

Public Schools Branch
Board of Trustees Public Meeting
March 12, 2026

Minutes

The Public Schools Branch Board of Trustees hosted a public meeting in person at the Stratford Town Hall, on Thursday March 12, 2026.

Present: Stephanie Arnold, Board Chair
Marcella Byrne, Trustee
Peter Fullerton, Trustee
Karen Clare, Trustee
Andrew MacFarlane, Trustee
Emily McKeown, Trustee
Andrew Rose, Trustee
Gaylene Garragher, Trustee
Tracy Beaulieu, Director Public Schools Branch
Natasha Monaghan, Executive Assistant
Matt MacLeod, Senior Communications Officer Public Schools Branch
Lyndsay Moffat, Presenter, Member of the Public
Members of the Public

Regrets:
Rob MacAdam, Assistant Director Public Schools Branch
Wade Czank, Vice-Chair

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 p.m. Chair Arnold welcomed all in attendance.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was moved by Peter Fullerton and seconded by Andrew Avery that the agenda be approved as presented. Motion carried

3/12/01

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

3.1 MINUTES OF THE January 15, 2026 BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

It was moved by Andrew Rose and seconded by Gaylene Carragher that the minutes from the January 15, 2026, Board of Trustees meeting be approved as presented. Motion carried.

3/12/02

4. BOARD CHAIR REPORT

Chair, Stephanie Arnold, shared the following report:

**Public Schools Branch
Board of Trustees
Chair's Report
March 2026**

I want to begin my Chair's Report by thanking Commissioner Jenkins and his team on their work in producing the report *Student Safety in Island Schools*. I also want to acknowledge, as a parent of two children in the public schools system, that the details that emerged over the past year have caused great concern. As Commissioner Jenkins highlighted, these are risks faced by schools across the country, so vigilance is important. The Public Schools Branch (PSB) has already begun implementing the Commissioner's recommendations to reduce gaps, address vulnerabilities, and mitigate risks in student safety. The Board of Trustees will be monitoring the PSB's progress. I want to thank the continued work of staff at all levels. The report recognized that the PSB strives to be transparent, trauma-informed, timely, accurate, and respectful of confidentiality considerations when communicating with students, parents, and the public. It also described staff as "professionals who operate in good faith, care deeply about student safety, and prioritize management of risk".

Student safety continues to be a priority of the PSB and the Board of Trustees. Since the last public meeting, the ability to meet student needs has also been brought forward as an area of concern. At the January meeting, we heard from a parent who highlighted insufficient supports for students with complex learning needs and was concerned that the current resource formulas and other priorities will likely continue to result in many of these needs being unmet. Representatives of Administrator's Associations echoed this as a challenge at a recent meeting with the Trustees. As needs continue to rise, even if access to assessments improve, there remains a challenge in putting in place the appropriate supports to meet the identified needs. It is heartening to hear of the innovation happening at the school-level to ease the pressures in the classroom. However, it is clear that the system needs significant changes to prevent shifting the problem from one shape to another, without meaningfully resolving it over time. The Board recognizes that these and other challenges require the involvement of and collaboration with education partners and the Department of Education and Early Years. It will not be a quick and easy fix. While we collect data to quantify the gaps, our newly-created Outreach and Engagement Committee will be building external relationships to enable multiple organizations to work on tackling these issues together. We will also begin discussions with the Minister's Office.

This marks my final Chair's Report. The main reason I offered to be Chair a year ago was to help with the transition from the past Board to this current Board. Although I was Vice Chair for the two years prior, the past twelve months have been challenging. Governing a complex system is a big job and it cannot be done without strong commitment and deep care that the past Trustees, current Trustees, and senior PSB management bring to their work. I express deep gratitude to them. Staff at all levels are working miracles with limited capacity to support the success and wellbeing of the students and the potential their futures bring. They deserve recognition as well. Finally, I want to specifically highlight the leadership of Director Beaulieu, who has conducted herself with integrity and honesty, leading the system with courage and transparency through different challenges. I have received many messages from administrators and staff voicing

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their trust in her leadership. It has been a pleasure to work with a well-respected leader with a long and accomplished history within our education system.

