

Board chair calls on province to 'create a better bargaining process' after being returned

Peel District School Board trustees acclaimed Janet McDougald, trustee for Mississauga Wards 1 and 7, as chair at their annual meeting last Tuesday.

McDougald has been a trustee for 27 years, has served as chair for 18 years and was previously vice-chair for three years. Suzanne Nurse, trustee for Brampton Wards 2 and 6, was acclaimed as vice-chair. Nurse is starting her 10th year in public office.

In her inaugural address, McDougald detailed some of the challenges the board, schools and staff faced in the past year, including working with the community to build a better understanding of the revised Health and Physical Education curriculum. She also addressed how trustees worked together with staff and schools during strike and work-to-rule action in elementary and secondary schools.

'This has been a year in which we were tested,' McDougald said in her remarks. 'The provincial labour situation not only put pressure on us, but also on the relationships within our schools and centres. It was ' and remains for some groups ' an unfairly long, complicated and frankly, fractious process.'

'As a board we stood together,' she added. 'We learned to work together in a time of constant intense pressure. How? By focusing on our positive relationships, by mirroring our values. Our values ' as it says in our mission ' are the foundation of our genuine relationships. To see them in action, we need to look no further than our schools. There is no sugar coating what we have gone through as a system.'

McDougald that throughout the troubles, the schools stayed focused on learning, and keeping the facilities open and safe.'''

'I don't want us to underestimate how difficult it was for our staff to keep that happening ' to stay positive ' to keep focused on students,''' she declared.

McDougald also commented on the need to learn from those struggles.

'And while we still have a few outstanding issues, provincially and locally, this board will now begin to ask all the partners in the process to review, and, more importantly, revise the bargaining structure,' she said.

'It simply does not work,' she stressed. 'Not for boards. Not for federations. Not for staff. And most importantly, not for our students. The government must create a better bargaining process.'