

Policy II-37 Volunteers in Catholic Schools

Summary of Stakeholder Feedback

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Background

At the Regular Board Meeting held on September 12, 2023, Trustees reviewed amendments to Policy II-37 Volunteers in Catholic Schools.

The policy was released for stakeholder consultation on September 15, 2023. The online form remained open until 11:59 p.m. on Friday, October 6, 2023. This report summarizes the feedback received through the stakeholder consultation process.

Who Responded?

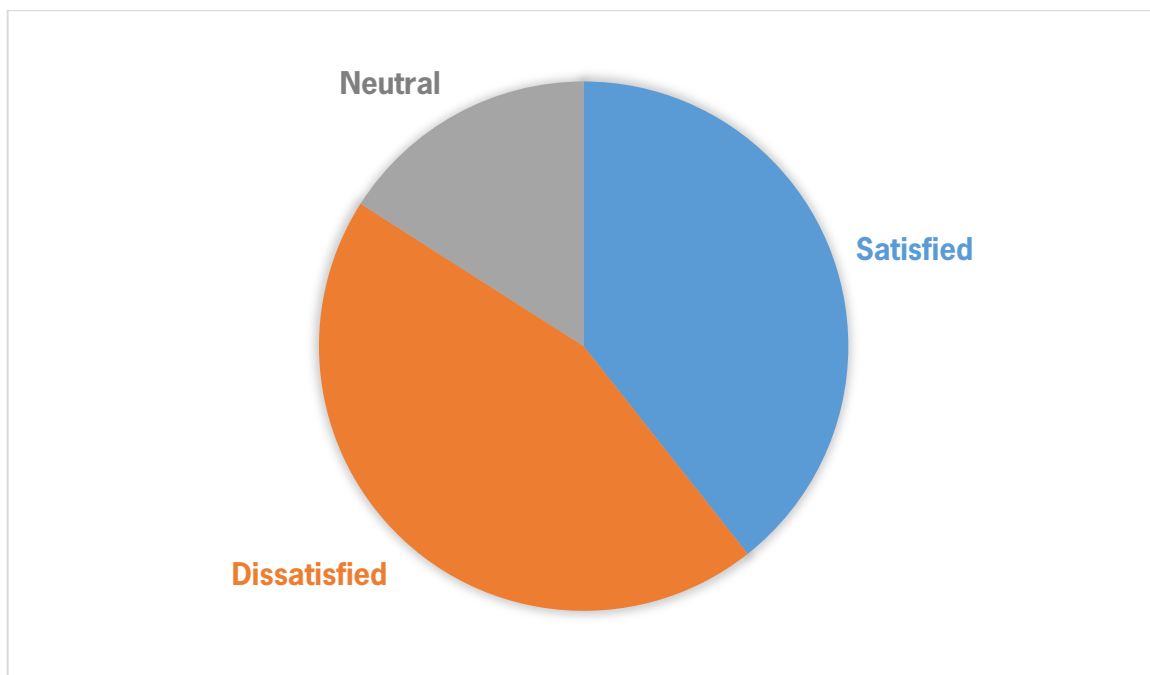
In total, 279 completed responses were submitted via the online form. One (1) response was submitted via email, for **a total of 280 responses**. The majority of respondents identified as HCDSB parents (75%, n = 210).

ROLE	COUNT
HCDSB Parent	210
HCDSB Staff	43
Member of HCDSB Community (ratepayer)	9
HCDSB Catholic School Council Chair (responding on behalf of CSC)	4
HCDSB Student	4
Parish Member (clergy, parishioner)	3
HCDSB CPIC	1
President of HCDSB Unionized Employee Group	1
Other	5

Level of Satisfaction with Content of Policy

Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the proposed changes to Policy II-45.

- **110** respondents indicated they are **satisfied** with the proposed policy changes.
- **44** respondents indicated they are **neutral** about the proposed policy changes.
- **126** respondents indicated they were **dissatisfied** with the proposed policy changes.



Comments Submitted

Respondents were invited to provide comments, questions or suggestions related to the policy changes. **171** responses were submitted and are listed below.

Comments have been redacted to remove identifiable information about an individual or school, and/or derogatory, inflammatory or disparaging statements about another individual.

Comments from Respondents Satisfied with the Changes

1. As a staff member on maternity leave, I would have appreciated being accepted as a volunteer at my child's school without having to provide a police check. As a staff member, that has already been acquired by the school board and is redundant.

Comments from Respondents Satisfied with the Changes

2. Teachers that want to volunteer for their child's school trips and activities etc should not be required to pay for a vulnerable sector screening since we already do that with our own boards annually in order to maintain employment. An OCT should not have to pay for a new screening every year in order to volunteer in their child's school.

Also, please ensure all schools are aware that the vulnerable sector screening from police is only once every 3 years, with a declaration in between. I'm not sure if this is new in this revised policy or not, but at our school we are told you need a new one every year in order to volunteer.

3. Should include a note that principals can delegate some of the responsibility for supervision, recruitment and training of volunteers. Policy should Reflect what actually happens in schools, focus on the real experience instead of a beaurocratic ideal. screening and selection should remain in the hands of the principal, and volunteers should be held To the highest standards. Keep the vulnerable sector check. In some volunteer areas, organizations have been doing away with that because it can be a barrier, but it is essential. Great schools Welcome volunteers in all areas and I think we need to see more of it.

4. Hello, I would just like to suggest that it might be helpful to note that if a parent volunteer is an active teacher or educator in another board, then provision of a copy of their Criminal Offence Declaration should suffice for vulnerable sector screening, as their current board is already responsible for ensuring that the professional is a safe person to be around students. Thanks for your consideration,

5. Just need clarity...

(1) How long is an official Vulnerable Sector Check valid for??? Does the potential Volunteer need to do one every year, or does the Declaration suffice for annual approval?

(2). For a parent that volunteers at their children's two different schools, it should be made clear that the Vulnerable Sector Check should list "HCDSB" INSTEAD OF THE NAME OF THE INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL (esp. In cases where the child may change schools mid year).

6. Vulnerable sector a must.

7. N/A

8. New policy, no. Requiring a new check every three years is a lot financially, when it's already difficult to get volunteers. HCDSB should reimburse those costs if it is going to require them.

Comments from Respondents Satisfied with the Changes

9. I believe it might be better if we could leave the students with volunteers 10-15min in case we need to be out of the classroom for few minutes.
10. This is an excellent change in order to protect the children and HCDSB resources. However, the wording about the findings from a vulnerable sector screening is not strong enough because this would just allow the director to allow criminals to volunteer.
11. The vulnerable check can be expensive. Parents who want to volunteer shouldn't be held back by the financial obligation of the police records check. Perhaps there could be a fund to assist parents who want to be involved, but cannot afford the check every 3 years?
12. Volunteer applicants who submit a Vulnerable Sector Check that lists any offences for which an official pardon has not been received will *NOT be eligible to volunteer in a HCDSB school.*
13. Volunteer groups working within the school should be screened multiple times throughout the duration of their assignment.
I believe teachers should bare the same. A status of an offender will appear once proven guilty, otherwise a person will not show a possible connection to an offence until then. This leaves the vulnerable sectors exposed to possible reoffence and the protection of our children should be first priority.
14. Volunteering is how I began in the education field and I encourage it.
15. Very well constructed policies , valuing the rights of staff and creating a room for growth .
16. Thank you to all the teachers and staff for all their hard work and keeping our schools safe.
17. The safety of our children and who they are around at school is crucial. This attention to detail is appreciated.
18. No

Comments from Respondents Satisfied with the Changes

19. I would suggest the following for non-Catholic volunteers:

Current: Each volunteer will model caring and cooperative relationships, promote Catholic values

Update: Each volunteer will model caring and cooperative relationships, promote values in alignment with the Catholic faith

20. Thank you for adjusting it to a vulnerable sectors check. I would encourage both a criminal and vulnerable sector check, as when requesting on the police website, you can obtain both together.

