

Candidate for Ward 11 TDSB Trustee

Andrew Waters

Website: andrewwaters.ca

Email: candidate@andrewwaters.ca

Phone: 437-717-1284



1. What makes you qualified to be a Trustee in the TDSB?

I am a fighter. The TDSB is a \$3.6 billion public institution, Trustees must be prepared to advocate strongly to effect the necessary change to reverse the decline of the TDSB and must confront other Trustees. The culture of a near majority of the Trustees as demonstrated with one Trustee saying that trustees are no longer caretakers of education, but rather in an unenviable position of "managing decline."

I am the only candidate who has been actively confronting Trustees and senior TDSB staff for the past 5 years as member of the [Parent Involvement Advisory Committee](#) (PIAC) of the TDSB, including two years as Co-chair. I am also a member of the [French Student Achievement Community Advisory Committee](#) of the TDSB. I have advocated forcefully to support parent engagement and school councils' role in holding schools and the TDSB accountable to improve student achievement and wellbeing. Working with other parents and caregivers I have had many successes. Recent examples include passing recommendations at the most recent [PIAC meeting](#) that will go to the Board and Director of Education for consideration:

- Allowing parents who have passed the Vulnerable Sector Check, and have the appropriate coaching training, to coach school teams without a teacher when no teacher volunteers to coach a team. Board policy should not limit students' ability to participate in sports when there is no teacher available to coach and there are parent volunteers willing to do so.
- Demonstrated to TDSB staff that LunchBox, a module of SchoolCashOnline, is charging a 35% markup on pizza slices when compared to ordering through SchoolCashOnline and having a parent call in the order to Pizza Pizza. This reduces fundraising monies earned and takes money directly out of parent's pockets. The impact if 50% of school use LunchBox in the TDSB would be over \$1 million taken from families.

I am a life long dedicated public servant for Toronto, Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA), qualified teacher, and former TDSB staff (working as a swimming instructor for 3 years while I attended university. This included Allenby Junior Public School at Avenue Rd & Eglinton Ave W).

As an experienced manager I have held roles in many areas including operations, policy, finance, and strategic planning that support Parks & Recreation, Housing, and Customer Experience (311).

I have a passion for learning. I understand the challenges that many students face as I am dyslexic. With the proper support, I was able to accomplish my goals throughout my educational journey. My academic achievements include CPA, Ontario Certified Teacher (OCT), Master of Public Policy Administration & Law, Bachelor of Education, and Bachelor of Commerce.

My life and career reflect a dedication to community involvement, parent engagement in education, public service excellence, and financial management.

2. What is your connection to Don Valley West?

I do not live in the Don Valley West Ward. I have two children in elementary school in the TDSB. I have many friends and family who reside in Don Valley West and whose children attend TDSB schools in the community. Through my work with PIAC, I have supported many families and school councils in the Ward by advocating for improvements to learning and environments at their schools. I have organized the annual [PIAC Parent Engagement Conference](#) for the past 5 years where parents and school council members come to learn about how to be effective advocates for their children's learning and school council's ability to effect needed change and provide accountability.

3. What do you see as the most important role of a school trustee?

Trustees have three roles:

- 1) **Advocating for individual students** within their Ward to ensure they are receiving the supports they need for their wellbeing and to achieve their potential. To help families navigate the overly bureaucratic system that is the TDSB for their child's individual needs. With my five years on school council and PIAC I have developed an expertise on navigating the TDSB and getting results.
- 2) **Policy making for the TDSB.** Trustees are responsible for setting policy to ensure the wellbeing and success for all students. Again, my work with PIAC has made me very familiar with current TDSB policies and where the Board should focus to achieve effective changes to drive achievement. Policy making includes developing a budget each year. As a CPA, service delivery, financial planning, finance and fiscal management are my livelihood, and I would bring that expertise and experience to bear.
- 3) **Accountability.** Trustee as elected officials must be accountable to TDSB families and the public. Trustees must hold accountable the Director of Education and TDSB staff through monitoring of performance against the policies, budget

and targets set by the Board. Trustees must ask tough questions and be prepared to make staff uncomfortable to effect the necessary change and drive performance.

4. What issues do you think need to be addressed most urgently?

Before discussing the most urgent issues, I would like to share context of the dire circumstances the TDSB is in. The TDSB has lost nearly 30,000 students (13%) since 2001, where the City of Toronto's population has increased, and other school boards have seen increased enrolment. Parents are choosing to have their children attend schools in Toronto that are not part of the TDSB. Trustees must take action to restore the trust of students and parents, to reverse the trend in declining enrolment. To that end, I am part of PaRents Engaging for Student Success (PRESS) and my priorities are:

1. **PRESS for Excellence.** Academic excellence needs to be the priority of the TDSB. TDSB and TDSB staff need to focus on policies, activities and initiatives that support students striving for achievement.
2. **PRESS for Transparency.** The TDSB is an opaque bureaucracy that intentionally misleads its parents and the public. As highlighted most recently in the Ontario Auditor General's Report titled [Performance Audit TDSB: Safety, Financial Management and Capital](#) released in December 2024, the TDSB is failing students and families related to:
 - a. School Safety
 - b. Financial Management
 - c. Capital (revitalizing schools)
 - d. Performance Measurement and Public Reporting

For change to be possible Trustees need to acknowledge issues at the TDSB, be transparent and fearless to demand staff deliver what is needed for students and the system.

3. **PRESS for Responsiveness.** From my own experience being dyslexic, I struggled in elementary school, and it was not until I received the appropriate supports that I excelled. Special education needs to be a priority of the TDSB. But responsiveness goes beyond special education. Trustees must champion a culture where every teacher and TDSB staff are focused on being responsive to the needs of each student and family and be timely in delivering the necessary service.
4. **PRESS for Accountability.** Excellence goes beyond the classroom and Trustees must create a performance of excellence in all departments of the

TDSB. Student wellbeing and achievement can only be achieved if Trustees set measurable goals and targets and then hold the Director of Education and TDSB staff accountable to achieve those results.

5. If elected, how much time are you prepared to dedicate to this position? How do you anticipate spending this time?

Through my work with PIAC I have connected frequently with Trustees, and I understand from them that it is a 30 plus hours per week commitment to be successful. I am passionate about this work. My current volunteer commitments between school council, PIAC, FSACAC, and other volunteer work I do is a similar time commitment. If I became a Trustee, I am statutory not allowed to be a parent member of a school council, PIAC or FSACAC. I would refocus my time volunteering and advocating to performing the duties of Trustee and advocating for the students and parents of Don Valley West.

As a member of a school council and PIAC I see the profound value of school councils and commit to attending one school council per school in Don Valley West per school year to ensure I am hearing from and supporting each school community.

Further, I commit to responding within two business days to any inquiry.

6. Are you affiliated with a political party?

No.

7. Do you have any endorsements?

I am not seeking endorsements.