

Public Schools Branch  
Fifty-Third Board of Trustees Public Meeting  
Tuesday, September 5, 2023

Minutes

The Public Schools Branch Board of Trustees hosted their eighth public meeting on Tuesday, September 5, 2023 via Webex virtual platform.

Present: Heather Mullen, Board Chair  
Stephanie Arnold, Vice-Chair  
Beverley Ann Boulter, Trustee  
Beckie Keezer, Trustee  
Rachel McCarthy, Trustee  
Jaclyn Massey, Trustee  
Amanda Blakeney, Trustee  
Jodi Zver, Trustee  
Wade Czank, Trustee  
Jacob Jadis, Trustee

Also, in Attendance:

Tracy Beaulieu, Acting Director of the Public Schools Branch  
Sheri Gauthier, Confidential Board Secretary  
Karen Redmond, Manager of Policy and Planning  
Becky Chaisson, Director of Corporate Services  
Blake Crockett, Financial Services Coordinator  
Dominique Lecours, Director of Student Services  
Alison Campbell, Manager of Student Services

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 p.m. Board Chair Mullen welcomed all in attendance.

**2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

09/05/01

**It was moved by Jodi Zver and seconded by Amanda Blakeney that the agenda be approved as presented. Motion carried.**

**3. MINUTES OF THE JULY 31, 2023 BOARD OF TRUSTEES SPECIAL MEETING**

09/05/02

**It was moved by Rachel McCarthy and seconded by Jaclyn Massey that the minutes of the July 31, 2023 Board of Trustees meeting be adopted as presented. Motion carried.**

**4. BOARD CHAIR REPORT**

(The complete Board Chair's report will be filed with the official minutes.)

Chair Mullen shared the following report.

Welcome back to another school year! It has been a busy summer across the Public Schools Branch, from maintenance projects that took place across PEI, classroom plans were

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reviewed and the hiring of new staff and existing staff moving into new roles. I was pleased to have the opportunity to speak to all our school administrators at the end of August and welcome new Principals and Vice-Principals into their roles. We thank all our administrators for the leadership, direction and coordination within the school and their work connecting with their local communities of students, parents and caregivers.

The Public Schools Branch has also had some significant changes in leadership over the summer with Norbert Carpenter accepting a new role as Deputy Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action. I thank Norbert for his leadership at the Public Schools Branch since 2020, he not only oversaw the day-to-day business of 56 schools and over 4,000 employees, but he also led the system through an unprecedented pandemic. As Trustees, he welcomed us all into our new roles and supported our training. I am happy to welcome Tracy Beaulieu into the role of Acting Director, Tracy has over 25 years of experience in the K-9 setting as a teacher, administrator, and most recently as an Administrative Support Leader to twenty elementary schools. The Board of Trustees will be working with the Public Service Commission over the next few months to seek a permanent designation in the Director position.

One of the priorities of the Board of Trustees over the past few months has been working with the Director of Student Services, Dominique Lecours and their department at the Public Schools Branch to understand and address the growing Educational Assistants (EA) needs within the province. Trustees also heard feedback from principals, parents and MLAs about their concerns regarding the EA needs in schools this upcoming school year. There are several factors leading to this increased need in PEI and Trustees will work collaboratively with Student Services, school administrators, the Department of Education and Early Years and the Government of PEI to explore options to address this growing need within our schools. Our first action to address these concerns was to work with the Department of Education and Early Years and the PEI Government to have 50 additional EA positions funded for the 2023-24 school year. I am pleased that this request was granted and announced on August 30 by Minister Natalie Jameson. Trustees will continue exploring additional options collaboratively with our stakeholders to address this growing system need.

Elections PEI is hosting a Trustee By-Election in Zone 7, this includes the Mount Stewart, Morell and Souris schools in the area. Candidate nominations open on Tuesday, September 5, 2023. Candidate Registration papers will be available on the Elections PEI website. Mail-In Ballot Applications will be available on Elections PEI website on Tuesday, September 5, 2023. For this by-election, you also must live within the Zone 7 electoral zone as defined by the Morell Consolidated, Mt. Stewart Consolidated, Morell Regional High School, and Souris Regional family of schools and as defined within the Education Act Election Regulations. Further details are available at [www.electionspei.ca](http://www.electionspei.ca).