21. Schools should be aware of any offenses as it should be a safe space for all.

22. N/A

23. No.

24. Vulnerable sector check to be completed each 5 years and delivered to school + be dated within 120 days of submission to the Principal.

- School to request the candidates to submit references from the community.

25. My only concern is if the Halton Region charges a fee for obtaining the Vulnerable Sector Check, parents who want to volunteer will need to pay the fee several times.

26. n/a

27. No

28. Having a set retention term of 3 years for VSC is an appreciated addition. Having a mandatory update after 3 years will ensure accurate records are on file with the school.

29. No

Comments from Respondents Satisfied with the Changes

30. does a volunteer have to be at least 18 or over 18? The wording is conflicting. Also, i think the vulnerable check should be submitted to the principal within 30 days, not 120 days. And, that the checks should be every 1-2 years, not 3 years. Thank you.

31. None at this time.

32. No

33. No

34. This policy should also cover any board committee members who would have may or may not have access to students in HCDSB schools, offices or where there is an official event taking place (track and field events, cross country, awards ceremonies, etc)

35. Proposed changes are required. The VSC must be a requirement that is renewed on a periodic basis and a period of 3 year is reasonable. The attestation process should also be a required procedure.

36. Proposed changes are required. The VSC must be a requirement that is renewed on a periodic basis and a period of 3 year is reasonable. The attestation process should also be a required procedure.

Comments from Respondents Neutral about the Changes

1. I think parents should definitely be involved in schools. I don't think they should replace educators in running after school programs.
Also I think 18 is a little young to be running programs for a large group of kids.

2. Can you please clarify if the criminal record check has to be issued in the city you live in. For example I work as a paramedic in a different region and my children's school will not accept my criminal record check from my employer. Should it not be okay as long as issued in Ontario? If not, please consider updating and adding to the policy about must be issued in city that child attends school.

Comments from Respondents Neutral about the Changes

3. What are the standards that the director is to follow if offences are not pardoned? You have built in another layer for checking, but not provided any thresholds, guidance or rules for how this will be managed
4. Why did the policy go from renewing your vulnerable sector scan to every three years? Also why do we need a letter from the organization to get a volunteer background check done?
5. Principal responsibilities should indicate 'or principal delegate' so that the principal has the option of leveraging a staff member for certain tasks.
6. The policy outlines that should a volunteer have something on their record in which a pardon had not been given the decision would then fall to the board; will that be documented and available upon request (minus the individuals name)?
7. Suggestion- The Volunteer Declaration form and Policy should indicate that should the status of the volunteer change during the course of the school year -it is the responsibility of the volunteer to provide an updated VSS or cease volunteer services at the school. For example if a volunteer is found guilty of an offence after the dated declaration (in September) that person should cease volunteering until an updated VSS can be produced. This would depend on the nature of the offence and whether a VSS would be issued? Not sure.
8. If there are offences listed on the vulnerable sector screening what would be the reason to have the director review? Would it not just suggest that the volunteer is not a good fit?
9. My understanding is that criminal checks are no longer required? What checks are in place to ensure that the parent is being truthful?
10. If the volunteer has offences on their background check the application will be reviewed by the Director; will this be public knowledge and made available (names removed of course)?
11. If there are offences, there should be more of a wait period if no person: not a review from the director of education. Also would suggest 90days instead of 120days
12. I think having parents renew every 3 years can help them save costs on checks, and it can help can help us keep more volunteers. It can also help the police who are often busy. However, a lot can change in three years and this may create risks for students. I do like how schools still have the freedom to screen and review anyone with offenses on their record.
13. Hello, After discussion with other parents, we were wondering how this affects current volunteers who are in the school running daily events. Are we expected to get a vulnerable sector check? If so, when would this policy take place and how long would current

Comments from Respondents Neutral about the Changes

volunteers get to get the proper police clearance. Or is this more for teams/clubs volunteers (ie parents coaching a sport team or running a art club for example)

14. When the board is provided a VSC whether it be in elementary or secondary, that should ensure that it is sufficient for both schools (no requirement to provide an additional one from elementary to secondary if it is within the timeframe) Also every three years could mean a VSC needs to be provided in grade 9 then again in grade 12. This makes no sense. This gives the appearance that no thought has been given to the parents who volunteer their time and money to the schools. One would ask is this also required of the staff who actually work unsupervised with our children every day? I would also ask if trustees are required to provide a VSC. I seem to see them at schools regularly and understand they show up without invitation. If this is being asked of parents then the same should go for everyone who enters the schools. Lastly, trustees have no business in parents personal/ confidential business. Nor do they have the right to access our or our children's personal information. I want reassurance that we do not have trustees accessing our or our children's information unless authorization is given by the parent. I would also like to know if there was an issue with students and a volunteer that caused this to be changed? If so, should parents not be informed that the reason this is being reviewed within one year is because of an incident within our schools. Up until now, I understood principals carried out ensuring the students were not in any harmful situations and that there is minimal unsupervised events with students and volunteers.

15. Do you have processes in place to make sure parents will have enough notice about this policy change and to ensure that parents are made aware when their volunteer check is about to expire?

16. no, thanks

Comments from Respondents Dissatisfied with the Changes

1. Volunteer applicants who submit a Vulnerable Sector Check that lists any offences for which an official pardon has not been received will have their application reviewed by the Director of Education. - ANYONE with any offence should in no way be involved with our children. NO exception!!!!

2. Any volunteer applicant who has ever been convicted of any criminal offense should not be allowed to have their application considered. The section states that their application will go

Comments from Respondents Dissatisfied with the Changes

under review, and that they cannot have committed a criminal offense within 120 days of their application. This should be completely deleted I do not want anyone who has ever committed a criminal offense to be anywhere near my child, and if the board is going to allow this, then the board should be brought up on criminal charges as well for allowing criminals near our children

3. Using volunteers for roles determined by each school principal does not clearly define the type of engagement with students volunteers will have. This also feels like a way to use unpaid labour to do jobs that should otherwise be assigned to paid HCDSB staff. If this is an attempt to fill duties based on lack of government funding I am vehemently opposed to this proposal.

4. If any volunteers in the school have a charge they have not been pardoned from, they should not be allowed in our schools or working in our buildings.

