

Schools should focus on nurturing tomorrow's builders, says trustee candidate Usvat



By Brock Weir

As a woman who trained as a power plant engineer in her native Romania, Aurora's Liliana Usvat knows firsthand the importance of a technical education.

As one of three candidates running to be Aurora and King's trustee on the York Region District School Board this Monday, Ms. Usvat says all students would benefit from an increased emphasis on math and science both in the classroom and in afterschool programs.

"Kids are good, but the environment a school provides should be an expectation of the future," she says. "We have to build a generation that will build the buildings we are going to live in. We don't want to live in buildings that are built by people who don't understand enough math or physics. We want to have a good transportation system and we want people to have good, logical thinking and good management ability to build at a lower price and higher quality.

"For those that travel around the world, I think the GTA subway system should be as good as the Paris Metro. We need to prepare the technical people in this school system that will be able to produce such systems for the future."

It might be a tall order, but Ms. Usvat, who has contributed to math text books and maintains a website dedicated to mathematics, says this could be achieved through fostering technical clubs in schools from the Board level, as well as clubs for math and physics.

More artsy-minded students shouldn't be left behind either, she says, stressing the importance art can play in architecture, as well as pure human enjoyment.

"Our students need to have their arts exposed in a way that would be beneficial to them and their community," she says. "Those that are inclined towards English, publishing or television, the Board can build a YouTube channel that will promote their talent, and allow each school the chance to provide shows with these very talented kids.

"The school system, I believe, is a model for a good community. Parents want to come to communities where their kids can come to a good school."

That is what brought she and her family to Aurora in the first place over 14 years ago. She says she had heard a lot of positive things about the area, and the York Region District School Board, which made her realise that this is where she wanted to raise her daughter. Looking back, she says she was happy with her choice "as is her daughter, who now works in the area of risk

management for ScotiaBank.

?Building good schools with kids who are high achievers means not only do they understand the curriculum, but I want more kids to be good at the international level, to participate in international competitions, and anything we can help these kids participate in and prepare for. I would like to see [increase focus on technical education in arts] in all high schools because I know there are good teachers but I would like the average level of education to be higher. The subjects should be greater than it is right now.

?If I have ideas that will appeal to people, I will be very happy to work as Aurora and King's trustee.?