

Public Schools Branch
Board of Trustees Public Meeting
September 16, 2025

Minutes

The Public Schools Branch Board of Trustees hosted their nineteenth public meeting in person at the Stratford Town Hall, on Tuesday, September 16, 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
Beverley Ann Boulter, Trustee
Jaclyn Massey, Trustee
Dylan Mullally, Acting Director of Public Schools Branch
Rob MacAdam, Assistant Director Public Schools Branch
Natasha Monaghan, Executive Assistant
Matt MacLeod, Senior Communications Officer Public Schools Branch

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:48 p.m. Chair Arnold welcomed all in attendance.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

3.1 MINUTES OF THE July 15, 2025 BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

It was moved by Beverly Boulter and seconded by Amanda Blakeney that the minutes from the July 15, 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
September 2025

The start of school is always a busy time for Public Schools Branch (PSB) staff and students. I wish everyone a safe, engaging, and fulfilling school year.

In late July, Wade Czank, Vice-Chair of the Board, and I met with the Child and Youth Advocate Marvin Bernstein and his staff. It was an opportunity to understand the mandates, structures, and operations of the two organizations. We also discussed where our paths may cross in our support of children and youth in the school system.

Last month, I addressed the principals and vice-principals of our schools at an administrators meeting. I recognized the challenge of being educators and administrators as needs increase in number, speed, and complexity across the system, and the experience, dedication, and creativity it requires to address them with limited resources. Education is a key determinant of individual and community wellbeing. The Board will continue to work toward near-term and longer-term strategies to address barriers and build system capacity.

Earlier this month, the election process for the PSB Board of Trustees began. The nomination period and voter registration has begun. Here are some key dates:

- Nomination period: September 8 - September 26 at 2 p.m.
- Voter registration to vote online: September 8 - October 17 at 11 a.m.
- Voter registration for mail-in ballot: September 8 - September 28 at 11:59 p.m.
- Online voting portal opens: October 3, 2025 12 p.m. - October 17 at 12 p.m.
- Mail-in ballots returned to Elections PEI: October 17 at 12 p.m.

Please visit Elections PEI (<https://www.electionspei.ca/>) to register as a candidate, register to vote, and learn about the latest updates.

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 of Public Schools Branch Update

As we begin the 2025–2026 school year, I want to extend a warm welcome to our Board of Trustees and express my gratitude for your ongoing leadership. This year brings both new opportunities and fresh momentum. I am very pleased to welcome several new members of our leadership team: Assistant Director **Rob MacAdam**, Director of Human Resources **Shawn Brinson**, Manager of Policy **Kelly Morris**, Acting Director of Property Services **Peter MacLeod**, and Acting Director of Finance **Ashley**

September 16, 2025_Public Mtg Minutes

Higginbotham. Their expertise and energy will strengthen our collective capacity as we move forward.

We enter this school year with optimism and determination. Our teams have worked hard over the summer to respond to the Auditor General's report on school food, to launch our new Learning Management System (LMS), and to bring forward a draft sexual misconduct policy for consultation. We have launched the Commit to Kids (C2K) training for all staff across the PSB, this includes the full course for new employees and a refresher course for returning staff who have previously completed it. We have also advanced new capital project submissions through the school review process, which will help ensure our facilities meet the needs of students and communities well into the future.

- Response to the Auditor General's report on school food
 - Margaret Young developing new policy and guidelines in consultation with CSLF, PSB DEEY
 - Consultation
- Additional Positions over the summer
 - 38 EA
 - 17 Teaching
 - 6 Board Based
- Policy
 - Sexual Misconduct
 - School Food
- Capital Projects
 - East Royalty
 - School Review
- Technology Updates
 - Learning Management System
 - Incident Tracking
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EAL/FAL Update

Staffing Updates

We are very pleased to welcome new staff to the EAL/FAL Team, including Karen Redmond as Manager of EAL/FAL Programs and Services, Heather Lee as EAL Counseling Consultant, Vee Ballon as FAL Itinerant Teacher, and Lu Rao as the Secondary Online Teacher. This brings the EAL/FAL section to an overall complement of 61, which includes 39 EAL/FAL itinerant teachers and 12 EAL Youth Service Workers, 10 office staff of seven specialists (3 in language assessment, 1 in counseling, 1 in inclusive education, 1 in teacher support, 1 in resources and research), one administrative assistant, a director and manager.

