

2018 Trustee/Municipal Election Humanist Survey

The [Central Ontario Humanists](#) asked all local school board trustee candidates, running in all 4 local school boards, as well as City of Barrie municipal candidates to fill out a survey. Humanists care deeply about transparency, religious neutrality and access to education. Our goal was to ascertain to what extent each candidate agrees with fundamental Humanist values of freedom of conscience and the aim of the full development of all people. We are pleased to present the results. The [full responses are listed on our website](#).

Results on Religious Freedom

Humanists believe that our civic institutions should not promote or hinder the religious beliefs or freedom of conscience of the residents of Ontario. Happily, the majority of city council respondents agreed that prayer should not be an official part of city council meetings. Currently, no prayer is on the agenda at city hall, and those who wish to pray may do so before, after, or quietly during a council meeting.

Almost 17% of council candidates said that council could open with a prayer if council chooses. This goes against Canadian law. The courts have found that opening council meetings with prayers violates the neutrality of government. Similarly, 10% of school board trustees said board meetings could open with prayer. This is a drop since our survey from the last election. Though no Catholic trustees responded this year. This likely deflated that number.

We were pleased to see that all trustees supported the right of students to form clubs without political interference. Though again, no Catholic school board trustees responded. In our last survey they raised opposition to groups that may contradicted the private beliefs of the trustee or Catholic teachings.

Since 1986, Catholic high schools have admitted non-Catholic students. More than half of Ontario's Catholic school boards admit non-Catholic elementary students. Mr. Conroy explained "our group has some atheist and agnostic members who have children going to Catholic elementary schools. And that's not counting students who grow to leave the faith of their parents. We support their freedom of conscience, as well."

We believe that it is unconscionable to use the government and schools to violate the conscience of students. This freedom extends to students of Catholic parents or students of non-Catholic parents who attend Catholic schools. Religion should not be forced upon them. "Some people believe that Catholic schools are funded by local taxes," said Mr. Conroy. "But that hasn't been true since the 80s. Catholic schools are funded per student by the province. My tax

dollars are being used to indoctrinate kids. Kids are not their parents property, but wards. We don't think children should be indoctrinated against their will."

Some public school board trustees thought forcing the children to partake in Catholic rituals was okay and expected. Mr. Conroy said, "luckily, those people have no say in Catholic schools." But since no Catholic trustee candidates responded to the survey, we don't know their leanings.

Results on Accurate Teachings

There is a lot of tension over teaching children. We were very interested in if the trustees valued teaching accurate, expert based curriculum. Our questions dealt with teachers who refuse to teach accurate information: for example, teachers who deny evolution, deny climate change or oppose comprehensive sex education. In our view, a teacher who is not teaching to a well-made curriculum because of their private political or religious beliefs is a determinant, and all trustees should oppose this.

On the other hand, the Ford Government has politically interfered with the age-appropriate health education curriculum, which was devised by experts and in consultation with parents across the province. We believe trustees should support, in any way they can, teachers who include content from the updated sex-ed curriculum the Ford government threw out.

Overwhelmingly, most candidates supported expertise in decision-making over playing politics with education. They said they supported teaching accurate information.

About COHA and Humanism

The Central Ontario Humanists are a social and educational not-for-profit that meets in the Barrie area. Its members are made up of people who are non-religious, and interested in science and human rights.

The Central Ontario Humanists "are concerned for the well-being of all, are committed to diversity, and respect those of differing yet humane views. We work to uphold the equal enjoyment of human rights and civil liberties" for all. Humanism aims for the full development of all people. Our schools are custodians of those among us who are still developing, and so we believe the vote for school board trustee is as important as city councilor or mayor.

The president of the Central Ontario Humanists, Mr. Conroy, said "we would like to thank all candidates who submitted their answers. We will not endorse

any particular candidate, and it is up to all voters to decide what issues and values matter most to them.”

Methodology

On Friday, October 5th we sent links out to all the email contacts we could find using the Ontario School Trustees website as well as the City of Barrie’s candidate listing page. Some candidates were unreachable, and some did not respond.

Each question included background information and a multiple choice option. Some candidates choose to use the ‘other’ option to make a more complete response.

Links

Press Release (this document)

- [View on website](#)
- [PDF](#)
- [Word](#)
- [Google Drive](#)

Full Responses

- [View on website](#)
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- [Word](#)
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Full Questions

- [PDF](#)
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2014 Trustee Survey

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