5. If there is an offence in the VSC, automatically shouldn't be able considered to volunteer.

6. I'm sure [REDACTED] appreciates this!

7. If you provide a check in grade 8 parents should not be required to provide an additional check the following year to highschool. Or for example you provide one in grade 9, then have to fill out another for grade 12? Trustees have no business in parents personal matters and should not be privy to parent or student personal records unless they give permission. Do they have vulnerable sector checks? I have watched trustees enter schools without invitation and without supervision.

8. I don't understand why individuals who have a criminal offences on their record for which they have not pardoned are being submitted to the Director of Education for review. This policy does not make me feel confident that our children are being sufficiently protected. I am aware of the myriad of criminal offences and the range of seriousness; however, if someone wants to volunteer and has committed a minor crime they can apply for a pardon. I don't feel like a secret review by the Director to determine if someone with a criminal record can volunteer at a school with vulnerable children is an appropriate policy. Rather, in my opinion, a bright line rule that only individuals with no criminal record or pardoned offences can volunteer will give parents confidence in the volunteer program and checks out into place in terms of who helps care for our children outside of school staff.

9. If there are concerns with a vulnerable sector check that doesn't have a pardon, is an automatic no. Parents should be notified.

Comments from Respondents Dissatisfied with the Changes

10. It should not be reviewed by Director - if an offense is listed they should not be eligible to volunteer

11. The volunteer must produce a valid Catholic baptismal certificate. The volunteer must not have any pending provincial, federal or international criminal offences before a court of justice. The volunteer must disclose all active social media accounts for review of content that may contravene the safe guidelines or policies of HCDSB or be found offensive and harmful. The volunteer must not have any visible markings or symbols, tattoos or clothing that would be deemed to contravene the guidelines and or policies of HCDSB

12. If a volunteer has not received an official pardon for a criminal offence they should not be allowed anywhere near children.

13. If a vulnerable sector check comes back with a list of offences, it should disqualify the person from volunteering. Why the review by director of education?

14. Are we that desperate for volunteers?! Who decides what criminal record is approved or not? Will there be community consultation around this aspect of the process or will the Director of Education decided what is and isn't acceptable (using what standards or guidelines?!). You say you want to be transparent, if this is true, outline the entire process and factors taken into consideration so the community at large is fully informed.

15. I have trouble with the red clause about volunteers failing the vulnerable sector screening perhaps still being allowed in schools when reviewed by Director.

16. As an educator I disagree with school boards and their more frequent dependency on volunteers as I am aware and have seen first hand how volunteers are placed in situations where they are unqualified
Parents are not notified that unqualified volunteers are used as supply staff with some of our most vulnerable students, and they do not receive training especially in working with our most marginalized students. Perhaps creating educator rolls that support these needs would be a more consistent and long term resolution to the need for volunteers.

17. I see no reason to add this clause. If the vulnerable sector check is not clear of offences, the applicant should automatically be disqualified from volunteering.

18. There's no explanation as to why the change is needed. It is not appropriate.

19. Any person who has offenses under the Vulnerable Offenses Act, pardoned or not, should not be allowed to Volunteer with Children. Period. There should be no exceptions or no sway if they have been officially pardon or waiting for pardon.

Comments from Respondents Dissatisfied with the Changes

20. There is a pardon process for a reason and by dismissing this process and allowing the Director to make the decision, we in turn diminish this very important process. Individuals wanting to help with anyone under 18 years old should still be required to go through the pardon process and denied entry to the schools until proof can be provided of the pardon. We have no business speaking for the courts and dismissing their responsibility.

21. You are very vague about what a volunteer will be asked to do. I'm sure it's totally intentional. I'm sure volunteers will be asked to do a job of an employee and thereby take away from someones wages.

22. How do we know that our children are safe in the school if you allow people who did not receive pardon. Do we receive a transparency letter listing the potential volunteer list and guarantee that the children are safe?

23. What is the point of adding the following clause and creating a loophole in the system that might potentially harm children? This is not acceptable.

24. I like the idea of there being a need for the director of education to be involved when someone with a criminal record has received a pardon. However, I am hesitant about giving the director this power with what I would assumes a limited understanding of the criminal justice system. Could there be some further direction for the director, possibly an added addition of, "in consultation with district lawyers". That way the director of education, with a vast knowledge of the school and its needs would be able to consult with someone with a vast knowledge of the criminal justice system.

25. vulnerable sector check should be done more often than every 3 years.

26. Children are a vulnerable population. There is NO circumstance where a volunteer who is not pardoned of an offense should be volunteering (or considered for volunteering) in an elementary school.

27. should not be reviewed, should not be eligible for consideration or rejected

28. Any parent with an offence should NOT be allowed to volunteer.

29. I would imagine anyone with an offence on their vulnerable sector check would be automatically excluded, not reviewed by the director of education.

30. Unnecessary waste of time. Director has enough to do. No official pardon - don't volunteer. If one wants to they can get a pardon.

31. Before approving this type of change, I would require additional information about the type of training that the Director would receive in order to evaluate vulnerable sector checks. As

Comments from Respondents Dissatisfied with the Changes

a parent I want to understand: How would they be deemed qualified to make these decisions? What examples have been denied in the past that you feel justify the reason for this change? Thank you.

32. I see no reason to change the existing policy. As the school administrator, the decision regarding volunteer selection should remain with the principal. While tough, these rules exist for a reason and we are all subject to them. I don't want a convicted criminal, pardoned or otherwise anywhere near our kids. As for the Director of Education, I would think this person has better things to do than to invest time in the pleadings of convicted criminals to be volunteers at our Catholic Schools.

33. I DO NOT AGREE WITH THIS: Volunteer applicants who submit a Vulnerable Sector Check that lists any offences for which an official pardon has not been received will have their application reviewed by the Director of Education. Why is this being considered? AN OFFENCE IS AN OFFENCE DESPITE THE PERSON AND THEIR ROLE OR PAST ROLE IN THE BOARD.

34. Volunteers who have offences listed on their vulnerable sector check should NOT be permitted in schools. This should not be at the discretion of the Director of Education. This is a slippery slope and puts children at risk.

35. I could be totally wrong but I am assuming that if someone has an offence as part of the screening process that it's related to not being allowed to be with minors. If that's the case, I'm not sure why the Director of Education would get involved and allow someone to volunteer. But, if all offences are listed, which perhaps are really old and UNRELATED to anything that could negatively impact a minor, I'd be okay with that. I would need more information as to an example where the Director of Education would and would not allow the person to volunteer.

36. I do not believe that an application for an individual that has not received an official pardon should be considered for volunteering. Their applications should NOT be advanced to the Director for review. They should NOT be considered UNLESS the official pardon has been received.

37. If an application lists an offence for which a pardon has not be granted, it should simply be refused. The risk is to high to have the person supervising our kids.

38. allowing too many volunteers to be involved at so many different levels compromises the integrity and privacy of students in the schools. volunteers cannot replace the role of qualified teachers and i am not confident that the screening of said volunteers will be thorough enough. i am not comfortable with having volunteers so involved in my child's

Comments from Respondents Dissatisfied with the Changes

educational environment and this will also open the board to liability and potential future law suits.

39. I do not understand why the criminal record check is removed for what reason. It should be mandatory and major screening point to ensure protection from unnecessary exposure.

