

**Public Schools Branch**  
Forty-Fifth Public Board of Directors Special Meeting  
Wednesday, December 7, 2022

Minutes

The Board of Directors of the Public Schools Branch met on Wednesday, December 7, 2022 at Spring Park Elementary school, Charlottetown.

Present: Bethany MacLeod, Board Chair  
Mary Jane Ready, Director  
Norman Beck, Director

Also, in Attendance:

Norbert Carpenter, Director of the Public Schools Branch  
Karen Redmond, Manager of Policy and Planning  
Sheri Gauthier, Confidential Board Secretary  
Blake Crockett, Financial Services, Coordinator  
Becky Chaisson, Director of Corporate Services (via telephone)

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME**

The meeting was called to order at 5:17 p.m. Board Chair MacLeod welcomed all in attendance.

**2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

12/07/01

**It was moved by Norman Beck and seconded by Mary Jane Ready that the agenda be approved as presented. Motion carried.**

**3. MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 19, 2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

12/07/02

**It was moved by Norman Beck and seconded by Mary Jane Ready that the minutes of the October 19, 2022 Board of Directors Meeting be adopted as presented. Motion carried.**

**3.1 MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 16, 2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPECIAL MEETING**

12/07/03

**It was moved by Mary Jane Ready and seconded by Norman Beck that the minutes of the November 16, 2022 Board of Directors Special Meeting be adopted as presented. Motion carried.**

**4. SPRING PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRESENTATION**

Principal Terry MacIsaac provided a presentation and highlights about Spring Park Elementary.

**5. FINANCIAL INVOICE**

**5.1 INVOICE # 340017 OCTOBER FLEET CHARGES FOR THE CHARLOTTETOWN GARAGE**

12/07/04      **It was moved by Norman Beck and seconded by Mary Jane Ready that invoice #340017 dated November 28, 2022 in the amount of \$296,029.30 for October fleet charges for the Charlottetown garage be approved as presented. Motion carried.**

**6. POICY REPORT**

**6.1 PROPOSED POLICY 610 – LOCKDOWN POLICY**

12/07/05      **It was moved by Norman Beck and seconded by Mary Jane Ready that the proposed policy be approved as presented. Motion carried.**

**7. DIRECTORS REPORT**

(The complete Directors' Report will be filed with the official minutes).

Director, Norbert Carpenter, shared the following report.

Director Carpenter showed his appreciation to the Board of Directors for their guidance and support through the last few years.

## Director's Office

The Public Schools Branch (PSB) would like to thank the current Board members for their dedicated service over the last number of years. Your work and guidance assisted all of us and our system through some very challenging times. The PSB looks forward to working with our new Board comprised of eleven numbers from across the province. We recently hosted a meet and greet with our new trustees and have arranged for governance training to commence over the next few weeks.

### Staffing Update

Jennifer Redmond, Senior Communications Officer, has accepted a new position and finished her work with the PSB on Friday, December 2, 2022. I would like to thank Jennifer for her dedicated service and wish her all the best in her new endeavors. The Senior Communications Officer Position will be filled in the coming weeks.

The Fall of 2022 has been a very busy one within the Public Schools Branch, with many things to celebrate. The PEISAA wrapped up a very successful fall sports program. Our buildings are buzzing again with extracurricular activities, community group usage and holiday and musical celebrations. We are very thankful for the collective efforts of our employees and stakeholders and are looking forward to 2023.

### Student Reporting

The Public Schools Branch is committed to ensuring that our schools provide a safe, caring, welcoming and respectful learning environment for students and staff. We do acknowledge

however, that sometimes incidents happen at school and if and when they do, we want students to feel comfortable reporting the incident.

The PSB is working to create more awareness and opportunity for students to report a concern or incident that happens at school. The goals of this work are to work with student and other stakeholders to:

- include a greater focus in our policies on student reporting
- hear about student experiences, the opportunities to report an incident and any gaps
- create student friendly student reporting promotional materials
- develop an online reporting tool to add to the reporting tools for students

We are working on these goals with the Three Oaks Family of schools to develop a model that we can implement as a pilot with the objective to implement in all families of schools.

## Student Services

### Staffing Update

Raeanne Adams has been seconded to the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning (DELL) until the end of June 2023 to lead the Inclusive Education Review. She will return to her role as Autism Consultant (AC) for September 2023. In the meantime, Mitch MacKinnon will replace Raeanne as AC for the majority of the schools in the western part of PEI. Mitch comes with a solid background with his work experience at ELP- Charlottetown and is well skilled to take on this new challenge.

Anne Inman will continue her work with Foundations under the umbrella of the DELL. The rollout in schools is going well and the transition has been seamless.

As you may know, we welcomed a new addition to the Student Services team back in September with a school physiotherapist. There has been a strong uptake of referrals as we currently have 75 students on active caseload.