In late August, the Division received ten additional educational assistants (EAs), two youth service workers and two EAL/FAL itinerant teachers from the Department of Education and Early Years to support programming and services for new EAL/FAL learners arriving on PEI. The additional EAs were provided for new EAL/FAL learners with "unanticipated needs" who arrived after the Student Needs Assessment Process

(SNAP) was completed and needs were identified and supported, especially in kindergarten.

[EAL/FAL Arrival and Enrollment Trends](#)

From July 1st to September 10th, 2025, the EAL/FAL Reception Centre welcomed 288 EAL/FAL students in PEI Public schools. In comparison, 338 new EAL/FAL arrivals were welcomed in September of 2024. As the Division continues to verify the presence of approximately 3800 EAL/FAL students in their zoned schools, the EAL database continues to be updated. By September 30th, after overall enrollment counts and student transfers are completed, and as new EAL/FAL students continue to arrive on PEI, we will analyze updated numbers and needs to determine EAL/FAL programming, services, and staffing requirements.

[STEP 2025](#)

Since July 1st, over 15% of all new EAL registrations into the PEI school system presented with limited to no English language proficiency skills, and/or limited prior educational experiences. The implementation of the School Transition EAL Program (STEP) bridges gaps for EAL/FAL learners who have had limited educational experiences and a high degree of trauma and loss. West Royalty and Spring Park Elementary Schools are offering half-day STEP programs to new EAL arrivals who have been recommended for the program. School capacity challenges affect a school's ability to offer a STEP. We continue to evaluate the program to determine more opportunities for STEP to be offered in one location with space for three classrooms/cohorts (grades 1-3, 4-6, and 7-9).

[Virtual EAL High School Delivery](#)

We will continue to offer the high school EAL courses online for rural high schools without a school-based EAL teacher. This model has been very successful for the past four years from a student, teacher, and school perspective. Troy MacKenzie and Lu Rao will be the online teachers for this 2025-2026 school year. Currently, there are 50 EAL students registered online, with more students expected to arrive.

[Summer 2024 STEP \(School Transition EAL Program\)](#)

Summer STEP was offered at Spring Park Elementary School for four weeks. A special thank you to Spring Park Elementary School Administration and Staff for collaborating with us on the use of their building! 41 new EAL students from grades 1-9 attended a full-day comprehensive, experiential, and language-based program that combined classroom instruction and community-based field trips. Having this program available to new EAL students, who arrived over the summer, provided opportunities for learners to gain some functional language skills, confidence, and friendships for the coming school year. Summer STEP aimed to ease the transition for new EAL students into our PEI school system, ensuring a smoother start in September.

[MCIS Language Solutions](#)

MCIS is a not-for-profit interpretation service that employs over 6000 language professionals. The services are available 24/7, 365 days of the year. [MCIS](#) provides interpretation services in 300+ languages and works within various sectors: healthcare, legal, education, social services, and government. MCIS can support parent-teacher

interviews, challenging conversations with students with limited English language proficiency, school orientation sessions with newcomers, etc. Last year, we piloted this service with a few schools and our EAL/FAL Division. It was very well-received, user-friendly, and appreciated when in-person interpreters were not available. This year, we are pleased to offer MCIS Translation services to all PEI schools.

Finance Update

The Finance Team continues to support school administrators and PSB colleagues to ensure support needed by schools, staff and students are in place.

Our procurement staff assist with purchasing needs and maintain strong working relationships with our vendors and our accounts payable staff provide day-to-day guidance to school-based staff while processing a high volume of transactions with accuracy and efficiency. We have continued to support schools in managing their School Raised Funds using the SchoolCash program. We provide support daily to schools and actively collaborate with schools to implement new initiatives in their schools such as the SchoolCash Online Catalogue. This capability allows schools to provide a secure and online portal for parents, improves internal controls by eliminating cash and improves efficiency for school administrators. We have several schools that have started this at the start of the school and are working with several more on initiating.

Our payroll staff have been busy working alongside the Human Resources Department for the start of the new school year. This proactive approach helps ensure that payroll processing is accurate and timely for all PSB employees even at the busy start of September. Members have also been training several new staff over the summer who have recently joined our team. We are pleased to welcome these new team members who bring a wealth of expertise, enthusiasm, and valuable skills to support our payroll team.

Our Administrative staff continue to provide professional and courteous service to all callers and visitors. Their dedication is especially vital during the first weeks of the school year, helping ensure timely responses and accurate information for all who contact or visit our office

Human Resources Update

We have implemented our new process for casual/substitute re-activation. This new process easily identifies if there is any further information required from the applicant with regards requiring an updated CRC, further references or a conversation required about concerns that arose throughout the previous school. All reactivations and new hires are required to complete the Commit to Kids (C2K) training. This process is working very well and helping ensure readiness and accountability.