Heather Mullen  
Chair, Board of Trustees  
Public Schools Branch  
Prince Edward Island

### Meeting Schedule June/July/August 2023

June 5	PSB Board of Trustees Meeting
June 14	Meeting with Director
June 20	Planning Meeting
June 21	Stratford High School Plans
June 22	Meeting with Minister <i>(attended by Vice Chair, Trustee Stephanie Arnold and Trustee Jody Zver)</i>
June 26	Planning Meeting
June 28	Special Meeting of PSB Board of Trustees
July 5	Meeting with Director
July 26	Capital Priorities Meeting
July 31	PSB Board of Trustees Meeting
August 4	Meeting with Director
August 5	Meeting with Vice-Chair
August 7	Meeting with Director
August 9	Meeting with Director of PSB Human Resources
August 10	Meeting with new Acting Director
August 21	HR Planning

August 21	Meeting with Acting Director
August 23	Meeting with Acting Director
August 25	PSB Administrator's Meeting & Planning meeting with Vice Chair
August 29	Planning Meeting
August 30	Meeting with Minister & Newly Appointed Deputy Minister of Education and Early Years
Sept 5	PSB Board of Trustees Meeting

## **5. PSB ACTING DIRECTOR REPORT**

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

Acting Director, Tracy Beaulieu, shared the following report.

Welcome to the start of a new school year. With each new year comes new possibilities and challenges, and it is my pleasure to continue to support our Public Schools Branch as the Acting Director. While I may be new to the position, it has been a very active and rewarding few weeks. I have met with many key stakeholders, such as the Board Chairs, Minister and Deputy Minister of Education and Early Years, the Dean of Education at UPEI, as well as professionals who work at the Child and Youth Advocate Office.

I want to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the Public Schools Branch employees who have worked diligently to ensure that our schools are ready to open their doors to students.

August was a busy month with preparation for the school year. There was a presentation made to the Treasury Board about the need for additional Educational Assistants to support some of our students who require special attention. We are very grateful that the province has approved this submission and funded the full request of 50 additional Educational Assistant positions. Since then, the Student Services and Human Resource Divisions have been assisting schools in the hiring process.

The August 30, 2023 press release can be found here

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/news/welcoming-students-back-to-school-0>

# Policy and Planning Update

## Student Reporting - Report It! Campaign

Last spring, the PSB launched phase 1 of the pilot campaign, Report It! in the Three Oaks Family of Schools. The Report It! Campaign was launched in response to a recommendation from the Child and Youth Advocate for the PSB to create more of a focus on student reporting.

The goals of the campaign are to:

- Promote the importance of reporting a school related incident (bullying, theft, violence, etc.) and
- Ensure students can report an incident in a way that is most comfortable for them (at school, at home, to a community partner, online).

The PSB conducted research across the country and most provinces have similar ways for students to report an incident, including anonymously online.

Promotional materials for the campaign included posters and bookmarks with QR codes, a website and online student reporting form.

In terms of the results from phase 1 of the pilot, it was not possible to determine an increase in the number of incidents being reported to staff, parents or community partners. However, during the pilot, 15 online reports were received regarding 11 incidents. Five of the 15 reports were reported anonymously.

At the end of phase 1 students (grades 7-12), parents and staff in the Three Oaks Family of Schools were provided a short survey. 142 completed surveys were received and overall, 87% of respondents said online student reporting should continue with the anonymous option.

Phase 2 of the Report It! Campaign will begin in all other PSB schools around the end of October and will conclude with a short survey to students, parents and staff to gain feedback. Additional tools have been developed to support the campaign including a short video, Q&A and teacher resource.

## Zero Tolerance Posters

School Administrators have been provided with Zero Tolerance posters to display on the main doors of their school. The purpose of the posters is to make everyone aware that respectful behaviour towards PSB staff is expected and that aggressive or abusive behaviour of any kind will not be tolerated. The posters also contain a QR code to the PSB's Safe and Caring Learning Environments Policy.

## Student Services

The Student Services Division wants to give thanks to all the trustees for their advocacy and support of our schools in helping secure an additional 50 FTE for Educational Assistants. The process has already started to allocate those extra hours to schools and has been welcomed by everyone. We are still currently in the process of adding hours to respond to the unanticipated needs in schools as we are made aware of them.

Earlier in August, we completed the second phase of training for PREPaRE with the training of 13 staff who are now certified trainers for PREPaRE. This will allow us to continue to build capacity in the entire Board. We will have PD on October 26 and 27 which will include school administrators, counselors, members of the Student Wellbeing Teams and staff from the Commission scolaire de langue française (CSLF). Our vision is to create a common approach and understanding across the province on how we can respond to events that disrupt the functioning of schools and reduce the emotional impact of such events on our entire school community.

We are continuing our collaboration with the Department of Education and Early Years (DEEY) on SEL (Social Emotional Learning) as we are planning PD for School Counselors and Child and Youth Care Workers.

