

**Public Schools Branch**  
Forty-Seventh Board of Trustees Public Meeting  
Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Minutes

The Public Schools Branch Board of Trustees hosted their second public meeting on Tuesday, March 7, 2023 at Gulf Shore Consolidated school, North Rustico.

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  
Patty van Diepen, Trustee  
Jacob Jadis, Trustee (via Webex)

Also, in Attendance:

Norbert Carpenter, Director of the Public Schools Branch  
Karen Redmond, Manager of Policy and Planning  
Sheri Gauthier, Confidential Board Secretary

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME**

The meeting was called to order at 7:39 p.m. Board Chair Mullen welcomed all in attendance and thanked Gulf Shore Consolidated for hosting the PSB Board of Trustees.

**2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

03/07/01

**It was moved by Jodi Zver and seconded by Jaclyn Massey that the agenda be approved as amended. Motion carried.**

**3. MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 26, 2023 BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**

03/07/02

**It was moved by Patty van Diepen and seconded by Amanda Blakeney that the minutes of the January 26, 2023 Board of Trustees meeting be adopted as presented. Motion carried.**

**4. GULF SHORE CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL PRESENTATION – PRINCIPAL MARIA LAVOIE**

Maria welcomed the Board of Trustees to Gulf Shore Consolidated and provided information about the school and the history of Gulf Shore. Maria thanked the Board for the opportunity to host the meeting and answered questions posed by the Trustees.

**5. MOTION FOR BOARD COMMITTEES  
5.1 HEARING COMMITTEE**

03/07/03 **It was moved by Jodi Zver and seconded by Rachel McCarthy that Jacob Jadis, Amanda Blakeney, Beverley Ann Boulter and Stephanie Arnold be appointed as members of the Public Schools Branch Hearing Committee, with Amanda Blakeney as committee chair, effective immediately for a three year term which may be renewed by the Board of Trustees. Motion carried.**

### **5.2 AUDIT COMMITTEE**

03/07/04 **It was moved by Beverley Ann Boulter and seconded by Wade Czank that Jodi Zver, Beckie Keezer, and Wade Czank be appointed as members of the Public Schools Branch Audit Committee effective immediately for a one-year term which may be renewed by the Board of Trustees. Motion carried.**

## **6. BOARD CHAIR REPORT**

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

Board Chair Mullen shared the following report.

February was Black History Month, a time to celebrate the achievements and contributions of Black people throughout our country's history. Unfortunately, racism remains prevalent in our society and schools and significant work remains. As Chairs of the Board of Trustees, Stephanie Arnold and I attended a meeting with Minister Natalie Jamieson and the Public Schools Branch, called by Black Cultural Society of PEI (BCS). Representing BCS was Tamara Steele, Executive Director and Aaron Sardinha, Education and Policy Coordinator. Representing PSB was Norbert Carpenter, Director of the PSB, Dominique Lecours, Director of Student Services and Karen Redmond, Manager of Policy and Planning. During this meeting, updates on the pilot program on racism and the progressive discipline model were shared. Discussion on the need for a monitoring and evaluation framework for continuous improvement, resources required to expand the program to additional schools (e.g., staff training, EDI officer within the PSB), and tailoring of the expansion to meet the needs of the schools' current demographics also took place.

During February, Islanders helped recognize the amazing staff at the Public Schools Branch who make our schools what they are during the Annual Staff and Teacher Appreciation week. I want to thank all staff across PEI, your commitment and caring for our students daily and your understanding of their needs will help them succeed in the future.

