

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PATRICIA MCDERMOTT, CHAIR
Halifax Port Authority (Retired)

JIM NELLES,
BOARD CHAIR DESIGNATE
Nelles Media Consulting Inc

DENISE BURKE
Full Speed Ahead on Life

Dr. COLIN DODDS
St. Mary's University

Dr. LEANNE FOSTER
Trafalgar Castle School

CAROL GRANT-WATT
Strathcona-Tweedsmuir School

Dr. BILL JONES
Strathcona-Tweedsmuir School (Retired)

SHARON KLEIN
St. Margaret's School

DERYN LAVELL
Saltus Grammar School

JAMES LEE
The Rosedale Day School

KEVIN MCHENRY
St. Andrew's College

Dr. SAIDA RASUL
Aga Khan University

RIVA RICHARD
Pollard Banknote Limited

KATHLEEN RITCHIE
Gowling WLG (Canada) LLP

PETER STURRUP
Pickering College

MARTHA J. TORY
Ernst & Young LLP (retired)

FIONA WEBSTER MOURANT
Manrex Ltd.

PETER WILKEN
Dolphin Brand Strategy

JOHN WRAY
Mulgrave School

ADVISORS

ALAN WHYTE
CIS Ontario

MICHEL LAFRANCE
QAIS

TAM MATTHEWS
ISABC

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PATTI MACDONALD

September 2020

Dear CAIS School Families,

In September, I generally like to greet people within the CAIS community with "Happy New Year". This year, there is a mix of excitement and trepidation as students return to a very different context from the one they left when campuses closed last March. When CAIS Schools moved rapidly to emergency distance instruction in the spring, we did not expect the disruption to persist into the new school year; however, our schools remain committed to realizing their mission and demonstrating their unique value.

Vancouver Talmud Torah is a Member of the Canadian Accredited Independent Schools (CAIS). CAIS is a community of over 90 independent schools, all of which commit to undergoing a reflective and collaborative school improvement process, meeting National Standards, and participating in research and leadership development. As part of a network, Heads of Schools and School Leaders from across the country have met through the summer to share strategies and resources, questions and challenges as they work to circumvent the unprecedented obstacles of the ongoing crisis.

CAIS Schools also share a deep commitment to the safety of their students and the provision of a high quality learning experience. This summer, Sick Kids issued guidance for reopening schools in which they emphasized the importance of children returning to face to face learning. They stated, "We believe education to be absolutely critical for the development of children and youth, a human right and a sine qua non for the future well-being of our society." Their guidance was intended to support school leaders in creating return to campus plans that maximize student wellbeing and learning while minimizing risks from a public health perspective. While there is no "right answer" as to the balance between wellness and learning in this unprecedented environment, CAIS Schools spent the summer planning and putting safety measures in place to mitigate risk for students, teachers and school staff, and families.

After a summer of intense planning for the worst and hoping for the best, school leaders and educators have been reenergized by the return of students. We appreciate your understanding as they respond fluidly to the virus's progression and the shifting directives from provincial

Ministries of Education and Public Health Authorities. When schools abruptly shifted online in the spring, they learned the importance of innovation, implementing new strategies and course-correcting as needed. Although there will be missteps along the way, we are fortunate that our schools are nimble and able to act quickly when there are changes in the environment and are committed to transparency with their communities.

We recognize parents and students are anxious and concerned about ensuring a safe return to campus. CAIS Schools are sensitive to the magnitude of the challenge that parents are experiencing as they make decisions for their families. We express our gratitude for your commitment to your child's success and your support of the students in the face of this challenge. We are in this together, and with continued trust, mutual support and partnership, we can ensure a positive outlook towards the new school year.

Sincerely,

Patti MacDonald
Executive Director