After more than two years of hiatus due to COVID, we are now reviewing and revising our readiness to respond to events and crises in schools such as an environmental emergency, death of a student or staff, bus accident, lockdown situations, etc. We are now aligning our response with the previous training done with PREPaRE and making sure that all schools have the necessary information to appropriately respond. Professional development is planned for various staff, communication with law enforcement and educating the public are also part of our goals.

Finally, we have improved our communication with our pre-kindergarten partners to ensure that we have the necessary information to have the proper supports in place for students who will start kindergarten in September 2023. It is timely as Kindergarten registration is taking place right now in schools.

## Human Resources

The Administrative Support Leaders (ASL) are conducting seven principal evaluations this year. Evaluations take place every three years and the framework followed for evaluations aligns with the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET) Standards. Work has commenced on updating the teacher evaluations and stakeholders such as UPEI and PEITF are involved in this process.

Professional development opportunities for administrators also align with the CAMET standards. Principals have come together twice this fall and positive feedback regarding the learning opportunities has been received. The ASL's offered a PD session for eight new principals in late September and a second one will occur in January 2023. There are twenty teachers enrolled in the administrative leaders' course which started December 2, 2022.

Staff absenteeism has increased during the month of November and we anticipate this will continue through to the Holiday's. November 28, 2022 saw absenteeism hit 17.86% which is approximately 3.5% higher than the peak times during COVID outbreaks January-April 2022. During peak times last winter, we were re-deploying staff when absences surpassed 230. Due to the recruitment efforts that took place during the summer and fall, the PSB was able to fill 380 absences on November 28, 2022 without any redeployment. We are still experiencing substitute pressures in certain pockets through-out the province however we are reviewing the data and looking at creative solutions to address the needs. Our biggest pressure point is with Educational Assistants, schools are experiencing unfilled vacancies on a daily basis.

The Human Resource division is in the process of developing an HR work plan that aligns with the PSB Strategic Plan. The areas of focus include:

- Expand our Learning and Development opportunities for Principals and Vice Principals to support future organizational needs. The development and implementation of a coordinated, integrated framework that will incorporate and build on CAMET Standards and other learning initiatives;
- Concentrate on workforce planning. This includes developing a succession planning framework, developing a proactive knowledge transfer initiative to ensure continuity in the provision of programs and services, and develop and lead progressive recruitment and retention processes and practices using key performance indicators that support PSB's organizational goals;
- Lead, develop and oversee the implementation of an onboarding process that provides ongoing support to integrate new employees into the organization, their role, and PSBs values;
- Enhance our focus on Performance Feedback and Coaching for employees at all levels that ensures timely completion of plans and encourages regular dialogue between leaders (administration) and employees throughout the year;
- Strengthen monitoring, benchmarking and reporting of Attendance Management;

- Implement best practices to keep people healthy and safe within the workplace including the development and implementation of an integrated disability management program;
- Prioritize and streamline HR practices, policies and processes to generate efficiencies and consistency across the organization;

***\*timelines and ability to execute the HR work plan will depend on resources.***

## Corporate Services

We would like to take this opportunity to announce that Jennifer MacDonald has joined Corporate Services as the Executive Assistant and will be working out of the Stratford office. Jennifer comes to the PSB with a wealth of knowledge and we welcome her to the team!

## Finance

Finance has been focusing a lot of effort on the school cash on-line program upgrade. Staff have been busy supporting the schools and getting the data updated in the system correctly. We are also coming into a busy tender season where the finance staff will be working to issue tenders for school items that will be needed prior to the summer months including the office supplies and school supplies.

## Payroll

Payroll has been working with other departments in order to streamline processes to ensure that things are done in an efficient manner. Bi-weekly payroll for staff has been busy for staff with many substitutes and casuals being used in the system. It is important that all information gets sent to the payroll department in a timely manner in order for all staff to get the proper pay.

## Property Services

Property Services faced a monumental task in getting schools back up and running after Post Tropical Storm Fiona hit with the aid of the Custodians and Cleaners at the individual schools. All staff worked tirelessly to get the buildings safe and reopened for learning to happen. When it comes to regular maintenance, we continue to receive many requests for work to be completed and we have been working through these requests as quickly as possible. Challenges in getting work completed due to additional pressures with contractors and supply shortages are still impacting projects but staff are working to ensure buildings are safe for students. We appreciate all the support that all school staff have given in order to allow necessary work to be completed.

Property Services Staff have been very active in many capital projects. The renovation projects at Eliot River Elementary and Montague Consolidated continue to progress through the various stages. The build at Sherwood Elementary is well underway and we

continue to provide input to the design committee for the new Stratford school during the summer months. There has been a lot of work completed by PSB Property Services staff on all projects mentioned above.

## School Safety Services

School Safety Consultants have also been working on many programs and procedures to ensure all schools are safe learning environments for students and all staff. School visits by the School Safety Consultants will continue through the school year as will the roll out of some new programs and initiatives.

Work has been done with the schools ensuring that schools understand the roles, responsibilities and the importance of Joint Health and Safety Committees and also touching base with schools to ensure that they understand their hazardous material management plans within the schools.

