

Aurora Votes 2018: Catholic Trustee candidate Ronco wants Board to go 'back to basics'?



By Brock Weir

Laura Ronco wants the York Catholic District School Board to 'get back to basics.'

The Stouffville-based mom of three is seeking to be Aurora, King and Whitchurch-Stouffville's representative on the York Catholic District School Board in the October 22 Municipal Election with a pledge to be a 'voice for the parents.'

'I think we need to better understand what the actual role of the trustee is and that it is not all about me and what I can do and what I am capable of; I really am the voice of the parents in the communities,' she says. 'I am very aware of what the needs are in some of the schools I stand in the schoolyards on the daily and I hear the continuous conversations of parents around me of what is needed. One of the biggest ones right now and the latest talks is the air conditioning required in portables and in the schools. Our schools are old. One in particular that comes to mind is the one in Stouffville. It is over 50 years old. Climate has changed in the last 50 years. We're no longer getting a hot summer day on the last day of school. We're looking at two months prior. It is difficult for these kids and teachers to sit in these a 40 degree classroom and be able to focus and learn and teach. I think that is fair enough to say across York Region.'

At the end of the day, however, Ms. Ronco says she feels the York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB) is losing 'the back to basics feel of everything.' Some schools in the one area, she says, have great extra curricular programs while a similar school in the next town has limited options for their students.

'I find that can't be,' she says. 'Funds have to be allocated appropriately to each school. Every student in every area has to have the same and fair extra curricular activities. Not even extra curricular, but just the basic curriculum activities.'

Another area she says she would like the YCDSB to get back to basics is restoring in-school chaplaincy programs. Faith, she says, is a 'big part' of the YCDSB community and shouldn't be the 'first thing' that is looked at when the Board deals with a budget crunch.

'That should be the last thing we look at, to eliminate or make it more difficult for children to have access to our faith,' she says. 'As a cradle Catholic, I can tell you I missed out on the catechism of my own faith because it wasn't in the curriculum and I would like to see that brought back. I don't want to see us only learn it as adult, it should be in our everyday life from Grade 1 and up, from JK and up, along pathways in guidance.'

'I don't think it is fair to say that they have moved away from the faith. I don't think it is implemented as strongly as it should be. We send our children to Catholic school for a reason, or our children choose to go to a Catholic School for a reason and I think we need to home in on that. I think we need to focus on the programs that are available to our Catholic schools and bring them in, whether it is trips, whether it is speakers, making sure that their curriculum is meeting all the needs of the students in that faith.'

Ms. Ronco adds that she would like to see an increased emphasis on in-school guidance programs.

'Guidance' is not just there to change courses and change classes,' she says. 'They are there to guide our children for

post-secondary school. It is happening much quicker than it was a few years ago when we still had OAC for kids to have that year to figure out what they really wanted to do. That year is gone and these kids now need a better pathway and assistance, and they can't have that, and it is no fault to the teachers if the teachers aren't there to do it. We need to put them back in that role and we need to have enough of them to meet the needs of each school.?