

Eastern School Board

December 6, 2006

1. OPENING

A meeting of Eastern School Board took place on Wednesday, December 6, 2006, at Holy Trinity High School, Torbay. The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. by the Chairperson, Mr. Peach.

Members present: Mr. Milton Peach, Chair
Mr. Ken Best
Mr. Don Blackmore
Dr. Ed Brown
Dr. David Dibbon
Mr. Chris Hammond
Mr. Melvin Lambe
Mr. Jack Murphy
Mr. Jerry Rice
Ms. Rosalind Robere
Mr. George Sheppard
Mr. Eric A. Snow
Mr. Derek Winsor

Absent with regrets: Dr. Jim Hearn, Vice Chair
Mr. Rick Martin

Also in attendance: Dr. Darin King, CEO/Director of Education
Mr. Allister Dyke, Assistant Director, Human Resources
Mr. Darrin Pike, Assistant Director, Programs
Mr. Eric C. Snow, Assistant Director, Finance
Mr. Ed Walsh, Assistant Director, Rural Schools
Ms. Mary Tucker, Manager of Communications
Ms. Gwen Hurley, Executive/Corporate Assistant

The Chair extended welcome to the public with special welcome to Beth Marshall, MHA, Topsail, to the meeting. The Chair introduced all Trustees and the Director introduced the staff in attendance.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

It was suggested that Item 6 be moved up on the agenda, after Business Arising.

Motion: Moved by Ken Best, seconded by Chris Hammond, that the agenda be adopted as adjusted. Carried.

3. **CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES**

Motion: Moved by Derek Winsor seconded by Don Blackmore, that the minutes of the School Board Meeting of November 1, 2006, be adopted as presented. Carried.

4. **BUSINESS ARISING**

4.1 **St. Thomas School, Grand LePierre.** The Board was advised that the property title is being conveyed to the parish.

6. **CORRESPONDENCE**

6.2 **Request from Parent to Present to Board.** The Chair read a request from the parent group from Paradise Elementary to address the Board of Trustees. The Chair advised that, in keeping with the By-Laws, the request is being brought forward.

A discussion was held on the background of the request, as well as the urgency.

Motion: Moved by Derek Winsor, seconded by Jerry Rice, that the request from Ms. Rixmann on behalf of a parent group be referred to the next meeting of the Planning & Priorities committee.

Amendment: Moved by Ken Best, seconded by Chris Hammond, that the Trustee from the zone be invited to attend the Planning and Priorities Committee meeting. Amendment carried.

Motion, as amended, carried.

The Chair noted that Ms. Rixmann would be notified by the Committee when this will happen.

6.1 **NLSBA – Ministers of Education & Finance.** Distributed for information purposes. The Chair gave a report on the NLSBA meeting held, providing further clarification for this correspondence. Mr. Peach reported that he is in receipt of a template for the Director's contract, which is being recommended by the Department of Education. This document will be considered by the Executive Committee before recommendation to the Board.

5. **REPORT FROM COMMITTEES**

5.1 **Executive - November 6 & 22, 2006.** These reports were circulated for information purposes.

5.2 **Programs – November 22, 2006.**

Motion: Moved by Ed Brown, seconded by Ken Best, that the Board, under the signature of the Board Chairperson, write a letter to the Minister of Education, expressing concerns regarding challenges facing the district in Mathematics education and requesting support for continued development and pursuit of an action plan by the district professional staff. Carried.

Dr. Brown, Chair of the Committee noted that all trustees are welcome to attend any Programs meetings. He advised that the Committee would be inviting the ISSP and the Teacher Allocation Commissioners to present to the Committee when their reports are finalized.

For the Board's information, Dr. Brown noted the priorities for the Programs Committee for the coming year included:

- a. Full Day Kindergarten
- b. Small rural schools and curriculum
- c. Career Counseling
- d. Alternative Curriculum
- e. Special Needs

Motion: Moved by Ed Brown, seconded by Melvin Lambe, that the Board visit one of the high schools in Mount Pearl, prior to the January Board meeting, to view the equipment and space used for the trades programs being offered. Carried.