40. I have entrusted the HCDSB to have my children's best interest in mind. This board's decision on this will effect all children. These procedures were in place for a reason, and it's unfortunate, but that is one of the consequences of being convicted in a court of law. You are unable to do certain things, and one is volunteer with the vulnerable. I have been with this board with active children in it for 15 yrs and have another 8 yrs to go. I hope you do the right thing and think of the children at hand.

41. Every three years is too much. Perhaps every four or five years? Isn't that why the annual declaration is in place? Requiring it too often may deter parents from reapplying to volunteer, and we really do need our volunteers in our schools. And who pays for it? It's one thing to volunteer, it's another to have to pay over and over for the privilege.

Why does it have to be dated within 120 days? What if I got one six months ago to coach my kids sports team? Seems redundant if you're going to require it every few years. As long as it's within the 3/4/5 year timeframe as per above, and the annual declarations are completed, why make us do it again and pay the fee again? Will Halton Police accept frequent applications like that?

What is an "official" pardon? Is there another kind of pardon? Doesn't seem clear. If it gets reviewed by the Director, what are they using to decide if the application is approved or not? I think this needs to be made clear. Does it depend on the type of volunteer work or is it arbitrary? If someone gets denied the opportunity to volunteer at their kids school I think it needs to be a very serious reason eg. sex offenders/predators; DUI convicted persons not allowed to be a driver, etc. Is there an appeal process? I'm all for protecting our kids, but you have to consider the parent's rights too.

What about staff/teachers/trustees and any other members of the board? Are they subject to the same rules? Anyone who has contact with students in or outside of school should have the same standards applied to them.

This needs a lot more thought than what's being proposed here.

42. VSS required every 3 years is too little. It should be required yearly.

Comments from Respondents Dissatisfied with the Changes

43. Police checks need to remain as mandated reports to obtain. The proposed change does not provide the same level of comfort for the children's safety. Why this proposed change? I am very confused.

44. Most of the proposed changes are fine. But shouldn't someone who had offenses without an official pardon be automatically declined? Why is it at the discretion of the Director of Education?

45. Policy should be revised every year and criminal background check must be submitted annually (I mean updated every year) not every 3 years.

46. While the majority of parent volunteers conduct themselves in a kind, respectful and collaborative manner, there are unfortunately, it seems in growing numbers, a faction who do not. Perhaps a Code of Conduct that addresses volunteers specifically could be considered which speaks to inappropriate behaviour (bullying, abuse, harassment of staff and/or fellow community members) and can be referred to in additional bullet points?
A volunteer must be respectful of staff, students and other community members, etc OR...
A volunteer must conduct themselves in accordance with the Volunteer Code of Conduct. Those who do not comply will be asked to leave, etc..

47. Why would we consider a volunteer to work with children/ children environment when the applicant has not received a full pardon, at least?

48. As a staff member and parent within HCDSB this is scary!

49. Regarding the proposed changes to Policy II-37 Volunteers in Catholic Schools.

After discussing these proposed changes with many concerned parents we are left to assume that the proposed changes have absolutely nothing to do with making our schools safer, encouraging volunteerism or enhancing the school experience for teachers and/or students and have everything to do with someone who (due to their own poor decision making and actions) is unable to meet one of the few criteria for being a volunteer in a school – a clean police record check and VSC.

It is not unreasonable to ask that any volunteer our schools be conviction-free. It is a standard practice for volunteer organizations to subject prospective volunteers to background checks to assess suitability. Now the Board in its wisdom has determined that even this minimum level of volunteer due diligence is unnecessary.

How on earth does this make sense? How does this make our community safer? Is this the bar we set for ourselves?

Comments from Respondents Dissatisfied with the Changes

What is the messaging to our students and the wider community?

- If you don't like how the rules apply to you, then just get the rules changed?
- So long as you have friends in places of authority, you don't need to worry about the repercussions of your actions?

These proposed changes have the Director Education as the sole arbitrator of what is a "good" or a "bad" conviction where an offense is present that hasn't been pardoned. Not only does this scream of a severe lack of transparency, but is also rife for conflicts of interest, self-dealing and cronyism. In fact, these proposed changes already seem to reek of insider connections and favouritism.

Is the Director Education going to report to the community which unpardoned convictions were deemed "acceptable" by him in his sole discretion? Will he report on the criteria he used to assess which convictions he deems acceptable for access to our children and schools? I doubt he will welcome the scrutiny – he'll hide behind "confidentiality" or another similar convenient blanket.

With the issues facing our education system the fact that the Board has spent any time or energy on something like this is laughable. It is shenanigans like this that erode faith in the Board's leadership.

I have also been told that some have been trying to couch these proposed changes under the guise of Christian values, forgiveness and second chances. This is a bunch of malarkey, in my opinion. The timing of these changes being proposed speaks to the desire to accommodate the specific circumstances of certain individuals as opposed to any altruistic desires related to Christian values.

Given the gravity of these proposed changes, I believe the minutes of the September 12, 2023 meeting where these absurd proposals were put forth should be made easily and readily accessible so stakeholders can get a deeper understanding of who proposed them and why – and more importantly, why the Board was seemingly supportive of these irresponsible changes.

I have also contacted my MPP to express my deep concerns about these changes and how the Board has conducted itself in this matter.

These changes should NOT be implemented.

50. I think you need to be more specific about which offenses can get an acceptance from the Director. Obviously anything violent, substance related, etc should not be eligible without an official pardon regardless of what the Director feels.

51. Vulnerable sector screening should be a minimum of every 2 years for volunteers. There should also be a provision included pertaining to photography (if volunteers are taking

Comments from Respondents Dissatisfied with the Changes

pictures of school events or on a trip), that they aren't permitted to share on social media platforms.

52. I do not understand how someone with offences for which they have not received a pardon could possibly be considered safe to volunteer in a school. I do not support this policy,

53. I don't believe that someone who has a notable offence on a vulnerable sector form should be given the opportunity to have it reviewed for further for consideration-it should be an automatic ineligible to volunteer for any school/grade level.

54. Vulnerable sector check every three years is ok. If you have a charge that you have not been pardoned for it should not be reviewed. They should not volunteer. It is not up to the director to choose what crimes are ok for still volunteering.

55. If someone has an offence of any kind that has NOT been pardoned in full, and wants to volunteer then I will not be sending my child to that school. I find this shocking that you are actually considering this at all. This is absolutely ridiculous. It is my duty as a competent parent to stand and speak up for the children that are enrolled into the Halton Catholic District School Board system. This is an open and shut case for me. If you have an offence on your record then you CANNOT be allowed volunteer. Thank you.

56. NO NO NO to letting vulnerable sector offenders volunteer!

57. I feel that this policy is vague and will allow the principal and/or the board to use volunteers to cover paid positions.

58. I would like to request a change with the policy that the principle and staff must have an automated phone call system that immediately notifies all parents of a hold and secure incident, lockdown, or other serious incident of that nature. The response time should be immediate and automated to notify all parents and give them the option to come get their child. I left my name out, but I am a parent and am a personal friend of Mr.Lecce and Doug Ford. I will be letting them know of the delayed response time during the last hold and secure .

