

March 24, 2021

Delivered via electronic mail to: ajjohnst@hwdsb.on.ca

At a special Board Meeting held Thursday, March 4, 2021, the Hamilton-Wentworth District School

Board determined that Trustee Alex Johnstone breached multiple sections of the Trustee Code of Conduct. As one of the sanctions, the Board of Trustees agreed to issue a formal letter of Censure of the trustee, as an official reprimand for Trustee Johnstone, for engaging in conduct that included failing to act while chairing a board meeting and by preventing a motion from being tabled that do not uphold civil behaviour nor the integrity and dignity of the Office of Trustee.

Dear Trustee Johnstone,

This is a formal letter of censure regarding two breaches of the HWDSB Code of Conduct. This Board condemns your actions and inactions as outlined below.

According to the findings of the Board of Trustees, based on the results of the investigation carried out by the external investigator, Arlene Huggins, you have breached the following sections of the Trustee Code of Conduct:

- Maintaining the integrity and dignity of office, Clause 2: *Trustees, as elected officials of the Board, must uphold the dignity of the office and conduct themselves in a professional manner, especially when attending Board events, or while on Board property and shall at all times act with decorum and be respectful of other Trustees, staff, students and the public.*
- Civil Behaviour, Clause 7: *No Trustee shall engage in conduct during meetings of the Board or committees of the Board, and at all other times that would discredit or compromise the integrity of the Board.*
- Upholding decisions, Clause 16: *Trustees shall comply with the Board's policies, procedures, bylaws, and the Board's procedural bylaws.*

Trustees, as duly elected representatives of their communities, are held to a higher standard of behaviour. Trustees are expected to model the exemplary behaviour that we want to see in our students. Trustee Johnstone, you have failed in this regard by "failing to intervene" when "what ought to have been known to be racist and offensive comments were made" during a Board meeting, and by preventing a motion from being tabled at the June 22, 2020 Board meeting. These inactions and actions did not uphold the Board's Equity and Inclusion Policy and had the effect of compromising public confidence in the integrity of the Board.

Further, the investigator's report describes your actions as having "the effect of silencing" a Student Trustee Member of the Board. These findings are deeply disappointing and not in keeping with the values and high standards we expect from Trustees or the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board as a whole.

The Board of Trustees have established a commitment to learning, equity, engagement and innovation. One of our key priorities to guide our system is Positive Culture and Well-Being. The Board also shares our commitment

HWDSB

Dawn Danko
Chair of the Board
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
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to the principles of equity in the Equity and Inclusion Policy. Trustee Johnstone, you have acted in a manner that did not uphold these commitments and priorities.

The Board of Trustees takes violations of its Code of Conduct seriously and will act judiciously and with resolve to protect the integrity of this important elected office. We note that you have acknowledged impact of your actions through a public apology. We trust you will continue to take appropriate measures to restore relationships and correct offending behaviours through continued efforts and education. Our students, staff and community deserve no less.

Sincerely,



Dawn Danko, Chair
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board