

Trustee Candidate: Brenda MacDonald

* Candidate profiles are published as submitted.

Who are you, and why are you running to be a trustee in Red Deer Catholic?	I have a deep love of children and a lifelong passion for education, with 38 years of experience as a teacher, superintendent, and leader in both Catholic and public education. Throughout my career, I have kept students at the center of every decision and worked closely with boards, teachers, staff, and families to create supportive, faith-filled learning environments built on trust and respect. Married for 41 years, I’m a proud parent of two who thrived in Catholic schools—and now, my granddaughter begins her journey in this faith-filled system. In our family, we strive to live with kindness, compassion, and courage—guided by faith and a commitment to care for one another and our community. This commitment extends to our parish life, where we have served as Eucharistic Ministers, participated on Parish Council, and been active members of the Union of Catholic Apostolate (UAC) at St. Mary’s Parish. These experiences have deepened my commitment to Catholic education and to schools where every child is seen, known, and loved. I understand the role of the Board is one of governance, and I want to build a trust-filled Catholic community that works in unison to create the best Catholic school division for the students we serve. I believe Catholic education is a blessing and must be protected and strengthened for future generations. As a trustee, I will be a strong advocate for improving classroom learning conditions, support mental health and wellness initiatives, and ensure every dollar is used wisely to benefit students. I will listen to parents, parish, and community voices, build strong partnerships, and promote safe, caring, and inclusive schools where every child is known and loved. My willingness to serve is grounded in my commitment to building trust with the community and ensuring that together we provide the very best education for our children.
How should Catholic school trustees balance their responsibility to uphold and witness to the Catholic faith with their duty to represent a diverse community that may include people of other faiths or no faith at all?	Catholic schools are built on the Gospel message, and that is what makes them so special. At the same time, just as Christ welcomed everyone, our schools welcome families from many faith traditions — and even those with no faith at all — and invite them to experience the love of Christ. Catholic schools are often the first place where students and families see the hands of Christ at work. I was blessed to be raised by a loving Catholic adoptive family, surrounded by Catholic values and a deep love for others. Even though I didn’t complete all the sacraments as a child, I witnessed the strength of faith lived out in everyday life, and it shaped who I am. As trustees, we have to do two things at once — protect and strengthen our Catholic identity, and make sure every family feels respected and included. I believe the way to do that is by leading with conviction and compassion: keeping prayer, liturgy, and faith formation at the heart of our schools, while listening to parents, staff, and students so that everyone feels they belong. Most importantly, our actions — how we treat people, how we serve, how we lead — should be our greatest testament to our Catholic values, even more than our words. My own family has experienced the power of this welcome. When my son attended a Catholic school, he was so moved by Christ’s presence that our whole family chose to formally join the Catholic faith. The school and parish community embraced us, and it truly felt like coming home. That’s the kind of environment I want to help preserve — one where faith is lived out in joyful and invitational ways. Respecting all faiths — and even those with no faith — allows us to live the Gospel call to love our neighbor. As Mark 12:31 says, “Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.” Trustees must be both faithful stewards and bridge-builders, helping ensure every child is known, supported, and encouraged to grow in both faith and learning.
Given limited resources and competing priorities, how should Catholic trustees decide between funding faith formation programs (e.g., chaplaincy, retreats, sacramental preparation) and other pressing needs such as classroom	As Catholic trustees, our budget decisions reflect what we value most. We are called to be careful stewards of public funds, guided by the School Act, Alberta Education requirements, and our responsibility to form students both academically and spiritually. Investing in chaplaincy, retreats, and sacramental preparation is vital to ensure students encounter Christ and grow as disciples. Faith formation is at the

