

Public Schools Branch
Board of Trustees Public Meeting
July 15, 2025

Minutes

The Public Schools Branch Board of Trustees hosted their eighteenth public meeting in person at the Stratford Town Hall, on Tuesday, July 15, 2025.

Present: Stephanie Arnold, Board Chair
Wade Czank, Vice-Chair
Amanda Blakeney, Trustee
Jocelyne Ludgate, Trustee
Rachel McCarthy, Trustee
Heather Mullen, Trustee
Beckie Keezer, Trustee
Andrew Rose, Trustee
Tracy Beaulieu, Director of Public Schools Branch
Karen Redmond, Manager of Policy and Procedure
Nathan MacLeod, Director of Property Services Public Schools Branch
Natasha Monaghan, Executive Assistant

Regrets: Jacob Jardis, Trustee
Beverley Ann Boulter, Trustee
Jaclyn Massey, Trustee

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:36 p.m. Chair Arnold welcomed all in attendance.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was moved by Heather Mullen and seconded by Andrew Rose that the agenda be approved as presented. Motion carried

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

3.1 MINUTES OF THE June 17, 2025 BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

It was moved by Heather Mullen and seconded by Jocelyn Ludgate that the minutes from the June 17, 2025, Board of Trustees meeting be approved as presented. Motion carried.

4. BOARD CHAIR REPORT

Chair, Stephanie Arnold shared the following report:

**Public Schools Branch
Board of Trustees
Chair's Report
July 2025**

Last month, members of the Audit Committee met with Public Schools Branch (PSB) staff and its auditors to review the outcomes of its annual audit. We will hear from Beckie Keezer, Chair of the Audit Committee on the audit process and results.

Earlier this month, I represented the Board of Trustees at the Canadian School Board Association's Annual Congress for the first time. Hosted virtually by the Manitoba School Boards Association this year, the 2-day program included presentations and workshops on a wide range of topics, such as school board governance, supporting mental health and well-being in the workplace, substance use harm prevention in schools, and reconciliation across school boards.

The Board is actively seeking to increase its capacity. Training, professional development, governance policy review, and access to expertise are among its focus areas. We will also continue to build productive relationships with education partners, working with them to identify areas of alignment and collaboration.

As always, the Board encourages local schools to invite your Trustee to events and meetings concerning your school community. Our contact details are available on the PSB website.

Stephanie Arnold
Chair, Board of Trustees
Public Schools Branch
Prince Edward Island

5. DIRECTOR REPORT

Director, Tracy Beaulieu shared the following report:

Director of Public Schools Branch Update

End of Year Reflections and Looking Ahead

With the school year concluded, we reflect on a time filled with both accomplishments and challenges. Our sincere thanks go to all students, staff, families, and partners whose dedication and support made a positive impact throughout the year, especially in times of need.

This month also brings a bittersweet farewell to our Assistant Director and colleague, Dominique Lecours, who will retire at the end of July. Ms Lecours's career has been marked by her unwavering dedication, professionalism, and compassion for students and staff alike. Her contributions have strengthened our school community in countless ways, and while we

are sad to see her go, we are deeply grateful for the opportunity to have worked alongside her.

We would like to welcome Mr. Rob MacAdam to the role of Assistant Director for the 2025-2026 school year. Mr. MacAdam most recently served as Principal at Colonel Gray High School and brings with him a wealth of experience as both a teacher and administrator. His insight and leadership will be a valuable asset at the system level.

Looking Ahead:

As we have transitioned into the summer months, our focus has shifted to preparing for the upcoming school year. Key priorities include:

- **Staffing Challenges:** We continue to face concerns around school-based staffing, which may impact service delivery. These issues have been central in our discussions with the Department of Education and information about our immediate needs have been shared in order to support a Treasury Board Submission.
- **Financial Sustainability:** We remain committed to advocating for the resources needed to support our programs and meet growing demands.
- **Organizational Review:** We are developing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to engage an external group in conducting a comprehensive organizational review. This will help identify the supports and structures necessary to ensure we are delivering services as effectively and efficiently as possible.
- **Commissioner Jenkins Review:** Work has begun with Commissioner Jenkins and we are fully cooperating with this process in order to ensure the PSB has solid processes in place to support our students.

We look forward to working collaboratively through the summer to address these priorities and ensure a strong start to the new school year.

EAL/FAL Update

Data

The EAL/FAL Reception continues to welcome newcomer families and their school-age children throughout the summer months. New EAL/FAL student arrivals for the 2024-2025 school year to date include 673 students. Of the 1200 EAL/FAL whose English or French language skills were reassessed this spring, 1,012 students are currently recommended for itinerant instructional language support in September 2025. This number will increase as the majority of new students arrive in August. 185 of these 1,012 students are from refugee backgrounds. To date, PSB schools have almost 3800 EAL/FAL students enrolled, close to 20% of the total student enrolments (20,964 as of May 31st) for September 2025.

