



## NOTICE OF APPLICATION FORM Office of Public School Trustee

### APPLICANT INTEREST

Please explain why you feel you should be the successful candidate for the position of Trustee, Wards 1, 2 and 3 (maximum 1000 words). Outline your commitment to public education as reflected in your involvement in Greater Essex County District School Board public schools or its committees, including your background, qualifications, interests, experience, and experience that support your candidacy.

My name is Michael Mills. I was born and raised in Windsor, Ontario. I am deeply passionate about public education and the role it plays in shaping not just our community's youth, but the community at large. In an increasingly changing and uncertain world, a strong public education is the best way to prepare future generations for what may come. As Kofi Annan once said, "Education is the premise of progress in every society, in every family."

I first realized my true passion for education after graduating from the University of Windsor and moving to South Korea, where I worked as an English immersion teacher for three years. Being in a position to work hands-on with children every day and see in real-time the results of the hours of prep work and lesson planning really helped me mentally connect the throughline between policy, objectives, and outcomes.

It was also during this time that I came to appreciate the value of community and local involvement. I became involved with the local community center, and a local church volunteering my time to teach English grammar and practice English conversation skills for classes ranging from adults to pre-schoolers. By contributing what skills and abilities I could offer to my community, I was able to find my place within it.

Ultimately, my partner and I decided to return to Canada where our union could be legally recognized and I began working in the private sector, where I have found progressive success throughout the past decade. In my career in Revenue Operations I have focused on operational excellence and the development of scalable processes and best practices; aligning targets, success metrics and behaviours; building and evaluating budget and revenue forecasts; and cross-departmental collaboration to achieve key organizational goals.

Almost four years ago my partner and I were blessed with a call from Kawartha-Haliburton Children's Aid Society with news that they had a young boy that was going to be put up for adoption. After a lengthy process, a good deal of bureaucracy and many, many trips to and from Peterborough, our son was placed with us on Thanksgiving weekend, 2021.

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Name of Applicant Michael Mills

Becoming a parent was a lifelong dream of mine, and the goal of everything I had been working towards professionally up until that point. But that was when the real work began. I had to navigate the adoption process, our healthcare system, and our public education system, all while adjusting to parenthood and getting to know our son and help set him up for success. Very quickly after becoming parents, we made the decision to move back to Windsor. I will admit that I was personally a bit reluctant to move back home, but I ultimately knew it was what was best for our son and our family. We wanted our son to grow up in a quieter environment with a more friendly community, go to a good school, and have better access to the resources he required - and Windsor checked all the boxes and then some. It was the best decision we've ever made.

It was a bit of a strange feeling moving back after a decade away. In many respects, the city seemed wholly unfamiliar. Despite having grown up here, most of my social circle had moved away, and we were suddenly feeling without community. So I did what I've had to do so many times already - I got to work finding and building my community. I developed a close relationship with the school administration during the IEP process for my son, and was able to find parents in similar situations in the neighbourhood. One of them recommended the Home and School Association as a means to get more involved with the school.

Shortly after joining, I was elected to the position of Treasurer - a role I have served in for two school years now. In that time, we've been able to host half a dozen events, run a small handful of fundraisers, as well as invest over \$15,000 directly back into the school. In addition to my role as treasurer, I have also taken on the unofficial role as our "policy person".

I have read every relevant bylaw, policy, code of conduct, etc. for OFHSA, the Windsor Council, and the King Edward Home and School Association. I've made annotated copies of them. Reviewing contracts and agreements is part of my job professionally, and reading public policy is a bit of a hobby for me personally. I also feel it's my responsibility to represent the concerns and challenges of our lower income families. Any school event or fundraiser needs to be balanced against the current economic realities to ensure that anything we endeavour to do is accessible and fair.

The GECDSD is facing numerous challenges at the moment - financial constraints, shifting demographics, conflicting priorities, and policy and directive changes at the provincial level. I believe that all of my lived experiences, both personal and professional, have provided me with a unique perspective that would serve the community well in this role. I look forward to the opportunity to do well and do good for the community, together.