## EAL/FAL

It continues to be a busy time in terms of newly arriving immigrants to PEI. At this point, we have registered more than 500 EAL/FAL students this year. These students have come from all over the world with the top source countries being the Philippines, Vietnam, China, India and Hong Kong. While many new arrivals have some experience with the English/French language, approximately 175 have had very limited exposure. Fifteen students from the Ukraine and 20 students with refugee status comprise this number. This results in a total of 2652 EAL/FAL students in 52 PSB schools.

Our schools are welcoming new students on a regular basis and it's wonderful for our school system to experience such a breadth of cultural and linguistic diversity. However, the volume of EAL/FAL students entering our school system does impact already challenging class composition and staffing. Additionally, students coming from backgrounds with limited or no prior schooling coupled with trauma add a layer to teaching and learning that can be difficult to navigate. As a result, we are piloting a program in one of our intermediate schools where we are providing a focused and intensity of service to students with limited prior education and limited literacy in the home language. This program aims to change the trajectory of students who fit within this descriptor in hopes of increasing their opportunities for success both at the intermediate and secondary levels. We are beginning to see some small gains and this is encouraging.

With the growth of the EAL/FAL population, now more than 13% of the total PSB enrolment, our education system needs to recognize that EAL/FAL students are part of the expected norm. However, many of our teachers have not had training within their Bachelor or Masters programs specific to the teaching and learning needs of new language learners. As a result, we need to offer timely and focused professional development that gives teachers the skills needed to teach EAL/FAL learners and the confidence to use them. Currently, this is done through teacher support but with only one position responsible for both PSB and CSLF, this is overwhelming. There is so much

demand for EAL/FAL teacher support that we are unable to keep up. As a result, we are exploring new ways to offer PD that builds capacity in our system. This exploration is focusing on the development of modules directed at understanding language acquisition and how to teach students at the various stages of language acquisition.

## Transportation

### Routing

Approximately 3,000 routing changes were implemented in our transportation system from June to August, and approximately 1,000 more have taken place since September. Changes since September include temporary changes such as those necessitated by Post Tropical Storm Fiona as well as permanent changes caused by student/family movement, adjustments to pick up/drop-off locations, an influx of immigration in some areas, as well as many other factors.

Efficiency, overcrowding, student time aboard buses, and fiscal responsibility continue to be the driving factors that shape our routing efforts. With a fixed number of buses and drivers allocated to our system, altering, adding, or eliminating bus runs are challenges that have direct impacts on students, drivers, and our system. We take these decisions very seriously and are proud of the efforts of our transportation support staff in addressing these challenges positively.

### Driver Recruitment, Interviewing/Hiring, and Training

Demographics require driver recruitment and retention to be an ongoing and necessary focus. Currently, 109 of the PSB's 261 regular school bus drivers are over age 60. As is the case across the country, labour shortages in this field have placed great pressure on our system to recruit, train, and maintain good, qualified employees. It is one thing to legally drive a school bus, it is quite another to be a good and qualified school bus driver. A genuine care for students is what separates our team from many, and quality interactions with parents and staff, policy and documentation adherence, daily problem solving etc., are essential to our system's operation.

Recruitment efforts continue via advertisements on a variety of media platforms, target specific job fairs, word of mouth, etc. Since September, the PSB has conducted over 100 interviews with drivers for position/route changes and has welcomed approximately 30 new drivers.

### Canada Games

PSB buses and drivers have been contracted to support the upcoming 2023 Canada Winter Games, hosted by PEI from February 18 to March 5. With an emphasis on this being a "Green" winter games, all PSB buses scheduled for use will be electric school buses. This will require additional training for many who have not yet used an electric bus, as well as a significant commitment from PSB staff from 6 AM to well past 10 PM every day for the duration of the games.

## Buses and Infrastructure

We have received notification that there will be delays in receiving the electric buses that have been tendered this year. Thirty-five additional buses were initially expected to be received by Christmas. While some buses are still expected to arrive in that time frame, the majority are now not expected to arrive until well into the new year.

Due to their age and mechanical condition, many buses in our existing fleet are at the end of their safe life span. This has led to fewer “spare” buses available. An adequate spare bus fleet is essential to allow for the regular maintenance of our fleet as well as to support co-curricular/extra-curricular student travel. This delay is expected to create pressure to have enough buses to support our regular obligations, particularly in the event of breakdowns, an accident, or other unexpected occurrences.

## School Bus Safety Week

October 17 - 21 was formally recognized, for the first time in our province this year, as provincial school bus safety week. With student safety as our top priority, this week was a welcomed opportunity to place focused attention on safe school bus transportation and the amazing work of our school bus drivers every day. Coloring and poster contests with a focus on school bus safety were implemented at the school level with students, and increased media via radio, television, social media coverage was used to further educate and encourage the general public to proceed with extreme caution around school buses, to absolutely stop for flashing red lights, etc. This initiative was very positive and is expected to continue and grow on an annual basis.

### 8. **OTHER BUSINESS**

No new business to report.

### 9. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 5:44 p.m.