There is much more to do. Looking forward, I am hopeful about the possibilities for the education system. This group of Trustees is engaged, motivated, and eager to govern, support, and advocate for the education system. We are also seeing continued advocacy from parents, guardians, the public, and education partners. We hear you. We hear your concern about staffing, inclusive education, student services, bussing, maintenance, and more. We share your concerns. I am seeing alignment in these calls for action. The work ahead is to find alignment in how we prioritize and tackle these challenges, big and small. For the last time speaking on behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to reiterate that we will continue to work with the public, the Department of Education and Early Years, and education partners in supporting the PSB in delivering education services that we can all be proud of.

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'S REPORT

Director, Tracy Beaulieu shared the following report:

Director of Public Schools Branch Update

As I reflected on the past month, I was reminded of the passion and dedication shown by those who work tirelessly to make our schools caring environments where students and staff can learn and grow. Even in the face of challenges, there are always people stepping up to support one another and seek opportunities to improve our collective efforts. In this report, I wish to acknowledge a few examples that exemplify this ongoing commitment and extend my sincere appreciation to those who show up each day to benefit others.

I am pleased to acknowledge that in the month of February, three administrators were recognized by their colleagues and school communities for going above and beyond in their roles. Donald Milligan, Principal at Kensington Intermediate Senior High School, was honoured with the Canadian Outstanding Principals Award. Mike Ellsworth, Principal at Tignish Elementary, was selected for the Doug MacDougall Inspire Award, and Jill Burry, Vice Principal at Stonepark, received the Home and School Extra Mile Award. We congratulate Donald, Mike, and Jill for their dedication, leadership, and passion for making our schools welcoming and supportive places for students and staff to learn and work.

I would also like to acknowledge the report on Sexual Misconduct prepared by the Honourable Judge Jenkins and thank him for his thoughtful and thorough recommendations. Many of these measures were already underway, which validated the work being done across our system. We continue to work collaboratively with the Department of Education and Early Years and our French school authority partners to consider additional opportunities for improvement. Trustees and the public are encouraged to review progress updates on the Student Safety website.

The Public Schools Branch has recently established a Bullying Prevention Working Group to gather information on the work currently taking place in schools and to explore opportunities to expand learning and prevention efforts. In addition, Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (PBIS) continues to show encouraging early success. Eighteen schools will be moving into year three of the pilot, with UPEI engaged in supporting the assessment of implementation and outcomes.

Sherwood Elementary had the privilege of hosting a *DiverseCity in Schools* event, an initiative led in partnership with the Immigration and Refugee Services Association of PEI (IRSA). Held for the first time in a school setting, the event brought together students, staff, and community partners for a day of multicultural learning, shared experiences, and celebration. It was a beautiful demonstration of collaboration and a meaningful reflection of the diversity within our school communities.

As we look ahead, the next few months will be an especially busy period for both schools and the branch as we begin the staffing process. This week, members of the PSB leadership team started meeting with school administration teams to better understand their needs for the 2026–2027 school year. Timely kindergarten registration remains essential for accurate staffing and planning, and we greatly appreciate your support in encouraging families to register if they have not already done so. These conversations play a key role in shaping decisions at both the branch and school levels once the budget is received.

The few examples highlighted in this report reflect what becomes possible when people come together with respect, care, and a shared purpose. Whether navigating challenges, seeking opportunities for positive change, or celebrating what makes our communities unique, these moments remind us that the strength of our system lies in how we collectively support one another.

With that in mind, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to Stephanie Arnold for their support and commitment as Board Chair. This role requires significant dedication, thoughtful planning, and time that often comes at the expense of personal commitments. Stephanie has willingly given that time in support of education and in moving our system forward in a positive way. While they are moving on from this position, I am confident they will continue to be a strong advocate for students and public education. Thank you, Stephanie, for your positive and collaborative leadership.

Policy Update

****Policies are being removed from the Public website- there will be a disclaimer letting the public know the policies are under review with an email to contact with questions
Sexual Misconduct Policy/procedures**

The engagement sessions are all complete for this policy with the exception of student feedback- that is being collected over the next 2 weeks (ending on March 14, 2026). We are in the process of completing the consultation summary, procedures document and revising the next draft of the policy. In parallel we are developing the training/orientation resources and planning for the roll out of the policy/procedures.