On the staffing front: We are pleased to welcome Ms. Laurie Watson, new supervisor for our APSEA group in the province. We welcome Ms. Wendy King as well (new teacher for DHH students), Mr. Nathan Ford (school psychologist) and Ms. Rebecca MacFadyen (autism consultant).

## Human Resources

The HR team has had a productive summer. Recruitment and hiring have been the focus. Many new positions have been added to the system, including 50 additional Educational Assistants. We are now pivoting to the onboarding process and our priority for September will be establishing a healthy pool of casuals and substitutes in all our employee groups.

Negotiations for the CUPE 3260 local (Education Support, including EAs, YSW, etc.) have concluded. The arbitration award included salary increases that align with the value of the PEI pattern and includes a flat rate adjustment for all bargaining unit members of \$0.53 per hour effective April 1, 2021, an adjustment of 2.75% effective April 1, 2022 and a staggered adjustment in 2023 of 2.25% effective April 1, 2023 and 2.25% effective October 1, 2023.

## Corporate Services

The entire Corporate Services Department has been working all summer in preparation for the upcoming school year to ensure a successful year for staff and students!

## Staffing Announcement

We are pleased to announce that Cynthia Watson is the new Executive Administrative Assistant for Corporate Services and will be working closely with the entire Corporate Services Team.

## Finance

We are pleased that we have received our 2023-2024 operational budget and we have been working on preparing the budget that will be going forward to the Board of Trustees for final approval. Schools and various departments will be receiving their operational budget and we will work with new Principals to help them better understand their budgets. We will also be assisting staff to understand what spending has been done to date and what is available to use for the remainder of the fiscal year.

The Finance team will also continue to work with schools to help them better understand the new school cash online software during the upcoming months by answering questions and inquiries as they come forward.

## Payroll

The payroll staff have continued to enter payroll data and changes in order to be ready for the start of the new school year. The first payroll for all school staff (instructional and non-instructional) will be issued on September 14, 2023.

## Property Services

The entire Property Services department (including school custodians and cleaners) continue to be busy preparing the buildings for the return of staff and students. The last few weeks of preparation are always very hectic to ensure as much work as possible is completed. All staff have done an amazing job to complete the volume of work that they have, with the limited timeframe that the summer months provide them.

## School Safety Services

School Safety Services has been preparing for the return of staff and students as well. They have also been working closely with Property Services on some projects at schools as well that have more of a safety focus. In addition, this team has been part of the planning in order to better prepare for the response if another natural disaster strikes our school system. Planning for upcoming safety training is underway as well.

# EAL/FAL

## EAL/FAL Arrivals

It has been a very busy summer at the EAL/FAL Reception Centre. Families have continued to arrive from all over the world with the Philippines, Vietnam and India being the top source countries. To date, there are 306 new EAL/FAL students to register into our PSB schools. This number will continue to grow in the coming weeks. As we complete intakes and language proficiency assessments with these new students, schools are sent registration packages and appointments are set up in hopes of most new students being able to start school if they have arrived prior to September 7. We are using itinerant teachers to help where we can in order to expedite the process.

## STEPP, School Transition EAL Pilot Program

We are pleased to be offering the **School Transition EAL Pilot Program, STEPP** at LM, West Royalty and Stonepark. STEPP is a full day experiential, hands-on literacy and transitional support program for English language learners in grades 1-9 for approximately 2-8 weeks depending on the needs of participants. Each program will be staffed with an EAL teacher and an EAL YSW. Participants will be identified based on their language proficiency and their prior learning history. It is the hope of this program to alleviate the transitional stress placed on some EAL students and classroom teachers so that as the EAL students transition full time into the regular classroom, they will be able to engage more fully.

## Supporting Newcomer Children and Youth in PEI Schools Through Professional Learning, Level 1: The Big Picture

EAL Programs and Services is delighted to be offering **Supporting Newcomer Children and Youth in PEI Schools Through Professional Learning, Level 1: The Big Picture** to all PEITF and CUPE 3260 staff on September 1 beginning at 1 pm. **The Big Picture** is a foundational professional learning opportunity that explores immigration on PEI, culture and language acquisition. This level will take participants between 2-3 hours and can be completed individually or with a partner. The link to this professional learning opportunity is public and can be accessed through any email account. Participants will be presented with a certificate of completion if they wish to receive one. The link is:

<https://sites.google.com/cloud.edu.pe.ca/level1-the-big-picture/home>



# Transportation/Risk Management

## Routing and School Year Start-Up

Summer months have been busy for PSB Transportation Services, with approximately 3,000 routing changes implemented. Hundreds more are expected during the first weeks of school. Our yearly average of routing updates falls between 4,000 and 5,000 per year.

