critical race theory into school boards seems to have been a wake-up call that could not have come at a better time."

She went on to say, "The school board trustees are the ones who implement policies in their local districts, so they are really the centre of the storm when it comes to what happens in the schools. As education is our mandate, the school board trustee elections are our most natural focus. It's crucial that we have players at this level who are hard workers, savvy about the issues and wise about getting good policies passed. They are weapons in the fight for the security of children at school. Trustees can delay the implementation of harmful provincial education policies on the basis of the need for public consultation, and they can enact other policies to blunt the impact of bad curriculum."

In Ontario, Teresa and her team at PAFE are conducting training and providing resources for men and women willing to step up to the plate and register to put their names on the ballot. Their training covers the responsibilities of a trustee and how to register. The closing date for registration of candidates is August 19, so time is of the essence. Those who are considering this opportunity should contact Teresa before then and as soon as possible at [teresa@pafe.ca](mailto:teresa@pafe.ca). Learn more at the PAFE website.<sup>5</sup>

To register a nomination in Ontario, you must be at least 18, a Canadian citizen, resident within the board's boundaries, not holding public offices, not an employee of a school board, not prevented by law from voting, and not in the penal system. Specific requirements, dates and procedures may vary from province to province, so check the details in your own province.

Another organization based in Ontario, working to recruit and train candidates for this Fall's election, is Christians That Care,<sup>6</sup> an initiative of Liberty Coalition. They are offering to help Christian candidates in Ontario and in various places across the country. They believe that ". . . the church of Jesus Christ is the most powerful human force on the planet. Righteous, biblical laws should govern this land: God's laws." They hope to engage ". . . every Christian, every church, everywhere." Learn more at the Christians That Care website.<sup>6</sup>

In BC, several groups are at work recruiting candidates for BC's October 15 municipal elections. One of them is Pastor Joe Russell in Abbotsford. He is focused on local districts close to home (Abbotsford, Chilliwack and Mission), but he invites inquiries from anywhere in BC. He says that the terrible things happening in our public schools—the promotion of early and aberrant sexual behaviours, boys in girls' washrooms and pornography in the libraries—these are taking place because good men and women have not taken a stand. He says, "God calls us to stand firm against evil and to declare the truth to our city and our nation. Will you work with us and pray with us for our God and for our nation?" The deadline

for registration as a candidate in BC is September 9, 2022. You can contact Pastor Joe by email at: [pastorjoe@telus.net](mailto:pastorjoe@telus.net) or by telephone at: (604) 338-8909.

Our interest at CHP Canada<sup>7</sup> is to influence public policy at all levels and to bring biblical morality back into the laws and institutions of our country. Local governance is a great place to start. We hope many of you reading this article will consider getting involved. You can make a difference!

## **Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022\\_Canadian\\_electoral\\_calendar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022_Canadian_electoral_calendar)

<sup>2</sup> [www.canada.ca/en/departement-justice/news/2021/11/government-introduces-legislation-to-ban-conversion-therapy-practices-in-canada.html](https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-justice/news/2021/11/government-introduces-legislation-to-ban-conversion-therapy-practices-in-canada.html)

<sup>3</sup> [theinterim.com/issues/marriage-family/surrey-school-board-vindicated-on-gay-books/](https://theinterim.com/issues/marriage-family/surrey-school-board-vindicated-on-gay-books/)

<sup>4</sup> [youtu.be/9NxOKFDUAXY](https://youtu.be/9NxOKFDUAXY)

<sup>5</sup> [www.pafe.ca](http://www.pafe.ca)

<sup>6</sup> [christiansthatcare.net](http://christiansthatcare.net)

<sup>7</sup> [www.chp.ca](http://www.chp.ca)

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