I am proud to be Board Chair of an organization that believes in promoting diversity, equality, and inclusion in all aspects of education. The Public Schools Branch is committed to creating a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and abilities. Our schools should be places where students feel valued and respected and where they can grow and learn in a supportive and accepting atmosphere. The statement made by the Public Schools Branch on February 6th helped clarify our commitment to the Guidelines for Supporting Respecting, Accommodating and Supporting Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sexual Orientation in our Schools. To review the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning's Guidelines for Supporting Respecting, Accommodating and Supporting Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sexual Orientation in our Schools, visit: <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/publication/md-2021-06-guidelines-for-respecting-accommodating-and-supporting-gender-identity-gender>

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February was also a busy month for the Trustees. Stephanie Arnold, Vice-Chair, planned and facilitated an engaging workshop on February 9th to identify the trustees' individual visions and goals for the board. Discussions included student wellbeing, accountability, community engagement, and board priorities. It was an opportunity for the board to understand where there is overlap and where there is diversity in ideas and perspectives to achieve our common goals. Trustees also completed a second session of governance training on February 19th.

Thank you to Gulf Shore Consolidated School for hosting the Board of Trustees this evening. We look forward to visiting more schools across PEI and we will continue to engage with Islanders on the importance of public education in our province.

Heather Mullen  
Chair, Board of Trustees  
PEI Public Schools Branch

Date	Meeting	Attendees
<b>January 30</b>	PSB Leadership Team	PSB Directors, Chair & Vice Chair
<b>February 1</b>	Workshop planning meeting	Executive Director /Confidential Board Secretary/ Chair & Vice Chair
<b>February 7</b>	Trustee workshop planning meeting	PSB Board of Trustees/Executive Director
<b>February 9</b>	Meeting with The Black Cultural Society of PEI & Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning	Executive Director/Chair & Vice Chair
<b>February 13</b>	Governance meeting preparation	Executive Director /Confidential Board Secretary/ Chair & Vice Chair
<b>February 14</b>	Stratford office staff appreciation	Executive Director /Confidential Board Secretary/ Chair & Vice Chair
<b>February 15</b>	Governance Training	PSB Board of Trustees/PSB Board Staff/Maria Sanderson, MRSB
<b>February 17</b>	Committee of the whole planning meeting	Executive Director /Confidential Board Secretary/ Chair & Vice Chair
<b>March 7</b>	Committee of the whole & PSB Board meeting	PSB Board of Trustees/PSB Board Staff

## **7. DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

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

Director, Norbert Carpenter, shared the following report.

### **Director's Office**

2023 has come upon the Public Schools Branch (PSB) very quickly. The new year is always a great time to refocus and reprioritize. The last official student enrollment counts totaled 20,199. This marks a significant increase over this time last year. While the growth is positive news, it does present some challenges when it comes to meeting the needs of all students. We continue to work with our schools and partners to provide high-quality service to our students and families.

As Director, I continue to monitor the enrolment and capacities at all of our schools. I am currently completing a study on the following schools: Queen Charlotte Intermediate, Birchwood Intermediate, Stonepark Intermediate, East Wiltshire Intermediate and Bloomfield Elementary. I will be providing an update to the Board during an upcoming meeting.

The 2022-23 school year has been one that has afforded our schools the ability to host extracurricular events, assemblies and celebrations. We are very proud of our 56 schools and will be making a special effort to showcase the positive news over the coming months. In particular, the staff and students at Cardigan Consolidated, Montague Regional High and Queen Charlotte Intermediate are to be commended for their high level of cooperation and resilience following the impacts of Post Tropical Storm Fiona. Great job everyone!

Matt MacLeod has joined our team at the Public Schools Branch in the role of Senior Communications Officer. Matt brings with him a wealth of experience in the world of media and communications. Welcome, Matt!

A sincere welcome to the 11 new trustees of the Public Schools Branch. I look forward to working with and learning from all of you. You hold a very important position in education during very interesting times. All the best in your roles and thank you for your interest and commitment to the betterment of education at the Public Schools Branch.

