

JUSTIN FABELLA

Yellowknife Catholic Schools
2026 Trustee Candidate Profile



Biography:

Justin Fabella has called Yellowknife home since 2017. Born in the Philippines and raised in Mississauga, Ontario, Justin attended the University of Waterloo before building his career in leadership, workplace safety, health, and risk management. Today, Justin works as a Safety, Health and Risk Superintendent in the mining industry, where he leads teams, manages complex programs, and works with people from diverse backgrounds to make thoughtful and responsible decisions. His professional experience has reinforced his belief in accountability, respect, collaboration, and creating environments where people are supported and given the opportunity to succeed. Education played an important role in creating opportunities in Justin's own life and shaping the person and leader he is today. Yellowknife, in turn, has given him a community he is proud to call home. He sees serving as a Trustee as an opportunity to give back to that community and help create opportunities for the next generation. Justin hopes to bring his leadership experience, practical perspective, and commitment to responsible decision-making to the Board of Trustees while supporting the continued success of students, families, educators, and staff.

Question 1: Why are you running for trustee?

I'm running as a Yellowknife Catholic School Board Trustee because my life has been shaped by communities that value dignity, service, and care for one another. As someone who immigrated to Canada and later built a home in Yellowknife, I know firsthand how important it is for young people to learn in environments that are welcoming, grounded in faith, and committed to forming the whole person – academically, morally, and spiritually. I'm drawn to this position because it's not just governance – it's stewardship. It's about safeguarding the Catholic education, supporting families, and ensuring our schools remain places where faith and learning reinforce each other. For me, running as trustee is a way to give back to a community that

welcomed me, and to help strengthen a school system that plays a vital role in forming the next generation with integrity, compassion, and hope.

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

One of the biggest challenges facing YCS is the loss of Jordan's Principle funding and the uncertainty around how to sustainably support students who relied on those services, all while YCS is going through a period of change (elections and Superintendent). While territorial bridge funding has helped, it isn't guaranteed long term. This has put tremendous strain on the staff and more importantly has affected inclusion, classroom support, and stability of services for students and other learners with complex needs. I would focus on strengthening long term planning around inclusive funding, improving data and reporting on where supports have been lost, and advocating for stable predictable funding so schools aren't forced into year-to-year uncertainty. I would also support clear communication with families and staff and look for partnerships that maintain key supports even as funding models change. This can be done through assisting families navigate individualized Jordan's Principle applications, building contingency reserve funds as a buffer against sudden funding drops, and applying joint pressure with YK1 on lobbying for permanent structural funding.

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

I will support student success by focusing on the conditions that allow students to learn well: stable classrooms, clear expectations, and consistent support for teachers. As a trustee I can contribute to this by supporting predictable staffing models and ensuring front-line roles like support teachers remain prioritized in the budget. Supporting Catholic education is about ensuring that the values guiding our schools – respect, care for one another, and service – are reflected in how we govern. Our Catholic identity is lived out through daily interactions, not just religious instruction. I can help strengthen this by supporting policies that promote safe, caring school environments and ensuring inclusion initiatives reflect dignity and hospitality for all students. This is done through ensuring our policies reflect Catholic values, supporting faith-based programming and Parish-school partnerships, ensuring staff have access to professional development rooted in Catholic social teaching, and supporting service and community initiatives that reflect our mission.

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

I come from a background where defensibility, transparency, and evidence-based decision-making are non-negotiable. In my work at the Gahcho Kué Mine, I have lead teams

through complex planning and system level improvements. These skills translate directly to a trustee's responsibility: overseeing budgets, policies, facilities, and long-term planning in a way that protects students and supports staff. As my fiancée and I are just beginning our journey together and don't have any children yet, I'm able to approach board decisions with a high level of objectivity and without personal conflicts or school-based pressures. It allows me to focus fully on what strengthens the system and supports every family in it.