Internal formal misconduct investigation policy/procedures

We are currently going through the process of having this policy/procedures reviewed internally with a next draft expected in the coming weeks.

School Violence Safety assessment

The contractor from Sprout safety completed her school site visits last week and met with the PSB Leadership team for a preliminary review, outline of her process and next steps. Her final report is expected at the end of April.

The Violence in the Workplace policies and procedures are currently being drafted to support this work

Other policy work-

- Student engagement/attendance working group
- Anti Bullying working group
- School Nutrition
- Vaccinations in schools

EAL/FAL Update

New Arrivals

From July 1st, 2025-March 3rd, the EAL/FAL Reception Centre has welcomed 468 new EAL/FAL students in PEI public schools.

Kindergarten Registrations and Case Conferences

235 EAL/FAL children are registered for kindergarten for the 2026-2027 school year.

42 out of 47 kindergarten case conferences have been completed by the EAL Inclusive Education Consultant and organized by Student Services.

New EAL/FAL Pilot Programs

As EAL/FAL student numbers and needs continue to grow, the team looks at ways to think outside of the box. The following pilot programs have been created to support data-driven decisions with regard to our programs and services.

Lucy Maud Montgomery

- Reassessment Pilot- level B (formal) assessments for all EAL students at the *Emerging Proficient (EP)* language proficiency level who have been recommended to come off of caseload (those who receive English language support services).
- *Assessing Reading; Multiple Measures*-testing this resource as part of our reading assessments and the triangulation of reading assessment data with EAL students at the EP proficiency level.

Spring Park Elementary x 2

- *Grade 3 EAL students & Foundations*- working with the students, school, Anne Inman (Department of Education and Early Years), and an EAL itinerant teacher to look at the parallels between the vocabulary, resources, and activities in *Foundations'* and English language learning lessons (i.e. phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding).
- *EAL/FAL Kindergarten Support*- researching how our EAL/FAL children are progressing in kindergarten, what is going well, what is challenging, where we can support, etc.

EAL/FAL Operations Manual

This manual is a quick-reference guide and living document for schools. The purpose of the manual is to provide information to better understand EAL/FAL Programs and Services. As we engage evidence-based practices and current research, we adapt and adjust to ensure that the services we provide to our new English or French language learners lead to the best opportunities for their success in our education system, our island community and the global community.

Finance Update

The Finance Department is actively working on several key priorities both in Payroll and Finance. Several payroll staff have joined the working group working with Human Resources on the transition from AESOP to PowerSchool. As this program is a primary source of payroll reporting, we are happy with the potential that this new program brings. The Finance team has begun preparations for year-end, reviewing accounts, coordinating outstanding transactions, and assembling required documentation to ensure a smooth and efficient close to the fiscal year.

The Finance leadership has been collaborating with the Department of Education to improve the timely notification of grants to Principals and Board-based staff, ensuring School staff are better supported. Meetings have also been held with the Oracle FIS team to explore potential enhancements to school-level reporting, and this work will continue, with the goal of implementing improvements in September 2026.

Human Resources Update

CUPE Bargaining

- Preparations began late last year and we have had one bargaining session in December with CUPE 3260 (EA group). We are back at the table in April.
- Bargaining for remaining CUPE groups (Bus Drivers, Custodians/Cleaners, Admin support) will begin in May.

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Ministers Directive regarding Record Checks to Support Student Protection and Safety

- Looking to launch March 12th

Staffing for 26/27 school year.

- The month of March we will be holding all the Staffing meetings with schools to map out plans for Fall 2026.

- In mid March we will be posting Principal and Vice Principal openings from retirements for the 2026/27 school year.

Director Openings

- The new Director of Finance will be starting March 27th.

- Currently interviewing for the Director, Property Services role.

Student Services Update

Kindergarten Case Conferences

Kindergarten Case Conferences are continuing. There are **269** Kindergarten Case Conferences scheduled to date

Below is a summary of the current PSB process for students who may require a Kindergarten Case Conference organized by PSB Student Services.

