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role following a term of the board that has been labelled as divisive and dysfunctional by parents, students, official reports and other trustees.

In his acceptance speech, Duarte directly addressed what he hopes for the next year and the public perception of the board.

"I do not see this as a victory, rather as a beginning a new chapter for us," said Duarte. "We have one year left to earn back some of our reputation — let's grab the opportunity and forge ahead."

In the last year, HCDSB meetings have regularly included multiple calls to order, agendas left incomplete at the end of meeting time, threats of disabling trustee microphones and criticisms by ratepayers and students around trustee conduct. The situation got to the point that an investigation was conducted into trustee conduct.

The roughly 30-page re-

port from that investigation, released in September, found multiple instances of what it described as factionalism and dysfunction at the board table.

"Given our track record, I do understand the odds of us coming together. But I will do my part to break the ice and put in the time and effort to make this happen. I'm going to ask all of you to stay positive, focus and bring some confidence to our HCDSB families. Trustees, as mentioned earlier we will very strictly adhere to our by-laws and trustee code of conduct at our meetings," said Duarte.

Chairs and vice-chairs are elected for one-year terms at the HCDSB. Burlington trustee Brenda Agnew was elected as the new vice-chair.

In his unsuccessful bid to be selected as vice-chair, Burlington trustee Tim O'Brien expressed support for Duarte while acknowledging the challenge be-

fore him.

"We have just elected a chair at a time in our board where there's a lot of divisiveness, a lot of entrenchment and a lot of people in their own corners. And I truly believe the chair we elected is probably the only person right now that can unify us," said O'Brien.

Despite the optimism expressed, Duarte's first meeting as chair on Dec. 7 was a contentious one.

At one point, a dispute over the speaking order between trustees Nancy Guzzo and Peter DeRosa resulted in a reprimand from Duarte and the labelling of DeRosa's behaviour as an interruption.

"Thank you once again for interrupting me," said Guzzo during the interaction. "Go ahead trustee DeRosa because you're so it's all about you all the time."

There were multiple occasions during the meeting wherein Duarte requested trustees follow the established meeting protocol.