### **Human Resources**

#### **Labour Relations**

The Arbitration related to the PEI Teachers' Federation Memorandum Negotiations has been awarded. The financial award is as follows:

September 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022 – Across the Board increases of 1.75%

April 1, 2022, to August 31, 2022 – Across the Board increases of 0.0%

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September 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023 – Across the Board increases of 3.0%

April 1, 2023, to August 31, 2023 – Across the Board increases of 0.0%

September 1, 2023, to February 2, 2024 – Across the Board increases of 2.25%

February 2, 2024, to August 31, 2024 – Across the Board increases of 2.25%

Once the rate of pay tables are signed off by both parties, PSC Central Payroll will work on the salary increases and retroactive pay. We anticipate rate increase for the current period will occur in mid-February and retroactive pay will occur in mid-March. Please note these time frames are not confirmed.

CUPE 3260 Education Support negotiations have reached an impasse. We are waiting on dates for arbitration.

Negotiations for CUPE Support will commence in March 2023. Dates are being confirmed.

## Recruitment and Staffing

PSB Human Resources staff will be participating in recruitment fairs at UNB/St. Thomas and the University of Moncton from January 26-27 and January 31 - February 1. The focus of this recruitment is on French Immersion Teachers and Counselors. The PSB will also be hosting a job fair in Western PEI in early February that will focus on all our job categories including custodial/cleaning, bus drivers, administrative support, education support positions and teachers.

Interviews for all job categories occur on a weekly basis and interviews take place daily. This is essential to maintain adequate substitute and casual lists.

Staffing meetings with Principals will take place during February and March. This is an opportunity for each school to discuss staffing needs they feel they have for the 2023/2024 school year. The meetings help the Director, ASLs, Human Resources and Student Services make decisions on Full Time Equivalent position (FTE) allocations for each school. At the completion of these meetings (end of March), FTE allocations will be determined based on priority needs.

## Principal and Vice-Principal Meetings

The Administration Support Leaders (ASLs) have meetings scheduled with Principals and Vice-Principals throughout the months of February and March. This is an opportunity for Directors to provide professional development on various topics with administration and to get timely and relevant feedback on operational issues from our school leadership.

# Corporate Services

## Finance

With the fiscal year-end of March 31 coming up, the Finance department has been preparing and planning for this. We have been sending out budgets and working with Principals at each school to assist them with the planning and forecasting that is required in order to meet the year end timelines. All goods and services must be received or completed by March 31 in order to be accounted for in this fiscal year, so it is important to provide assistance to everyone that has a budget to make sure they forecast their financial position. Once this forecasting is completed, they can make the necessary purchases or initiate required work to have completed prior to March 31 in order to take full advantage of the budget they have available to support their school. In addition to this work, we have been working on the Board-wide forecast to determine an estimate as to where the Branch will be financially positioned as of March 31, 2023. There are many variables that must be calculated such as heating fuel consumption and price, diesel fuel consumption and price as well as the substitute and casual costs that are incurred. These are complicated calculations that use various assumptions, but based on historical data and current trends we put together a forecast to plan and have necessary discussions with the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning.

The Finance Department is also starting to prepare and plan for some large bulk order tenders that have to be completed early each calendar year in order to have the necessary products purchased and received at schools prior to the end of this school year, for use the following September. These tenders include a considerable amount of work and organization, so it is important that we start this work early each calendar year.

## Payroll

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

With the recent conclusion of one of the contract negotiations and the upcoming two-week Canada Games break for students, there will be increased work for the payroll department in order to get the necessary information entered into the system and verified.

## Property Services

Property Services continue to work with a few schools to complete the repairs necessary after Post Tropical Storm Fiona caused damages, but the affected schools will soon be ready to resume regular programming thanks to the hard work of everyone involved from various departments and community partners.

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.

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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.

We will soon begin to plan for summer work that is requested at schools. We will work with individual schools to determine their priorities and put a plan in place for PSB maintenance staff and begin the search for subcontractors to assist with necessary work that our staff is unable to complete internally. This is all done while ensuring that we stay within the financial resources that we have available to do this work.