supports, technology, or staffing?	heart of Catholic education and is what makes us distinct from other publicly funded school systems. We have outstanding teachers and staff who give their all to ensure students receive a quality education. We cannot be complacent about their commitment — we must support their efforts by investing properly in classroom supports, technology, and staffing. These investments ensure Red Deer Catholic continues to achieve excellent results on provincial achievement and diploma exams. This is truly a balancing act—listening to parents, staff, parish partners, and students while aligning our budget to meet both spiritual and educational needs. We must also be transparent and data-informed in how we allocate resources, ensuring accountability to our community. Our actions must be a testament to our Catholic values, ensuring we are distinctively Catholic while equipping every student for future success.
What do you see as the biggest challenge to the long-term sustainability of Catholic education in Alberta? What role should trustees play in ensuring Catholic schools remain distinct, valued, and viable within a pluralistic society?	One of the biggest challenges facing Catholic education in Alberta is the growing number of choices available to parents within our publicly funded system—public, charter, and alternative programs—combined with limited funding that must now be shared across more school districts. Catholic schools must work harder to demonstrate their value and remain the school of choice for families. At the same time, funding pressures mean we must be good stewards of every dollar, ensuring that resources are used effectively to support faith formation, classroom instruction, and student well-being. We’ve seen what can happen when Catholic education loses its distinctiveness. In Newfoundland and Labrador, Catholic schools were once fully funded just like ours. When a vote was held to remove denominational education, Catholic schools lost public funding and became part of a single, secular system. It was a significant loss—not just of buildings, but of faith identity and a tradition that had shaped generations of students. Alberta still has this gift, but we cannot take it for granted. This is where trustees play a critical role. Trustees must: Protect Catholic identity by supporting chaplaincy programs, retreats, sacramental preparation, and faith-permeated curriculum so that students have real encounters with Christ. Advocate for fair and adequate funding while making wise, faith-aligned decisions that balance faith formation with classroom supports, technology, and staffing. Promote Catholic education to parents and the wider community, helping them understand why our schools are worth choosing. Listen to families, staff, and parishes so decisions reflect the needs of the community and the mission of Catholic education. Model Gospel values in all we do, letting our actions—not just our words—be a testament to what Catholic education stands for. When we do this well, we keep Catholic education strong, distinct, and valued—ensuring that it remains a vibrant, faith-filled choice for children and grandchildren for years to come.
Do you support public education in Alberta? What is the role of private education and/or charter schools in Alberta?	Public education has been foundational in the development of this province, and publicly funded Catholic schools are a vital part of that system. They offer families the choice of a faith-based education that nurtures the whole child — academically, socially, and spiritually. Since Alberta became a province in 1905, the right to publicly funded Catholic education has been protected under the Constitution. This history reflects our province’s commitment to parental choice, diversity, and respect for faith-based education as part of a strong, pluralistic society. All schools — public, Catholic, charter, and private — have their place and serve families in different ways. My concern is that when funding dollars are stretched thin, it becomes harder for public and Catholic schools to maintain high-quality programs, supports, and faith formation for students.