New Arrivals with Needs

EAL/FAL students continue to arrive in PEI schools with significant exceptional needs, which often require EA or YSW support. Some of these students arrive with a diagnosis, while others present with specific issues and no diagnosis, creating additional challenges, especially when parents may not discuss these issues due to cultural factors. The number of EAL/FAL students arriving with additional needs has grown from 8 students in 2019 to 35 in 2024-2025 (to date), with more EAL students identified with needs arriving over the

summer. This places significant pressure on the school system as current staffing allocations are not able to meet the needs.

Summer School Transition EAL Program (STEP)

39 EAL students are registered for the **Summer STEP**. The program can accommodate approximately 15 students per class, with three classes at three levels (one teacher per level and two EAL Youth Service Workers for the entire program):

Grades 1-3 (11 students)

Grades 4-6 (12 students)

Grades 7-9 (16 students)



The program provides functional English language and transitional skills to new EAL students who have been assessed at lower levels of English language proficiency. The in-school setting provides a strong and realistic environment for multilingual learners to build routine, confidence, and connection. Students benefit from daily exposure to functional language in a supportive and structured space, helping them maintain and extend their English skills. Activities are designed to mirror real classroom expectations, with additional time outdoors for social language practice. While transportation remains a challenge for some families, the overall response has been positive. Program staff have intentionally reserved spots to accommodate new arrivals throughout the summer, ensuring flexibility and access as student needs evolve.

Focus Groups & Surveys

In collaboration with the Department of Education and Early Years, the EAL/FAL Division hosted a newcomer parent group in May at the EAL/FAL Reception Centre. The purpose of this focus group was to engage newcomer parents in conversation and to obtain feedback from parents/guardians on their children's learning and transitional experiences in PEI schools. Focus groups with school administrators and EAL STEP staff were also held at Queen Charlotte Intermediate School, Glen Stewart, and Spring Park on their School Transition EAL Programs this past school year. Both of these focus groups provided valuable information used to make recommendations in the *Inclusive Education Action Plan*. Surveys

with the EAL/FAL Team and newcomer parents were also used to gather information and feedback.

Finance Update

The audit for March 31, 2025 was completed in late June. On June 26th, the Audit/Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees met with Doane Grant Thornton (Partner, Manager, Audit Senior) and the financial management team from the Public Schools Branch (Blake Crockett, Director and Ashley Higginbotham, Manager). The financial statements and auditors reports were presented to the committee with a clean audit opinion (unqualified) and the statements were approved and signed by the committee and management (the statements will be brought forward to the Board of Trustees for formal approval as part of the Annual Report at the AGM). As such, the finance department was able to complete its financial statement package to the Office of the Comptroller earlier than the June 30th deadline, submitting on June 27th.

It is to all of our Finance Department Staff's (Accounting, Payroll, Administration, etc.) credit when the work that auditors check is free from misstatement, we are issued a clean audit report and meet all our tight reporting deadlines with the province. Our small but mighty team is always busy and under many deadlines. The fact that the team gets more efficient each year-end is a testament to the skills and abilities they possess. Our Finance department leadership wants to highlight how much we appreciate all of our team's very hard work, expertise, attention to detail, resilience and help that get us to this point each year.

The 2025-26 operating budget has been drafted and it was reviewed with the Audit/Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees. The committee has tentatively approved the operating budget and is bringing it forth for adoption by the Board of Trustees at the July 15th meeting. Once approved, the Finance department is ready to upload budgets and provide initial packages to Branch departments and school administrators.

Our accounting department, coming off a relentless spring year-end push, is busy processing payments, invoices, and purchases to end off the school year and to support summer maintenance operations. Staff will, while completing regular day-to-day tasks, begin planning for September and the 2025-26 school year. Our payroll department completed an extremely busy June ensuring all advance pays were completed (Teacher Deferred Summer Pays) on the final pay for June (essentially equating to five pays being processed during one two-week period). Other payroll staff were busy with final pays, Records of Employment for 10-month staff, and other year-end tasks. Staff will now turn their attention to continued summer payroll tasks while also planning for a new school year, new staff and any changes/pivots that can be made for efficiency.

The payroll department was pleased to receive one (1) additional FTE in our budget letter for a Payroll Officer. This increase in positions will provide opportunities to reallocate work, redistribute capacity, refocus efforts and provide process efficiencies. The department has a posting out for this position as well as another payroll officer position in Summerside. Once filled, management, supervisors and staff will be busy orienting/training new staff members to ensure their and our department's success.

Finally, the Finance Department is very sad to announce the passing of a long-term payroll staff member. Sandra McNally, who worked for the Public Schools Branch since 1996, was a Payroll Officer with our Stratford Branch Office. Sandra has been on leave for the past two years battling illness and ultimately, passed away on July 6th. Staff who had the pleasure of working with Sandra will remember her strong payroll skills, expertise/training provided to fellow co-workers, her efforts to ensure her work was done to the highest degree and her absolute love and dedication to her family. We will remember Sandra and keep her family in our thoughts during this difficult time.

