

Chair's Inaugural Address: December 10, 2020

Good evening fellow trustees, members of senior administration, staff and guests. Once again, I am honoured to continue as your Board Chair.

This year has been an especially difficult and trying one as a result of COVID-19 and its ongoing influence and impact on our day-to-day lives. Hopefully, the soon-to-be delivered vaccinations will rid us of this terrible virus.

I am so pleased with the ongoing efforts of our more than 2,500 employees. They do their best every day to serve our students in all of our communities and provide education that Trustees can rightfully be proud of.

I would like to personally thank each of our superintendents who worked long and tirelessly to meet the many changes required in our delivery of education this year – both in class and virtually. Your ability to provide our students and families with viable options for learning during the pandemic has been greatly appreciated by all Trustees.

I would also like to thank retired Director of Education, Brenda Blancher, for her wonderful leadership during the past five years. Trustees look forward to the leadership of our current Director, JoAnna Roberto, as our Board will have to continue to navigate learning during a pandemic. Our Grand Erie Multi-Year Plan will be updated or changed in 2021. With support and input from Trustees, senior staff, employees and community members, it is my expectation that this new Multi-Year Plan will be developed and implemented by the end of 2021. This will be a large undertaking, and the leadership of Director Roberto in this activity will be critical.

I look forward to working closely with Trustees Susan Gibson and Rita Collver in the year ahead as they take on the roles of Vice-Chair of the Board and Committee of the Whole Chair, respectively. Trustee Tom Waldschmidt, who we welcomed back this month, will be a worthy Committee of the Whole Vice-Chair. I'm pleased that we once again will have two experienced former Board Chairs as OPSBA Voting Delegates in Trustees Carol Ann Sloat and Don Werden.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize Superintendent Linda De Vos, who will be retiring shortly. Linda has worked diligently and tirelessly as a Family of Schools Superintendent and a leader in our Elementary Curriculum and Program areas. All the best to you in retirement, Linda!

This year, it was very gratifying to once again pass a balanced budget, despite the various challenges brought on by COVID-19. This fall, Grand Erie received approval and funding for a new elementary school to be built in the rapidly growing area of West Brant. We're excited to get this project underway in 2021 as we work with our partners at the City of Brantford.

Our Multi-Year Plan, [*Success for Every Student*](#), summarizes what we stand for and value in Grand Erie. By focusing on students and staff in a culture of high expectations, we will continue to achieve success.

As Trustees, we must continue to guide our school board in a time of uncertainty. We must also realize that we are responsible for keeping a watchful eye on our education system to make sure it serves the needs of all of our students.

Finally, on behalf of all trustees, I'd like to thank every Grand Erie staff member for their continued support of our students in so many ways. While this Christmas and holiday break will be much different than those in the past, I hope each of you has time to rest and reflect on the year that was.

I wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. May there be better days ahead for all of us in 2021!

Thank you.

Greg Anderson
Chair