59. I am not satisfied with the first bullet only - VSC should be done every 5 years. 3 years is too short a time.

60. This is a TERRIBLE change. Keep the Criminal Record Check in as a requirement. I do NOT want a past convicted criminal as a volunteer for my child.

61. Leave the Criminal Record Check as a requirement. Anything less is irresponsible.

Comments from Respondents Dissatisfied with the Changes

62. I won't feel safe if volunteers don't have a proper criminal record check.

63. "Volunteer applicants who submit a Vulnerable Sector check that lists any offences for which an official pardon has not been received will have their application reviewed by the Director of Education" - This should not be included and is not safe. I fully disagree with this statement and it needs to be removed. Student safety is paramount and there should not be discretion involved.

64. Criminal record check should remain as a requirement for volunteers in Catholic schools

65. I believe anyone working with children or youth should have vulnerable sector police checks completed. This is a necessary safeguard to protect our children from potential risks/exposure to individuals who do not have good intentions and may use such loop holes to gain access.

66. A valid Police check should be submitted each year for each volunteer within the school. Schools are vulnerable and volunteers should be screened for safety.

67. Why was the criminal check requirement removed? I disagree with this change, and I believe it directly impacts the safety of our children and all staff working at the institution. I hope my feedback will be taken into consideration, and that the modification will be reconsidered.

68. Criminal records and frequent vulnerable sector checks are essential for our kids to be safe and surrounded by adults that share values and attitudes with the community they volunteer for. Taking out that requirement exposes our children to be near people whom, as parents, we would not feel comfortable leaving our kids with.

69. Why do I need to submit a new criminal check every 3 years? If I complete the annual declaration why is this not enough?

70. I don't think you should have to do a vulnerable screening every 3 years and I don't think the director should get to pardon those with offenses. This will discourage people from being volunteers and comes at an expense for volunteers. We need to encourage parents to participate not make it harder. The policy should clearly outline those charges that can be pardoned. It should not be left up to a director who is influenced by those who hire them. In all professions that work with vulnerable sectors a screening is only required once then a declaration is completed every year.

71. 3 years is too often to require a new vulnerable sector check - most places I have volunteered at in the past have only requested every 5 years. why 3? its too much and too many parents will forget. its overkill. 5 is fine.

Comments from Respondents Dissatisfied with the Changes

72. These changes don't make sense. What is prompting these changes? What are they hoping to accomplish? I have been a council member in the past so not sure why this needs to be done? By putting in these changes it will create a negative impact to those who want to volunteer. Making them do this seems like an overkill. It's like ridiculous barriers for volunteers that are needed and who care about the school and the students. I do not support such changes to the policy and would be disappointed if these changes were accepted

73. Making It Easier to Understand: Some parts of the policy use complex language that might not be clear to volunteers who aren't familiar with educational or legal terms. Simplifying the wording could make it more accessible to all volunteers.

Age Rules: The policy states that you need to be 18 to volunteer, except in specific school programs. It would be helpful to specify which programs allow younger volunteers. For example, in our high school, we have student volunteers who assist with feeder elementary school programs to earn graduation volunteer hours. They work with students but are under 18.

Keeping Track of Volunteers: While the policy emphasizes the importance of maintaining updated volunteer lists, it should explain where and how these lists should be stored and accessed for better organization.

Paying for Background Checks: The policy highlights the need for background checks, but it should clarify who covers the cost - volunteers or the school board.

Checking People with Records: The policy mentions checking the backgrounds of applicants with past issues. To provide clarity, it should outline the specific criteria for approval or disapproval by the Director of Education. It should also explain the process for appeals if an applicant is denied.

What's Covered: Although the policy explains its purpose, it could be more explicit about its scope. For instance, does it apply only to volunteers working directly with students, or does it also cover those in administrative or non-student-facing roles?

Role of Parent Councils: The policy should clarify the role and responsibilities of Parent Councils. Some High School Catholic School Councils (CSCs) have student representatives in their meetings, while this isn't always the case with Elementary CSCs. It's unclear how the policy affects CSCs in terms of their roles, especially when it comes to student-facing and non-student-facing responsibilities.

Parent Volunteers Outside of Councils: Additionally, the policy doesn't address parents who want to participate in meetings but aren't formal members of the Catholic School Council. We should

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consider explaining how these parents can actively take part in discussions, especially if they involve students during these meetings.

74. The policy was fine the way it was. Don't allow anyone with a criminal past to volunteer in school with my children.

75. The term "review" alludes to the possibility of permitting volunteers who have not received pardon on a case by case basis. For the protection of the children, the assessment of whether it is permissible to volunteer under this state should fall under the discretion and responsibility solely of a judge and not the director of education. The board should not incur such risk and liability. As a parent, I do not feel that this is the best strategy to move forward.

76. Hmmmmm - let's put together the puzzle pieces:

June (approx) 2023 - Toward the end of the school year, [REDACTED] parent council member [REDACTED] tries (unsuccessfully) to push through changes to the [REDACTED] parent council bylaws to eliminate the need for council volunteer parents to provide a clean PRC. I am told [REDACTED] [REDACTED] in the fall. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] are friends.

September 2023 - HCDSB policy committee puts forth proposed policy changes that speak to the Director of Education basically being able to overlook non-pardoned convictions for people who want to volunteer in HCDSB schools.

Nothing like taking care of your own, right?!? Brutal.

77. I have been a volunteer for 10 years at my child's elementary school and plan on volunteering in their high school as well. With the new suggested changes for a vulnerable sector check every 3 years that means a parent needs to get one at least 5 times in the 14 years at HCDSB. Probably more than that because the check needs to be dated within 120 days and one check could be needed in Grade 8 but I assume a new check might be needed in Grade 9? At \$30/application that is a lot of money for a parent volunteer. Also as a member of parent council why is a volunteer application needed? Council meets at night after school hours and no children/students are present. It is also unfair because parents are allowed on school property after hours for parent teacher interviews, or during the school day for events like liturgies, school assemblies etc without a check being required. So you are essentially penalizing parents who volunteer and give of their time freely within the school. A better policy would be to require a sector check every 5 years (so essentially

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JK, Grade 4 and then Grade 9) with a signed declaration in the other years. Or the school board should cover the cost of the checks if the new three year rule applies. Alternatively the criminal record check is free with a volunteer letter from school so if that could be acceptable then the 3 year rule could apply.

