

SARA FLAHERTY

Yellowknife Catholic Schools
2026 Trustee Candidate Profile



Biography:

Sara was born and raised in rural Newfoundland. She attended Memorial University, completing undergraduate and Masters degrees in History. Sara began a career with the federal government in 2008 which involved frequent travel throughout the North. In 2016, she moved with her family to Iqaluit, Nunavut, where she held several senior management positions including as Assistant Deputy Minister with the Government of Nunavut and as CanNor's regional director. In August of 2021, Sara, her husband Bill MacKay and their three children moved to Yellowknife and were warmly welcomed into St. Patrick's Parish. Two of the kids currently attend St. Patrick's High School, while their youngest attends St. Joe's. Having experienced first hand the benefits of Catholic education, Sara is grateful that her children will too. For the last two years, Sara has been an active member of the St. Pat's Parental Advisory Council. She has enjoyed the opportunity to engage with other parents and will continue to do so if elected as a Yellowknife Catholic School Board trustee.

Question 1: Why are you running for trustee?

School board trustees play a critical role in making financial and policy decisions that resonate throughout our schools. With three kids attending Yellowknife Catholic Schools, I have a vested interest in ensuring that they, and their schoolmates, get the best education possible. I was educated in Catholic schools and I believe that faith-based education helped make me into the person that I am today: hardworking, empathetic, pragmatic and always with an eye on how to make things better. So much of what makes faith-based education special is interwoven into school culture. Though it's not a subject that is graded, it is certainly taught. It celebrates the building of character and the importance of community over self-interest. It is something to be nurtured, celebrated and protected.

Question 2: What is the biggest challenge facing Yellowknife Catholic Schools, and how would you address it?

Some of the big issues facing YCS are issues of perception. Moving here five years ago, I heard that YCS wasn't as academically rigorous as the public system. I challenge that notion. My kids have had many wonderful and deeply committed teachers at YCS. They have lovely friends and a vibrant school community that supports them in becoming the best versions of themselves. We live in a small town with two school systems and that will naturally give rise to some healthy competition. As a school board, we should carefully examine the reasons people choose (or don't choose) to send their children to our schools. The school board should review the data and educational outcomes and adjust school board priorities, policy and funding as needed.

Question 3: How will you support both student success and Catholic education?

Much of this comes down to how we define student success. Education is about more than academic achievement. It's about preparing students for life beyond school and in helping them become good people, kind people, people of character and integrity. The qualities that make for student success are a built-in feature of Catholic education. It's in the willingness to share your gifts and help your community, to care for those less fortunate, and for those who cannot advocate for themselves. It's in understanding why your life matters.

A key part of preparing students for life involves academic preparedness but it can look different depending on the student. Across Yellowknife Catholic schools, there should be high standards for behaviour, ensuring a safe learning environment. Academically inclined students should and do have opportunities for enrichment through clubs and volunteer opportunities. At the high school level, St. Pat's offers the only Advanced Placement classes in the territory. All of this exists alongside a focus on inclusive education.

Question 4: What experience or perspective makes you the best candidate for the role?

As the mom of three YCS students, I want them to get an excellent education that equips them for life beyond Grade 12. My background is in research and policy. I have had a successful career in government, working in intergovernmental affairs and economic development in roles that involved advocating for Northerners. I work well with other people. I am good at spotting gaps in programming, identifying barriers to inclusion and in coming up with practical solutions. I hold myself to high standards and to following through on my commitments. As my career winds down, I have the time to devote to the important work of a Yellowknife Catholic School Board trustee.