

## Separate board meeting challenges

**By Mark Pavilons**

Staffing and funding issues continue to challenge the York Catholic District School Board.

Despite the challenges, the board is working on a strategic plan that will outline a four-year direction.

Board chair Elizabeth Crowe said some of the top issues and challenges include implementation of the Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with all of their employee groups. As different groups reach, agreements often the details of implementation change.

Balancing the budget is an ongoing chore. While the government has invested in some programs such as full-day kindergarten, funding to other areas was cut and the board had to make cuts to central staffing by not replacing certain positions when a retirement occurred.

“High pockets of growth and decline in other parts of the board lead to challenges in staffing,” she said.

A “disproportionate” increase in the number of students who receive special education support, but since the board's overall enrolment did not grow, the funding to special education remained constant even though needs increased.

Finding teachers to teach French immersion as the board continues to expand the program is also proving difficult.

And many of these challenges will continue into 2014, she said.

However, the board is embarking on a strategic planning initiative and is looking for input from stakeholders. There will be a survey online at [ycdsb.ca](http://ycdsb.ca) starting in mid-January.

This year is a “bargaining year” and it will be done under a newly legislated framework whereby all major monetary issues will be negotiated at the provincial level and local working conditions will be negotiated locally.

All elementary schools implemented a standardized dress code this school year. In King, Crowe noted that steady growth continues at all three schools and the schools will fill up despite their new additions/buildings.

The strategic planning process, once completed, will outline a four-year plan to address these challenges.

“We will continue to be focused on our Catholicity and the achievement of our students. We will do this by providing safe school environments, professional development for staff particularly in the area of 21st-century learning, and working with our schools on [improving parent engagement](#) in our schools and in their children's learning.” Our children are the future and it's very important that we provide all of the necessary resources they may need to become our next doctors, firefighters and astronauts. We are priding ourselves on putting the children first and we look forward to seeing what the future holds for every staff member and student.