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 construction project at Sherwood Elementary is well underway and we continue to provide input to the design committee for the new Stratford school.

In addition to the maintenance work and capital projects that are mentioned above, we have continued to work to hire custodians and cleaners for the system. Similar to many other employee groups, this continues to be a challenge when trying to recruit for some positions, as well as trying to get a large enough substitute and casual pool available to fill the vacancies that arise.

## 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 rollout of some new programs and initiatives.

Work has been done with the schools to ensure that schools understand the roles, responsibilities and 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 building. School Safety Services has been working hard to provide feedback to schools on a regular basis in regard to any information that is being brought forward on their monthly minutes and has also been working with PSB leadership on plans and processes for dealing with larger items that are brought forward that would be capital costs in nature.

Consultants also have been travelling to individual schools to address and discuss any individual questions or concerns that come up or are identified. They have been very dedicated to ensuring that all concerns are addressed, and immediate issues are dealt with accordingly.

School Safety Services is also working to plan and schedule necessary training sessions on upcoming non-instructional days which takes a lot of coordination between providers and the individual staff requiring the training.



## EAL/FAL

### Current EAL/FAL Data

The number of children entering our schools who speak languages other than English or French or who were born outside of Canada has increased this year with 557 EAL/FAL students registered in the school system since September 1, 2022. This has resulted in an overall EAL/FAL population of 2750 students in 52 PSB schools.

EAL/FAL students continue to arrive from countries affected by COVID-19 and in many instances, new arrivals have had limited to no access to remote or in-person learning for the past 2 years. EAL/FAL students who continue to arrive with Refugee status and from the Ukraine have significant challenges resulting from trauma and loss. Anticipated immigration trends with the aim of continued population growth will result in continued EAL/FAL student arrivals throughout the remainder of the school year.

As new EAL/FAL students arrive, careful consideration is given to the impact at the school and the classroom level. Itinerant teacher support is deployed where needed. Currently, 34 EAL Itinerants and two FAL Itinerants provide language support to students in K-9 and in seven high schools. High school EAL learners in rural schools take EAL courses in a synchronous virtual classroom. Currently, 68 EAL learners from seven high schools participate in virtual EAL classes.

Nine EAL Youth Service Workers support the transitional needs of EAL students in 14 PSB schools currently. As the social, emotional and behavioral needs of EAL students are identified, EAL Youth Service Workers assist with targeted programming that will help with adjustment.

### Functional Language

As new language learners with very limited exposure to the English language enter the school system particularly at the K-9 level, there is a need to provide functional language support that gives students a foundation that allows for more comfort in the classroom. Itinerant teachers provide functional language support in a variety of ways however, due to increasing needs, a pilot program focusing on Functional Language for students with limited prior education and/or literacy in the first language is being implemented at Stonepark Intermediate. Participating students are showing tremendous growth in language and engagement in curriculum.

### Additional Funding

Additional funding through the Treasury Board has helped to support students and teachers in 20 schools. Allocations have been given to schools to support the exceptional needs of EAL/FAL learners, to add additional homeroom classes or to add additional courses. The remaining FTE will be disbursed in the second semester.

### Diversity and Language Acquisition Education

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Partnership with the Immigrant and Refugee Services Association of PEI has led to the development of a grade 6 intercultural pilot program focusing on the increased awareness and celebration of cultural diversity in 10 elementary schools. Expansion of this program is expected during the 2023-24 school year.

Board-based Public Schools Branch employees and Principals have participated in Cultural Inclusion Training in coordination with staff of the Immigrant and Refugee Services Association of PEI. This training is being extended to individual schools as requested.

Much work is being done to address the professional development needs of classroom teachers regarding understanding language acquisition and how to teach new language learners in the classroom.

## Looking Ahead to 2023-24

Much work is being done by the province to create a Population Growth Strategy and a Population Growth Planning Tool. The EAL/FAL division is directly involved and will highlight the needs of our education system related to population growth such that proactive planning can take place.

