

EXCLUSIVE: New Milton school board candidate speaks on ISIS family controversy

A new trustee candidate of the Milton school board at the centre of controversies surrounding the mother of an ISIS member has spoken out.

[MELANIE BENNET](#)

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Source: andrewjwood.ca and votefordrkmetwally.ca

The mother of a convicted ISIS terrorist is running to oversee Milton's public schools, prompting her opponent to warn that the publicity surrounding her candidacy could distract the Halton District School Board from its education mandate.

Khдвига Metwally's candidacy captured international attention after the public learned that her son, Abdulrahman El Bahnasawy, had been convicted in the United States for plotting ISIS-inspired attacks in New York City.

El Bahnasawy pleaded guilty to terrorism offences and was sentenced to 40 years in prison. He was later transferred to ADX Florence, the federal Supermax prison in Colorado.

Metwally has spent years advocating for her son, arguing that he was mentally ill, addicted to drugs, and manipulated by undercover law enforcement agents. She has also campaigned for his removal from Supermax and return to Canada.



Mother of convicted ISIS terrorist runs for school board trustee in Ontario

MELANIE BENNET

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SEP 8

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Juno News travelled to Milton to speak with both candidates and residents about the Halton District School Board trustee race.

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Metwally declined an interview with Juno News, despite expressing significant concern over being misrepresented. She feared an interview could unfairly suggest that she was personally

responsible for her son's actions or mental health condition, damaging her character and perceived fitness to serve.

Andrew Wood, a local pastor whose children attend public schools in the ward, warned that El Bahnasawy's terrorism conviction has become a prolonged distraction for the HDSB.

"I think that the HDSB board would be very distracted for a long time because of the publicity around this," he said. "And I hope my candidacy can bring some order to that."



Wood said he entered the race shortly before nominations closed because he did not believe there was enough suitable representation for his family or the community.

"It really was about giving our community a choice, and there wasn't going to be one," he said.

"I'm running for school board trustee because my kids are in the schools here," Wood said. "How the schools run and function matters to me as a parent. The end result of my kids' education is a priority for me."

Wood said he is still learning about the board's specific challenges, but he said his experience sitting on two other boards taught him about governance and the limits of a board member's responsibilities.

“I hope that our school board can be less bogged down by distractions and more focused on the primary mandate of education,” Wood said.

Reviewing Metwally’s credentials on her [campaign page](#) influenced Wood’s decision to run. He contacted her directly to ask about her education and experience.

“The truth matters, and I think when you put yourself in a position for a public role, then you owe the public the truth,” he said.

However, Wood stopped short of blaming Metwally for her son’s actions. He said she had expressed heartbreak to him over what happened and condemned her son’s decisions. He further added that she maintained that her son’s mental health problems made him vulnerable to manipulation.

Wood also criticized some of the personal attacks directed toward Metwally online.

“The human side of me and the Christian side of me actually feels quite sad for the way that she’s been treated,” he said. “That goes beyond just people informing the public about the truth.”

He said voters must ultimately decide how the controversy affects their confidence in either candidate.

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