Human Resources Update

Staffing of schools and the Branch vacancies has been going extremely well and feedback from Administrators has been very positive in using the new ATS system this year. HR will continue to work on improvements as we begin to use more features of the system for 2025/2026. To date there have been 215 positions for Administration/Teachers and 119 CUPE 3260 postings. The French Immersion Open posting had 19 hires for the upcoming school year into french positions.

The casual/substitute re-activation postings will be up this week for the 2025/2026 school year to apply to a posting with the ATS system to reactivate. They are now required to provide an up-to-date resume and identify if they were actively subbing the previous year or had any gaps in their employment with us. References will be requested for those applicants.

Both the CUPE Education collective agreements will be going to the bargaining table this fall and with the newly ratified CUPE Health collective agreement providing significant wage increases and other incentives we expect to see these as well at these tables.

Student Services

This month the Student Services team said farewell to their Acting Director, Sandra Jay, as she concluded her position. Mrs. Jay has made a positive impact within the division and her professional contributions were appreciated. A heartfelt thank you to Sandra for all her work and dedication to the Public Schools Branch.

On July 1st, Mrs. Raeanne Adams assumed the permanent Director of Student Services position. Mrs. Adams was recently a Manager in that division and has served as an Autism Consultant. We are happy to welcome her to the Director's team and know that she will bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the position.

Property Update

Maintenance, School Safety & Minor Capital Repairs:

In preparation for the 2025-2026 school year, Property Services and School Safety are actively working with the schools, Departments and Contractors across the Island on many different projects, big and small. There is great work happening each day at the schools to provide a safe learning environment.

Property Services and the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure (DTI) continue to work on this year's minor capital repair priorities, which takes into consideration building infrastructure and school revitalization upgrades. There are 120 projects that are currently being worked on, most now in the construction phase, others being designed for future work. Property Service is also in the midst of our summer maintenance projects. These projects were discussed with school administration and custodians as their top priorities from a school level. These are projects that are coordinated and/or completed by our maintenance team.

Major Capital Projects:

Property Services and DTI are now working on four major capital projects, Stratford High school, East Royalty school, Queen Charlotte Intermediate addition, and Stratford Intermediate. Construction at Stratford High is progressing well. Consultants have been actively working through the design for East Royalty and concept plans for Queen Charlotte addition. The planning committees for both these projects have been meeting with the team of consultants to move these projects forward. East Royalty Phase 1 is currently out for tender, with plans to start construction by the end of summer/early fall. Stratford Intermediate is still in early stages of the process, with groups working on a space program. This program will be used as the basis of the design

Transportation Update

Ridership Numbers Up

During the 2024-5 school year **16,896** PSB students were supported via PSB school buses to and from school daily. This number is up by **85** students compared to last year. Transportation support remains consistent at approximately **80%** of PSB total student population.

Nearly **100%** of PSB students are transported via PSB school buses at some point each school year, via their participation in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. PSB school buses supported **2,454** school requests for additional co-curricular and extra-curricular trips this year. This number is up by **211** over last year and is an all-time high for our system.

Driver Recruitment

In late June, the PSB Transportation team conducted our fifth annual school bus driver job fair recruitment campaign. Three locations (Bloomfield, Charlottetown, Montague) saw Transportation staff available on a Saturday morning to promote and discuss the work of PSB bus drivers. These efforts resulted in **46** prospective drivers submitting their names for employment consideration. We will continue other recruitment efforts year-round as we anticipate a need of approximately **50** new school bus drivers each year for the foreseeable future to offset demographic demands.

Cameras on Buses

National media recently announced changes to Canadian highway safety standards that will require 360-degree exterior cameras to be installed on any new school bus purchased in Canada after 2027. These 360 cameras offer a "bird's eye" view of the circumference of the bus to the bus driver. This should assist bus drivers with backing safely and ensuring students/vehicles/etc. are a safe distance away from the bus perimeter before proceeding.

These 360 cameras will not however assist in addressing our issues with red light violations nor concerns inside the bus. The PSB therefore continues to advocate for the presence of additional monitoring devices on PSB buses to assist with: 1) public driving safety via increased convictions of red-light violators (exterior cameras), as well as 2) addressing student behavior issues on the bus, allegations against drivers, etc. (interior cameras which include audio).

We have received legal opinions regarding personal privacy issues associated with such recordings, have discussed the topic with school bus driver union representation, and have started the process of developing operational standards and policy regarding the use of recorded video and audio inside and outside of PSB school buses. We have received assurances from Department of Education officials that there would be financial support of a pilot of these camera systems. Stay tuned!

6. Capital Budget:

07/15/03

It was moved by Heather Mullen and seconded by Andrew Rose that the Capital Budget letter be approved as presented by Nathan MacLeod. Motion carried

7. 2025-2026 Proposed Budget:

07/15/04

It was moved by Beckie Keezer and seconded by Heather Mullen that the proposed 2025-2026 budget be approved as presented. Motion carried.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 p.m.



Chair Signature of Approval