Purpose of the Kindergarten Case Conference

The primary goal is to share information, and to identify and coordinate supports a child may require upon starting Kindergarten. It is typically initiated if a child:

- Presents with significant developmental, behavioural, physical and/or communication challenges
- Requires specialized medical supports or equipment.
- Has been receiving significant support from Early Childhood Centers or external agencies (like Early Years Autism Team, Speech-Language Pathology or Occupational Therapy).

Student Needs Assessment Process (SNAP)

The process for collecting information regarding students with exceptionalities who will require specialized support for the 2026-2027 school year has started. Each school meets with their Inclusive Education consultant to identify needs. The process is designed to ensure that students with exceptional needs are identified early and provided with the appropriate resources and supports to succeed in a classroom environment.

CUPE 3260 Support Staff (EA's, YSW's ect) are **one** of the supports in a wide continuum of support services that are available to students with exceptionalities. Please see the guidelines below for assigning CUPE 3260 Support Staff.

- EA's are assigned annually based upon clear criteria for significant exceptionalities - physical, medical, behavioral and / or developmental.

- EA hours are assigned to the school based upon the most pressing student needs, as identified during the Student Needs Assessment Process (SNAP). It is the school's responsibility to create a support schedule to address these student needs, recognizing that there are certain times of the day / week / year that students may require more or less support. Students may also be grouped based on similar skill development needs.
- There is an ebb, flow and flexibility to EA support and schedule.
- The goal is to help students become as independent as possible. Therefore, the Teacher and EA strive to foster that independence in every way.
- To encourage student growth and build capacity, we strongly advise scheduling varying CUPE 3260 Support Staff where possible. Unhealthy dependence may develop when one CUPE 3260 Support Staff remains for a full day and / or an extended period.
- The Teacher is the person responsible for the student's program and Individualized Education Plan/ Transition Action Plan (IEP/ TAP), not the EA.
- The CUPE 3260 Support Staff helps in the delivery of the program or IEP/ TAP.
- The Teacher is the primary communicator regarding the child and his / her program when sharing information with parents and other professionals.

Property Update

Major Capital Projects

Public Schools Branch (PSB) Property Services continues to be highly engaged with numerous major capital projects currently underway across the province. These initiatives are critical to supporting population growth and addressing the evolving needs of our school communities. PSB remains committed to expanding school capacity, modernizing aging infrastructure, and creating inclusive, welcoming learning environments for students and staff.

Mobile Classrooms

PSB, in collaboration with DTI, is currently developing site plans at four schools across the province in preparation for the placement of five mobile classrooms. Investment in mobile classrooms remains essential to support the evolving needs and increasing capacity pressures faced by schools throughout the province. With a \$2-million budget allocation for this year, mobile classrooms are planned for installation at the following schools:

- **West Royalty** (2 units)
- Westwood
- Athena
- Greenfield

Stratford High School

Construction at Stratford High School continues to progress exceptionally well. Contractors remain fully engaged and are maintaining the project schedule, with construction completion anticipated for March 2027. This timeline provides opportunity for the commissioning of building systems, ensuring the facility is fully functional and ready to support staff and students ahead of the planned opening in September 2027.

Alternative Education Centre

Plans for the AEC are now in the final stages and nearing readiness for tender. Property Services is working collaboratively with the Department of Transportation and Coles Associates, with the construction tender package expected to be issued within the next month. Construction is scheduled to begin in early spring, with a targeted completion date in early 2027.

East Royalty Elementary

East Royalty Elementary is currently progressing slightly ahead of schedule. While major construction projects can experience delays for various reasons, getting off to a strong start is highly beneficial. Structural steel work is nearing completion, and crews are preparing to begin roof installation and close in the building envelope.

Queen Charlotte Intermediate

Plans for Queen Charlotte Intermediate continue to progress. While the overall addition plan is being developed in the background, the design team is currently prioritizing essential upgrades to the existing school. This work will be tendered in the coming weeks and is expected to be completed over the summer. Planned summer improvements include renovations to existing bathrooms, the creation of more accessible washrooms, and the addition of much-needed custodial space.