78. I want to keep police checks for parent volunteers.

79. As outlined above, I am very dissatisfied with the proposed policy change re: Policy II-37. If a potential volunteer has an offence on record for which they will not receive a formal pardon, this alone should negate their ability to volunteer in our schools. The Director of Education should not have the ability to review a request to volunteer and thus potentially allow a convicted criminal to volunteer within our schools. The vulnerable sector screening process exists for this very good reason: to keep transgressors away from our children. Serving as a volunteer coach within both the local soccer and hockey communities, I know these organizations would never dream of by-passing the vulnerable sector screening process and allow the head of our soccer/hockey organizations to "review" the application to volunteer. Well-developed and trusted processes are already in place to screen potential volunteers, all backed-up and supported by regional police services. Convicted criminals can seek a pardon through proper legal channels if they wish to volunteer in schools; this should NOT be at the discretion of the Director or any other person within the HCDSB. It is quite possible that a Director of Education (or any one person granted the "review" authority) could have a conflict of interest due to personal or professional relationship with the potential volunteer (ie. [REDACTED] who is a convicted criminal seeking to volunteer in our schools). Why would we want to risk the safety and well-being of our students by allowing a convicted criminal who cannot gain an official legal pardon to volunteer in our schools? This makes no sense. As a former Principal and HCDSB employee of 34 years, I would not welcome a convicted criminal to volunteer in my school unless they received an official, legal pardon for their conviction. We are not that desperate for volunteers that we need to adjust Policy II-37 in this manner. Our community members trust that those volunteering in our schools have passed the vulnerable sector screening process and have no formal convictions on their record. For those potential volunteers who do not pass the vulnerable sector screening process, not being permitted to volunteer in our schools is part of the consequences for their previous actions ... perhaps they should have thought of this a bit more carefully before they broke the law and therefore the trust of the community at large. I'm not sure how many of my former HCDSB colleagues will take/have the time to respond to this policy, but I know in speaking with them, the VAST majority of the HCDSB Principal/Vice Principal group feel exactly as I do on this issue. In summary, there is no need to adjust a volunteer screening process and system that works and is trusted by all stakeholders across all organizations, not just HCDSB; we all know the

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impetus behind this proposed policy change and it is ridiculous to suggest a "work-around" to allow convicted criminals proximity to our children within our schools.

80. Keep as is now.

81. 'Full disclosure of Criminal status is required, why are we changing this, to accomodate someone?

82. If I'm reading this right it seems as though you want the ability to override our national policy of volunteering to allow someone who has a criminal record to be approved by a committee or board. This is ridiculous and who gives you the right to decide over the police that someone is suitable to go into our schools and our classrooms to be with children when they've broken the law. To me it seems like there's an underlying loophole that you are trying to bypass for someone who has been denied access. I asked myself under what circumstances has this been an issue before and why is it that it needs to be changed now? Has this really been an issue that we need and must have someone who has a police record to get into our schools? I volunteer for four different organizations outside of my job and in all those circumstances I am asked to do and present a successful police record check every year in order to volunteer my time. No one should be above the law and this seems as though you are trying to make a cut into the cloth for your own purposes.

83. Request all volunteers to have a current police check on file

84. Why are we allowing Director of education the ability to review and consider any vulnerable offenses. This point should be removed from policy. In what scenario would we allow an offender access to vulnerable children. Would parents be aware?

85. The Director of education should never have the ability to review or have power to pardon vulnerable offenses. This point should be removed from policy. In what scenario would we allow an offender access to vulnerable children.

86. The Director of education should never have pardon powers to vulnerable offenses. This is for the judicial system not for. Education director.

87. Why on earth would a director be allowed to review or pardon vulnerable offenses. You are not the legal system, have zero jurisdiction and absolutely no ROLE around pardoning anything that could potentially harm young people. What a thoughtless addition to a policy.

88. A very poorly drafted policy. It is unclear why the director is reviewing the vulnerable sector checks in the first place. It is not clear at all what power the director has if any under this policy. He has no legal power to pardon an offence. The policy should clearly state that

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those with vulnerable sector checks convicted of an offence (for which there is no pardon) cannot be a volunteer period. Why the changes to the policy would be interesting to know?

89. The primary concern of CPIC is finding the balance between making volunteering at school accessible and free of unnecessary roadblocks, while still ensuring the safety of HCDSB students. Finding parents to volunteer is already a challenge under the current policy, so it is imperative that HCDSB ensures that any changes to the policy do not result in a reduction in the number of volunteers as such a reduction would impact the ability of schools to run events, fundraisers, and so on.

Regarding drivers behind changes to the policy

- It isn't clear why the policy is being changed – what is the gap in the current policy that is driving the proposed changes? Have there been incident(s) related to volunteers that have impacted our children?

Who requires a VSC

- Just sitting on council should not require a VSC as there are no minors present at these meetings in elementary schools. Student reps are usually present at secondary school meetings, however every CSC meeting must have an admin, a teaching rep and a non-teaching rep present so there is always supervision, not unlike other school gatherings and events where anyone can walk through the doors of the school and attend without any kind of a check.
- There are other people who enter our schools who do not require VSCs (board staff, trustees, etc) – these people are sometimes present at CSC meetings and other school events where children are also present, so why are they exempt from providing a VSC? (they are not volunteers, but it is an inconsistency)
- Some parents attend parent council meetings, but do not sit on council; do they also require a VSC on file to sit at a council meeting as an observer?
- Many high school students volunteer at elementary schools (either out of interest, younger siblings, volunteer hours, class projects, etc); is there any process for screening minor volunteers? If not, should there be? How are we ensuring the safety of younger children in this scenario?

Flags on VSC

- Something coming back on a VSC should not automatically exclude someone from volunteering, however the review procedure needs to be clear
 - While the review process should be transparent, the privacy of the individual needs to also be respected (is it only the principal and director who would see the individual's check in this case?) This needs to be crystal clear on who would see it and would know.

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- Charges unrelated to schools or volunteering with children should not necessarily hold anyone back from being able to volunteer
- If there is any flag on a VSC, regardless of offense, that will exclude someone from participating at school (council or otherwise) then that needs to be transparent and explicitly stated
- What flags on a VSC would exclude someone from being able to volunteer? Is there a list of charges/convictions that would deem someone to be excluded? Is it fair to leave it up to solely the discretion of the Director?
 - What is the appeals process for a rejection?

On obtaining the VSC

- HCDSB needs to provide a standard template letter for requesting the check and VSC, particularly if the letter enables the \$30 fee to be waived
 - When you fill out the VSC you have to select “employment” and pay \$30, or select “volunteer” and provide a letter; some councils have written their own letters but a standard from HCDSB should be available to keep things proper and consistent
 - If there are no minors present at council meetings, why is a VSC required for only sitting on council but not volunteering at the school?
- Is there a process for volunteers who would struggle with the \$30 fee? We cannot assume that the fee is within e’s financial means, particularly if we are going from requesting it once to every 3 years

On the VSC frequency

- Why are checks not transferable between schools (regardless of graduating to a high school or changing schools within the board)?
- How often are HCDSB staff required to provide a new VSC (teachers, support staff, principals, board staff)? It would seem logical to align parent volunteers with the frequency of HCDSB staff checks
- Three years is going to cause unnecessary roadblocks for retaining volunteers; finding people to volunteer is already a huge challenge for most schools and requesting every three years (regardless of cost) is going to further reduce the number of available individuals
 - Why is the requirement every 3 years? High school lasts 4 sometimes 5 years, and other boards and groups that use volunteers (child care centres, summer camps, etc) generally have 5 years as the standard for redoing checks
 - If a parent gets a VSC when their child is in JK, that check needs to be redone 6 times in 14 years (JK, 2, 5, 8, very 5 years, it would be 3 checks in 14 years (JK, 4, 9) which is far more sensible

Access to Volunteer Lists

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- Who has access to a school's volunteer list? Is it just the principal, or can other school staff see the list?
- Does the master list include details of the police/VSC check? Who can access that information?