	As a trustee, I would work to ensure that Catholic education remains distinct and valued within this landscape of choice, while collaborating with other sectors to advocate for fair and sustainable funding. Strong Catholic schools benefit not only Catholic families but the entire community, helping form compassionate, engaged citizens who contribute to a better Alberta for everyone.
As an RDCRS Trustee, how would you advocate for improvements to classroom learning conditions in light of current per-student funding levels? In your response, please also address the biggest challenges facing publicly funded Catholic education today, how these issues should be addressed, and the role of the Board in resolving them.	Having worked closely with a public school board as Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent, I know how important the Board of Trustees is in advocating for public education. Superintendents have their circle of influence, and trustees have theirs — at a different level — as the elected voice of their constituents. As an RDCRS Trustee, I would be a strong advocate to the provincial government to increase per-student funding — which is currently below most other provinces — and to earmark dollars for additional supports such as educational assistants, mental health programming, and classroom resources. Working collaboratively with organizations like the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) and the Alberta Catholic School Trustees’ Association (ACSTA) would amplify our voice and ensure the needs of Catholic students are heard at the provincial level. When funding is predictable and targeted, schools can plan effectively, keep class sizes manageable, and ensure students have the help they need to succeed. When we invest in these supports, we create the conditions where students can thrive academically, socially, and spiritually. Supporting teacher well-being is also essential, which means advocating for professional collaboration time, access to mental health resources, and fair workloads so teachers can stay in the profession they love. Our teachers go above and beyond every day to meet the needs of their students, often at personal cost. Trustees must do everything we can to support and retain these dedicated professionals by providing them with the tools, training, and resources they need to be successful. In some classrooms, teachers may be working with nearly 30 students — including English language learners, children with diagnosed learning needs, and those requiring extra behavioral or academic support — all at the same time. Managing this level of diversity is an incredible task, and without enough help, students can miss out on the one-on-one attention they need while teachers face exhaustion and burnout. This is why it’s so important to invest in additional staff, resources, and flexible spaces to support both students and teachers. Catholic education faces real challenges right now: limited and competing funding, growing mental health needs, teacher shortages, increasingly complex classrooms, and the constant need to show why Catholic schools matter in Alberta. The way forward is to be careful stewards of our resources while also investing in faith formation, excellent teaching, and inclusive, welcoming schools where every child feels seen, supported, and loved. Building strong home–school–parish partnerships ensures that students are supported in every aspect of their growth. The Board’s job is to set clear priorities, advocate with the province for fair and predictable funding, and make sure every decision reflects both faith and what’s best for students. Trustees must listen deeply to parents, staff, and students so we can build schools where kids are excited to learn and teachers are proud to teach. Finally, we have a moral responsibility to build trust within our community so we can move forward with unity and purpose. Senior administration, principals, teachers, support staff, bus drivers, parents, and the wider community must be united by trust to achieve the best outcomes for our students. As Stephen M.R. Covey reminds us in <i>The Speed of Trust</i>, “Trust is the one thing that changes everything.”
As an RDCRS Trustee, how would you balance the perspectives provided by Senior Administration with other important viewpoints (e.g., teachers, parents, and community members) in your decision-making? In addition, how would you build relationships and work collaboratively with the Alberta Teachers’ Association at both the Local and Provincial levels?	I believe great decisions begin with listening — really listening — to the people we serve. I would also begin all things in prayer, inviting God’s guidance before we act. While Senior Administration provides the expertise and data we need as a Board, I would also seek out the voices of teachers, educational assistants, parents, and students. I would make time to visit schools, talk with staff, and connect with parent councils so that when I sit at the Board table, I am bringing the lived experiences of our community into the conversation. As an Indigenous teaching reminds us, we were given two ears and one mouth so we can listen twice as much as we speak — wisdom I would follow in every decision. Collaboration with the Alberta Teachers’ Association is an opportunity, not an obligation. Locally, the Board would seek regular dialogue with ATA representatives to understand concerns, celebrate successes, and address challenges early. Provincially, the Board would build relationships by engaging with ATA updates, attending conferences, and joining ASBA/ACSTA advocacy efforts on issues like curriculum, teacher shortages, and funding. I also recognize the vital contributions of CUPE members and other employee groups — including educational assistants, bus drivers, librarians, secretaries, and custodians — who help create safe, caring, and effective schools. I would support regular communication with these groups and advocate

	for the resources and respect they need to serve students well. Decisions must be made collaboratively as a Board and clearly communicated to the community. The Board would share both the process and the rationale for each decision, reflecting Catholic values and focusing on what is best for children. By combining prayer, evidence, and empathy, we can create classrooms where students thrive, staff feel supported, and every child is known by name and loved for who they are.
Why should voters pick you in addition to the other qualified candidates?	I bring 38 years of proven experience in education, including seven years working closely and successfully with a school board. I am a people person and a good listener who always keeps children at the center of my decision-making. I have deep respect for teachers and staff, knowing they are the heart of a successful school. As a parent and now a grandparent, I know firsthand how important safe, faith-filled schools are to families. I am well-versed in the School Act, Alberta Education priorities, and budgets, and I understand that the role of a trustee is one of governance — setting the vision, policies, and priorities that guide the division while holding the system accountable for results. My unique combination of classroom, leadership, and governance experience allows me to bridge the gap between policy and practice, ensuring decisions truly work for students and staff. Catholic education is both a blessing and a responsibility — one I will work hard to protect and strengthen for future generations. I am committed to building strong school–parish–community partnerships and ensuring every student is seen, known, and loved.
Are there any other comments / ideas / thoughts that you want to share?	Thank you for the opportunity to share a few final thoughts. These points reflect who I am and what I bring to the role of Trustee: Experienced & knowledgeable – 38 years in education, including leadership roles; understand governance, budgets, and the Education Act. Student-focused – Every decision starts with what’s best for children’s learning and well-being. Faith-centered leader – Guided by Catholic values, committed to protecting the gift of Catholic education. Collaborative & respectful – Build strong relationships with staff, ATA, CUPE, bus drivers, parents, and community partners. Committed to excellence – Stewardship of resources, focus on student achievement, and safe, inclusive schools. Advocate for classrooms – Champion supports for teachers, manageable class complexity, and mental health resources. Transparent & approachable – Open communication, listening sessions, and accessible at Brendamactrustee@gmail.com Ready to serve – I would be honored to earn your support and sincerely appreciate your vote.