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**Subject Line:** Racist Trustees in the YRDSB

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To Minister Lecce, Director Sirisko, and the Board of Trustees,

I am writing to you today to express my grave concerns about the recent actions of the York Region District School Board Trustees and the ongoing racism faced by the Black community in York Region.

After months of what should have been unnecessary advocacy by the Black community, the YRDSB decision to rename Vaughan Secondary School after it was discovered that Benjamin Vaughan, after whom the school was named, owned slaves.

The board then underwent the process of requesting name submissions from the community, where the results of this process indicated overwhelming support (more than 42%) for renaming the school after Hodan Nalayeh, a Canadian-Somali journalist with a legacy of social activism who was killed in terror attack in 2019.

Since the results of this community consultation were released, YRDSB Trustee David Sherman has attempted to undermine this process by questioning the legitimacy of the votes for this name and suggesting there were “outsiders” who exerted undue influence on the process and going so far as to publicly post an email from ANCHOR (formerly the Vaughan African Canadian Association) on his personal Twitter account in an attempt to shame the organization for respectfully reaching out to him in an effort to explain why his words and actions are harmful to the Black community.

To add insult to injury, in a trustee meeting on January 28, Trustee Dr. Elizabeth Sinclair (who is Black) raised concerns about how these actions by Trustee Sherman, as well as the entire process, were causing undue harm to the Black community.

Board Chair Cynthia Cordova then indicated that she “did not like [Trustee Sinclair’s] tone” when these concerns were raised, which is a disturbing instance of racist tone-policing by a white trustee to the only Black trustee in the YRDSB.

Despite overwhelming community support, a motion to designate the new name of Vaughan Secondary School as Hodan Nalayeh Secondary School was not passed.

I am demanding that:
1. Vaughan Secondary School be immediately renamed to Hodan Nalayeh Secondary School, as per the community’s wishes
2. Trustee Sherman issue an immediate apology to the community and resign from his position as trustee
3. Trustee Cordova issue an immediate apology to Dr. Sinclair and resign from her position as board chair
4. The Ministry of Education perform an inquiry to the rampant racism present in the YRDSB Board of Trustees, including previous incidents with other trustees

Toni Morrison once said that “the function of racism is distraction.” That the Black community has had to fight THIS HARD for something as seemingly simple as finding a replacement for a racist school name continues to demonstrate that the YRDSB has no intent to meaningfully engage in the fight against anti-Black racism.

I look forward to your response.