90. Policy changes is not aligned with what is listed in HCDSB website under Criminal Record Checks, which includes both Executive officer of Human Resources and Director of Education. "The final decision will be made by the Executive Officer of Human Resources in consultation with the Director of Education."

<https://www.hcdsb.org/hcdsb-careers/criminal-records-check-information/>

Should an applicant submit a Criminal Record Check showing evidence of a criminal offence, confirmation of their placement will be postponed pending a review of the information. A criminal record will not necessarily disqualify an applicant. The Halton Catholic District School Board reserves the right to request applicants to provide additional information with regard to their request for placement. The final decision will be made by the Executive Officer of Human Resources in consultation with the Director of Education.

91. The Director of Education should never have the ability to review or pardon vulnerable offenses. Would recommend we remove this point.

92. The Director of Education, or any other person, should never have the ability to review or pardon vulnerable offences. Would recommend to remove this point from the policy. We need to protect our children. Allowing individuals with vulnerable offences into our schools IS NOT protecting our children

93. The Director of Education, or any other person, should never have the ability to review or pardon vulnerable offences. Would recommend to remove this point from the policy. It is imperative that we protect our children. This point MUST be removed from this policy

94. All staff and volunteers that enter a school with minors (vulnerable sector) should be required to provide criminal check and vulnerable sector check, it is just common sense! There's no need or good reason why to remove a layer of protection for our students and even staff. Who wants to work with a person that has a criminal record?

95. I feel that every 3 years is too long. Volunteers have access to roam the school and can go unnoticed. The policy should be that volunteers need to provide this once a year, or at minimum every 2 years. A lot can happen in a year. Now that these checks are all done by a computer, and they are emailed, it would be beneficial to approach counsel and HRPS about the fee for this when used for volunteering at a HCDSB, and even HDSB, school. HCDSB

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should also attempt to have a program to provide financial assistance to help with the fee associated to low income families so they are not excluded from the volunteer opportunities due to costs associated with obtaining their report.

96. There should be no room for negotiation on this policy. This leaves grey area that can lead to serious consequences.

97. The policy is poorly drafted and is ambiguous in two respects.

First, if the goal of the policy is to require all volunteers to submit and provide a vulnerable sector check that has no convictions (for which a pardon has not been granted) then it should clearly state that. I suggest the following:

- remove "Volunteer applicants who submit..." and change to "Volunteer applicants who submit a Vulnerable Sector Check that lists any offences for which an official pardon has not been received shall not be a volunteer until such a pardon is obtained."

Second, it is unclear in the proposed draft what "reviewed by the Director of Education" means. It certainly does not mean based on the plain language that the Director will "pardon" or somehow allow someone convicted of an offence to be a volunteer. If that is the intent then the wording of the draft is disingenuous and parents have a right to clearly know that is the intent of the change.

The Director of Education I assume would not want such a scope of review to somehow "pardon" a convicted individual as that would open them up to legal liability. I suggest and encourage a lawyer review and revise the draft policy to make it clear in plain language what the policy is because right now it is not clear at all.

I support vulnerable sector checks for all volunteers. If an individual convicted of an offence (for which no pardon issued) cannot readily cross the border why in the world would our trustees let that person in the school. The ability to obtain a pardon is a process that any affected person can and should utilize as they see fit.

Giving the Director some power to "review" whatever that means goes down the slippery slope of this policy basically being meaningless assuming the point of the policy is to not have convicted criminals volunteers at the school.

98. I think it is essential to require any person who will be allowed in the schools or to participate in school functions to be fully screened and deemed safe. They will have access to our children and there's no reason why we shouldn't ask for police checks to ensure the safety of our children and school staff is top priority.

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99. Make the police checks free (or at least more affordable) for volunteers! I understand updating vulnerable sector checks every 3 years but it's quite costly to do this. For example - when two parents have to pay twice every 3 years - especially when you have multiple children spanning perhaps over 15-20 years in elementary school - (i.e. - \$30 x 2 parents = \$60/3 years X 5 (span of 15 years) = \$300) that cost really adds up just to help out on the occasional field trip!

100. Please clarify what it means by Director to review offences? If I am interpreting this point correctly, how is this loophole protecting vulnerable children? Is it about the children or the small percentage of offenders that want to volunteer with children? They can go through the pardon process through the judicial system. Why is it necessary to add this loophole? Can we align our volunteer policy with all other school boards, such as York, Peel - which are very straightforward, no loopholes.

101. I don't understand why, if offences are listed on the vulnerable sector check, the director of the board has the authority to further review the person requesting volunteer status. If the police have deemed the potential volunteer a possible threat to the minors under his care, by what grounds can the director ensure that this person will be a safe choice? It seems that this policy could potentially endanger students.

102. I don't for one second believe that there is that many previously convicted individuals that we need to waste to allowing veto powers to veto and allow them to volunteer. Let's hope this is not a ploy to get recently convicted [REDACTED] on is it ?? If someone really wants to volunteer there or other places they can do so. Not with children. Or follow the pardoning procedure through the legal system. Thank you

103. I agree with the changes except for the authority given to the Director of Education to decide whether a volunteer with charges is allowed to be with our children or not. This is UNACCEPTABLE! It is not in this person's job description, nor this person is prepared to make such decisions. It does not give transparency to the Board, on the contrary this particular change in the policy creates opportunity for dishonesty and manipulation of the intended policy. Please remove this authority given to the Director of Education.

104. I believe for this policy to be truly effective, transparent and accountable, the Director should not be making the decision alone. His decision should be brought back to the Board and presented after which the Board should vote on whether the individual is allowed to volunteer in our schools.

105. School board should pay the fees for volunteers to get a new police check.

106. The director is not a criminal judge. That is not his job.

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107. The policy should aim, among other values, at improving the safety of our kids, not compromising it by lowering the standards with respect to the background checks of the volunteers. If eventually, the background records are at the discretion of one individual, why ask for it in the first place? It will only increase costs with no associated benefit. Please remove (or at least minimize) the possibility that someone with criminal offences on record could be around our schools.

Furthermore, you are asking the Director of Education to reject or approve volunteers base on his/her impartial discretion and without any guidance or training on criminal offences. Why put this individual in such an awkward position? I will require that, if you proceed with these policy changes in spite of my suggestion, these such decisions made by the Director of Education, get on record for further accountability.

108. Volunteers are great to have , but they need to be crystal clean without a criminal record of any kind. There needs to be a strict screening process.

109. Is this change to bring [REDACTED] back? The spirit of this amendment seems innocent enough; giving convicted felons a chance to work in our schools who (at the discretion of the director) have shown they have mended their ways and can now be an asset to children. However, in the real world, it is often not the repentant who benefit from such clauses, but rather others. Our courts go to great lengths to protect our children. Please let them do their job and not place that burden of responsibility on the discretion of our director of education.

110. I believe that a Criminal Record Check should also required as well as a Vulnerable Sector Check. And if there are some offences that were not pardoned for a volunteer applicant, then that person cannot be a volunteer in this school board. It should not be up to the principal's review whether that person should be allowed to be a volunteer or not.