An updated process for staff investigations has been introduced, including the use of the Staff Misconduct Investigation Form and the Violent Incident Form. This was

presented at the August P/VP meeting and has since been cascaded to schools as of early September.

Two new HR Assistants joined the team in September and are currently onboarding. With four Assistants now in place, we are moving to distribute school portfolios among them, which will allow for more efficient and responsive service to schools. The Learning Management System (LMS) project is progressing well. The Communication and Change Management Plan is currently in the sign-off stage. Targeted user testing is scheduled to begin in the coming month.

Student Services

Student Services Staffing:

We would like Nicole Wadden Garland to the Manager of Student Services position. Nicole will be replacing Raeanne Adams who has moved to the Director of Student Services. Nicole has a diverse background, having been with accessibility Services at UPEI for many years, and this past year as Student Well-Being Team Program Lead.

Unanticipated Needs:

Any students new to the Public School Branch over the summer, who have significant needs that would require EA (or other CUPE 3260) support in order to attend school (as determined by/in adherence with SNAP criteria,) are considered an Unanticipated Needs. There has been a tremendous amount of unanticipated needs and student moves this fall that impact Educational Assistant Support time.

Threat Assessment Training:

There will be full-day training regarding *Behaviour Threat Assessment and Management* (BTAM) by psychologist, Dr. Melissa Reeves offered by the Public Schools Branch this fall. The training will take place on October 21, 2025 in Charlottetown. The PSB will be offering the training to a variety of professionals within education, such as psychologists, counsellors, and administrators, as well as student well-being teams, police services, mental health, justice, and child protection. The focus will be on high school counsellors and administrators, student services staff, and community partners for the first large session. There will also be certification for six of our student services staff as trainers to build capacity for a full system K-12 implementation.

Property Update

Maintenance, School Safety & Minor Capital Repairs:

Entering the 2025-2026 school year, Property Services and School Safety are looking back at all of the fantastic work that was completed in our schools over the summer. This year, we requested school administration and custodians submit their top maintenance priorities from a school level. These are projects that are coordinated and/or completed by our maintenance team. There were 228 priority maintenance projects requested and our maintenance team has worked extremely hard to complete 168 of those (and counting). Our maintenance team is actively working with the

schools, and stakeholders across the Island on many different projects in order to provide a safe learning environment across PEI.

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 were 121 projects on the Minor Capital List this summer and we are very pleased with the progress that was made so far. Many projects have been completed, others are currently in the construction phase over PD days and extended breaks, and the remainder are being designed for future work.

Major Capital Projects:

Property Services and DTI are continuing to work on four major capital projects, Stratford High school, East Royalty school, Queen Charlotte Intermediate addition, and Stratford Intermediate. Construction at Stratford High is going extremely well. Phase 1 of East Royalty has been awarded and site work has begun, with construction expected to start in September. The planning committee has been actively working with consultants around the concept plans for the Queen Charlotte addition. The concept process is in the final stages and will be moving to the design phase next. 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

Student Ridership:

Approximately 5,000 routing changes were made during the summer months to accommodate new students entering our system, graduates exiting our system, student family movement, updates to childcare requirements, etc. 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 as compared to the previous year. Daily transportation support remains consistent at approximately 80% of PSB total student population. As with every year, nearly 100% of PSB students are transported via PSB school buses when considering co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. PSB school buses supported 2,454 additional co-curricular and extra-curricular trips to the end of June. This number is up by 211 over our previous year and represents an all-time high for our system.

Driver Status:

Since June of 2024, 41 new drivers were hired by PSB transportation services to offset retirements, long term leave, and attrition of our substitute pool. This number is on par with previous years. Currently, approximately one-third of PSB school bus drivers are age 60 or older, leading to expectations of similar recruitment, hiring, training, and management requirements in our future. Increases in ridership and advocacy for support re: overcrowding and student travel times has resulted in one additional PSB school bus driver FTE being granted to the PSB for this school year. This driver has been hired and deployed to service the Charlottetown/Cornwall area.

School Bus Fleet Status:

Reception of 37 new PSB buses is underway, offsetting 34 that must be retired due to age restriction legislation and/or condition. All new buses have been purchased via the Maritime School Bus Procurement Tender from "Thomas Built Buses". All have internal combustion diesel engines. 4 are wheelchair capable.

6. DTI Invoice:

It was moved by Beckie Keezer and seconded by Wade Czank that invoice #364515 Charlottetown Garage be approved as presented. Motion carried

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:02p.m.



Chair Signature of Approval