Language re-assessment of 1083 EAL/FAL students will take place between April and May. This re-assessment process will determine the number of EAL/FAL students who need support in the 2023-24 school year and will begin to formulate where itinerant teachers will be needed most. As assessment and intake of new arrivals for the remainder of this school year and into the summer unfolds, a more comprehensive idea of the exact needs will become clear.

## Student Services

### Itinerant Support to Schools

We have added four additional substitute Youth Service Workers (YSWs). They are assigned to the following four schools: St.Louis Elementary, Elm Street Elementary, Montague Consolidated and Westwood Primary. They are reporting to those schools unless there is an unfilled absence within their region, at which point they would get reassigned for that day.

### Staff Updates

Anne Inman has moved to the DELL to continue her leadership role with the implementation and training for Foundations. Raeanne Adams is currently on secondment to the DELL and has been tasked to do a complete review of our Special Education Model in the province.

### Preparations for the 2023-2024 School Year

We are moving forward on planning for next year by assessing the needs of students who will be entering the public school system. This includes meetings with daycares, kindergarten

case conferences, collection of data, determination of processes to engage with all of our partners to get the information required to be ready for September. This obviously has a strong connection with the staffing process in schools.

## PREPaRE

We have engaged in a collaborative process with Holland College to have our school administrators, counselling consultants and some school counsellors take the PREPaRE training in May. This training is to help our system be ready for unexpected events that may impact the school day, the students and staff.

## Current Challenge

As a division, we are still being challenged to respond to the unanticipated needs entering our schools, be it from students new to the province or students wanting to re-enter the public school system.

## Collaboration with the Department of Health & Wellness

New complex cases requiring the involvement of our speech-language pathologists have been brought forward by pediatricians as they relate to school-age children. We have now engaged in a collaborative effort to best serve those young people with the staff currently in place.

# Transportation

## Routing

Approximately 4,000 routing changes have been implemented in our transportation system since the end of June. In addition to natural grading changes, adjustments include those of temporary nature such as those necessitated by Tropical Storm Fiona or childcare issues, as well as permanent changes caused by student/family movement, adjustments to pick up/drop-off locations, immigration, and 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 staff in addressing these challenges as positively as possible.

## Driver Recruitment, Interviewing/Hiring, and Training

Demographics continue to require driver recruitment and retention to be an ongoing and necessary focus. At present, over 40 % of PSB permanent 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 be able to legally drive a school bus, it is quite another to be a good and qualified school bus driver. A genuine and knowledgeable care for students is what separates our team from many. 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, specific job fairs, word of mouth, etc. In the past 3 months, the PSB has conducted well over 100 interviews with existing and potential drivers for new positions and/or route changes. Since September, we have welcomed 30 new drivers.

## Buses and Infrastructure

An additional 35 new electric school buses were tendered this year, for use by the Commission scolaire de langue française (CSLF) and the PSB. Buses were expected to have been received prior to Christmas. Due to delays, we have only recently received and activated our first five buses in January, with no ETA yet on the remainder.

These new buses will replace buses in our existing fleet that, due to their age and mechanical condition, are at the end of their legislated safe life span. This delay has led to fewer "spare" buses available. To maximize the lifespan of our fleet, an adequate number of "spare buses" is essential to allow for regular maintenance, inspections, etc., to support co-curricular/extra-curricular student travel, and to support transport in the event of breakdowns, an accident, or other unexpected occurrences. This delay has created pressures to ensure we have enough buses to support our regular obligations and has resulted in additional operational expenditures as we have little option but to repair older buses until our new ones arrive.

## Canada Games

PSB buses and drivers have been contracted to support the upcoming 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 contracted 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 transportation staff to provide coverage and support for these shifts that extend from 5 AM to 11 PM every day for the duration of the games.

### **8. OTHER BUSINESS**

No new business to report.

### **9. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.