111. I would like to petition that the present amendment regarding volunteer checks may result in creating an unsafe environment for our children.

112. I am not satisfied with the newly added point "Volunteer applicants who submit a Vulnerable Sector Check that lists any offences for which an official pardon has not be received will have their application reviewed by the Director of Education".

This is too subjective. How will the Director of Education base the review and decision as to whether or not a stakeholder is allowed to volunteer? How will HCDSB ensure decisions are equitable and consistent across all circumstances?

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Will this policy include committees (ie. CPIC and SEAC) as well as volunteers?

113. What was wrong with the previous policy that the new policy changes were deemed necessary? It is not (nor should it be) the responsibility of the Director of Education to pass judgement on the fitness of volunteer applicants who have not received an official pardon for past criminal offences (that is what the previous Board policy was designed to deal with in the first place). The power to approve or disapprove of such applications should not be arbitrarily vested in the hands of any one single individual. I strongly object to any new policy or policy changes that would make this so.

114. Convicted felons whether pardoned or not should not have contact with the children of our school system. It is simply beyond the pale that such a move should be made. It opens the doors for sex offenders to be allowed into direct contact with vulnerable students. It is amoral and unconscionable. To do so would be a complete violation of our roles as guardians of the students. It is a complete rejection of the Catholic virtue of Prudence.

115. [REDACTED]

116. How can anyone, calling themselves Catholic, allow potentially dangerous persons convicted of offences anywhere to have contact with the most vulnerable members of our society, and the most valued treasures of our rate payers. This policy is evil!

117. I would prefer for the criminal check to continue being required.

118. The voice of a parent should strongly be considered when such a proposed policy change is considered. The HCDSB holds the best interest, safety and the integrity of our children in its hands, daily. As a parent, I strongly oppose the proposed policy change to the Volunteer Policy. I strongly disagree with the review of an offence that is not pardoned to be considered. Whether or not an offence is connected to vulnerable persons, in this case school children, it is associated with the children and their everyday learning environment. Any offence against the law is a threat to our students and their families and the most important advocate for the children of the HCDSB, are their parents. I do not feel comfortable not knowing who is walking the property of our school buildings and I do not agree with this policy change.

119. The requirement for an updated vulnerable sector screening every three years is a definite improvement over the current "one and done" policy, however this improvement is weakened by the proposal to allow the Director, in their sole discretion, to overlook the results of a vulnerable sector screening and allow someone with a criminal record to volunteer in HCDSB schools. In addition to eliminating this proposed change, there are

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additional measures that should be taken to ensure the safety and security of our children, staff and board assets. This would include a requirement for volunteers to self-report any charges, guilty pleas or convictions that arise between the vulnerable sector screening and annual declaration(s), with consequences (such as a permanent ban on HCDSB volunteering) for failing to do so.

While the requirement for a vulnerable sector screening every three years is an improvement, a lot can happen in three years. While any additional self-reporting would be based on an honour system this is no different from the current annual declaration requirement. A possible failure of volunteers to self-report is a very weak reason not to proceed with this requirement; the same argument could be made for the existing annual declaration and there is certainly no harm from having this additional requirement which is also cost and (other) barrier free.

The provision of “veto power” to be given to the Director of Education, potentially allowing individuals with a criminal record to volunteer in close proximity to children and board assets is quite troubling and exposes the board to significant risk with no apparent benefit. Are any of our schools unable to function due to a shortage of volunteers? Even if that is indeed the case, it is still not worth the risk of exposing board assets - of which our children are the most valuable - to individuals with a questionable past and/or criminal record.

It is worth noting that minor infractions may already not appear on the requisite reporting, and older ones will disappear over the course of time and/or through granting of a pardon.

Trustee discussions which minimized the seriousness of some charges/convictions were also troubling. “Drunk driving”/driving under the influence (DUI) is not insignificant - drunk drivers actually kill people. Whether or not the infraction is directly related to the volunteer activity is irrelevant. Drunk drivers, for example, show a callous disregard for the well-being....indeed the lives, of others. To say they have demonstrated poor judgement is an understatement. Even if they are “just” coming to the school to deliver pizza, they are still driving onto the school parking lot - possibly while under the influence. What kind of example are Trustees setting for students when they minimize such an offence, and consider allowing such individuals to participate in the functioning of the school?

While someone with a DUI record, for example, may have shown a one-time lack of judgement a long time ago - they could just as well be someone with a drinking and/or substance abuse problem. The instances of recidivism are high. Do Trustees really want to leave it to the Director to make these determinations? Does the Director really want to

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accept this responsibility, putting both the board, and him/herself personally at risk? And again, for what perceived benefit?

There were also some discussions regarding the human rights code prohibiting “discrimination” against those with a criminal record unless there was a bona fide reason - that the charges/convictions were directly related to the activity from which an individual would be prohibited from participating. As was noted, this provision in the Human Rights Code is specifically related to employment. This makes sense in the fact that shelter and food for example are basic human rights, and difficult to access without employment. However, “volunteering” is neither a human or legal right. Volunteering is a privilege. Applying the human rights code to the privilege of volunteering in a school is quite a stretch.

While volunteers are unlikely to sue the board for denying them the privilege of volunteering, there would not be any damages for which a legal claim could even be advanced. On the other hand, if harm were to come to a student or staff from the actions of a volunteer with a guilty plea or conviction on their vulnerable sector screening, the board would most certainly face legal action. Proceeding with this proposed change unequivocally creates legal risk for the board. Why would Trustees or the Director want to unnecessarily expose themselves to this risk?

As someone who volunteered extensively in HCDSB schools for many years, it is also important to note that it is difficult to limit the scope of a volunteer’s activities. Whether I volunteered to hand out pizza or healthy snacks or planning for community events (ie. Pasta/Pierogie Nights), I was often asked to purchase supplies which then involved submission of expense claims. I solicited and collected raffle prizes which often included gift cards. I counted cash , unsupervised; usually in the school, but also at home - by request of the Principal. All of these activities present opportunity for fraud.

So while, as an example, you might say that a fraud conviction/guilty plea has no relation to handing out pizza or planning a community event, you need to understand that an individual might find themselves tasked with ancillary activities that do present very real opportunities to reoffend. Do you really expect a principal to say “you can hand out pizza but you are not allowed to submit any expenses because you have a fraud conviction”?

Also, the premise that principals provide training and direct oversight to volunteers does not match my experience. The level of involvement of principals does vary but is not typically what I would consider of a supervisory nature. Lunch and healthy snack programs as well as community events usually have a lead volunteer who assigns tasks to fellow

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volunteers. Do you really expect principals to instruct lead volunteers as to which specific activities their fellow volunteers may or may not undertake....which also becomes a violation of privacy?

While the safety of students and staff is paramount, consideration must also be given to board assets and the many ways in which they can also be compromised.

A periodic vulnerable sector screening and annual declarations would be strengthened by mandatory reporting of instances that would otherwise appear on a vulnerable sector screening, with significant consequences for failing to report or reporting that is fraudulent.

If Trustees are truly concerned with the safety of students and staff, and protecting board assets, they will ensure that only individuals with a clear vulnerable sector screening are permitted to volunteer at HCDSB - no exceptions.