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, altering, adding, or eliminating bus runs are challenges that have direct and serious impacts on students, drivers, and our system.

Driver Recruitment, Interviewing/Hiring, and Training continues to be a necessary focus. Recruitment efforts included a province wide job fairs in June, with Saturday recruitment in each county of the province. The summer months saw training for several drivers, including 5 that were trained in-house via the PSB school bus driver training program. By September's end we expect to have OJT training complete for all new substitutes and new employees fully operational, no small feat considering summer months. Transportation hired over 40 new school bus drivers during our last school year, and we expect to require similar numbers this year, due in large part to the aging demographic of our drivers.

## Driver Meetings

On September 1, 5, and 6 a total of six school bus driver meetings will be held throughout the province which will allow open and two-way conversation with drivers. Focus will include the significance of the role drivers play, student safety, communication, system support, route adjustments, HR and contract related issues, availability and use of substitute drivers, managing behaviour issues, electric bus challenges, and other.

## Buses and Infrastructure

Purchase orders have been issued by the Province for an additional 21 electric buses. These new buses are expected to arrive before Christmas and replace older buses that have aged out of our system. Electric buses continue to pose many additional challenges for our system, with range and charging infrastructure being the two primary areas. This has indicated an impact on our ability to support extracurricular activities and emergency situations, including early dismissal due to inclement weather.

The charging infrastructure required to support all 21 of these new buses will be located at driver's residences. This model has proven positive to date, but does introduce additional challenges regarding installation, maintenance, and ongoing support.

## Bus Passes

In past school years, the PSB had issued as many as 75,000 bus passes per year. Considering we only have approximately 180 instructional days each year (minus storm days,

etc.), the system time required to evaluate each request, complete the required paperwork, our driver to track and accommodate, etc. was unsustainable, particularly in light of new bus manifest requirements and others. Direction has been given such that bus passes are no longer to be used to support social or "optional" activities. Restrictions will remain in place with passes to be issued to support primary childcare concerns or exceptional situations only.

## Community Engagement

PSB Transportation has partnered to support many community initiatives over the summer months including support for the Cavendish employment shuttle summer runs, Oak Acres Children's Camp, Water Safety Programming, the "Stuff a Bus" program for food kitchens, and others. While PSB buses are not available for rental purposes due to insurance constraints, the activities have been "grandfathered-in" and have received governmental support as exceptions.

The PSB has also partnered with Law enforcement and the Province in school start up campaigns designed to draw greater attention to school bus safety. Our next concentrated efforts will be for our annual school bus safety week in October.

### **6. FINANCIAL INVOICES**

#### **6.1 INVOICE 344786 – MAY FLEET CHARGES FOR THE CHARLOTTETOWN DEPOT**

09/05/03

It was moved by Jodi Zver and seconded by Becky Keezer that invoice 344786 dated June 12, 2023 in the amount of \$155,049.76 for May fleet charges for the Charlottetown garage be approved as presented. Motion carried.

#### **6.2 INVOICE 344949 – MAY FLEET CHARGES FOR THE SUMMERSIDE DEPOT**

09/05/04

It was moved by Becky Keezer and seconded by Amanda Blakeney that invoice 344949 dated June 16, 2023 in the amount of \$123,735.38 for May fleet charges for the Summerside garage be approved as presented. Motion carried.

#### **6.3 INVOICE 346006 – JULY FLEET CHARGES FOR THE SUMMERSIDE DEPOT**

09/05/05

It was moved by Beverley Ann Boulter and seconded by Wade Czank that invoice 346006 dated August 3, 2023 in the amount of \$104,499.12 for July fleet charges for the Summerside garage be approved as presented. Motion carried.

#### **6.4 INVOICE 346096 – JUNE FLEET CHARGES FOR THE CHARLOTTETOWN DEPOT**

09/05/06

It was moved by Rachel McCarthy and seconded by Jodi Zver that invoice 346096 dated August 8, 2023 in the amount of \$112,099.49 for June fleet charges for the Charlottetown garage be approved as presented. Motion carried.

**7. 2023-2024 PSB PROPOSED OPERATIONAL BUDGET**

09/05/07

**It was moved by Jodi Zver and seconded by Beckie Keezer that the 2023-2024 PSB Operational Budget be approved as presented. Motion carried.**

**8. STUDENT SERVICES DIVISIONAL UPDATE**

Dominique Lecours, Director of Student Services, and Alison Campbell, Manager of Student Services, joined the meeting to provide a Student Services update. Alison provided an update and spoke to the process for securing additional Educational Assistant positions at the PSB.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.