Stratford Intermediate

DTI has recently selected Nine Yards Studios to design the building plans for Stratford Intermediate. As Nine Yards is already engaged with both Stratford High School and Queen Charlotte Intermediate, the firm brings strong familiarity with PSB's overarching goals and facility design requirements. Although the project remains in its early stages, DTI is currently working to acquire land adjacent to the new Stratford High School, and Nine Yards has begun developing the initial concept plan for the new school.

Revitalization Fund & Minor Capital Repair Budget

Looking ahead to FY25–26, the budget for Revitalization and Minor Capital Projects has already been fully allocated. Due to several carry-forward projects that were not completed in the previous fiscal year, only minimal funding remains for new initiatives or unforeseen emergency repairs across PSB facilities. While a substantial amount of work is still scheduled to be completed over the summer, the lack of additional funding for much-needed upgrades and unavoidable emergency issues continues to present challenges. Despite these constraints, PSB Property Services remains committed to maintaining safe, functional learning environments and is working diligently to uphold facility standards across all buildings.

Transportation and Risk Management Update

Bus Monitoring

Positions: The PSB now employs 21 School Bus Monitors daily. These adults travel on the bus and assist drivers in addressing the needs of students, while emphasizing a safe and welcoming environment. This number represents a continued expansion of the pilot program initiated in 2024. Results have proven overwhelmingly positive to date, with encouraging feedback from students, drivers, parents and the school community.

Perhaps most encouraging is that the number of students identified with special needs that are now able to travel on PSB buses has increased from 82 to 117 (+40%!) since the implementation of the monitoring program. Further, the number of bus conduct reports related to extreme behavioral issues on our buses has decreased from 270 to 187 in that same time frame (-30%), thanks in no small part to the presence and effectiveness of school bus monitors.

With the above said, it remains a significant challenge to recruit and manage the logistics of these positions, and we have not yet received permanent funding to support their presence.

AV Equipment: Work continues regarding the addition of monitoring technologies on PSB buses, both inside and out. Policy, implementation logistics, and cost are focal points of ongoing consideration. A PSB jurisdictional review has found that the use of audio and video recording devices, particularly inside school buses, has been widely implemented across Canada. While challenges exist to ensure compliance with FOIPP and other legislation, union implications, cost, and other, indicators suggest the implementation of cameras both inside the bus (to assist with student and driver safety and compliance) and outside the bus (to assist with increasing conviction rates of drivers going through our red lights) should be pursued, with our next step being the development of a governing policy.

Red Light Violations

The PSB has incurred 81 “red light violations” thus far this school year. This projects to put us on par with previous years. While even one is “one-too-many”, considering the increase in the volume of drivers and traffic on Island roads, our trending numbers could be argued to reflect a degree of improvement. That said, we would still advocate for cameras outside our buses to assist with conviction rates and thereby act as a deterrent.

Prior Years Totals:

2024-2025 – 148 violations

2023-2024 – 189 violations

2022-2023 – 166 violations

2021-2022 – 163 violations

2020-2021 – 197 violations

2019- 2020 - 152 violations

School Trips

The PSB has conducted over 1,500 bus runs in support of school field trips thus far, as well as also supporting community initiatives such as the Terry Fox Bridge Walk (64 buses), Oak Acres children’s camp, Boys and Girls Club, etc. - all in addition to our daily obligation of safely getting students to and from school (14,000+ stops, daily).

3/12/03

6. Queen Elizabeth School Study:

It was moved by Peter Fullerton and seconded by Andrew Avery that a public consultation regarding Queen Elizabeth School Study will be held for at least 30 days following this meeting in accordance with the School Review policy. Additional information about the consultation will be posted on the PSB website.

3/12/04

7. OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE CHAIR:

**It was moved by Andrew MacFarlane and seconded by Peter Fullerton that the Gaylene Carragher be named Chair of the Outreach and Engagement Committee.
Motion carried**

The Trustees were also joined by member of the public, Lyndsay Moffat, who presented Learning Commons: The Swiss Army Knife of Education.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Andrew MacFarlane", written over a horizontal line.

Chair Signature of Approval