7. **NEW BUSINESS**

Motion: Moved by Chris Hammond, seconded by Derek Winsor, that the Board invite the Minister of Education to attend the next board meeting that is convenient to her and the Board. Carried.

7.1 **Public Exam Results Presentation.** Mr. Darrin Pike, Assistant Director, Programs gave a complete overview of the public exam results from 2005-06.

7.2 **Paradise Elementary Update.** The Director provided an update on the status of Paradise Elementary, giving an overview of the problems encountered and the times lines relating to the project. The Director recognized the efforts of all staff, district office and

union personnel, who made tremendous efforts to support the move of the students. Also recognized were the efforts of the staff of Paradise Elementary for their supportive efforts during that difficult time. The Director noted the understanding, assistance and support of the parents of Paradise Elementary during the difficult changes.

The Director advised that all efforts will be made to keep the lines of communication open with all stakeholders.

Dr. King informed the Board that the tender for an extension to the school has been cancelled as the timelines could not be met. In the new year, a tender will have to again be called for repairs and for the extension.

The Chair noted that available trustees had visited Paradise Elementary prior to this meeting.

The local trustee for the area, Mr. George Sheppard brought forward the following *Notice of Motion* with preamble:

As you know, this school is part of my zone, and has been central in my thoughts since my election to the Eastern School District in the Fall of 2005.

Just prior to my election, in August of 2005 Dr. King and staff were at Paradise Elementary, attending a public meeting to inform the public that there were mould issues identified with the school, and therefore a delayed opening was to occur while remediation work was completed.

After a 2 week delay, students returned and school resumed.

I understand that there were several air quality tests completed since that time, during the past year, and the results of these tests were acceptable.

About a month ago Dr. King and staff again had to attend a public meeting with the Paradise public, to announce that the testing conducted at that time indicated a problem with Air Quality and mould. The result of this was the closure of Paradise Elementary for the remainder of the current school year, and our students were dispersed to three schools in Mount Pearl and St. John's.

Let me say, first, a big thank you to Dr. King, District staff, and school staff for the manner in which they handled this situation, and their resulting response. I believe that the proper decision was made, and that our staff acted with due diligence and responsibility in placing the health and safety of our students and staff above all else in making the tough decisions that had to be made.

I understand that there has been a tremendous amount of public scrutiny and debate over the issue, but I commend our staff for the actions taken.

I have been kept abreast of the events surrounding this issue, and am quite aware that the School Council, which has been put in place to represent the views of the Paradise Elementary Community, has been actively engaged with Dr. King and district staff through the entire process. I also know that they have been very professional and forthright in sharing their, and the community, views on this situation with district officials.

I would like to thank the school council, and staff, for ensuring that proper diligence and consideration was given to this.

At this time, in collaboration with the school council and the many constituents that I have been elected to represent, I believe that the history of Paradise Elementary with air quality and mould, will make it next to impossible for us to regain public confidence in this facility. While I recognize that there are still 2 tests/reports outstanding, the School Council has stated to me that their position, on behalf of their school community, is that the School Board should make application to government for a new facility to replace the current Paradise Elementary.

Having given this whole issue due consideration, keeping in mind my responsibility as a trustee to act in the best interests of the entire district, and to do my best to manage public funding in a responsible manner, I believe that we must look beyond the current situation we are faced with, and consider the phase 2 planning that we have committed to for Mount Pearl/Paradise/CBS.

We all recognize that Paradise, in particular, is an area experiencing tremendous growth. At Holy Family Elementary School, for example, this year we have surpassed the originally projected enrollments for the year 2014.

I believe that we should engage immediately in firming up our vision for these areas as part of the phase 2 planning, and incorporate this into any actions we take on this current issue. While the issue at Paradise Elementary is indeed serious and unfortunate, I believe that we must seize this opportunity to turn it into a real positive direction for our district, and for the residents of Paradise in particular.

Therefore, I would now like to provide you with this Notice of Motion that I intend to bring forward at the regular School Board meeting in February:

Notice of Motion: I will moved that the Board make application to government for a new facility to replace the existing Paradise Elementary. This request to Government will be in addition to our previously submitted Capital Works Plan.

The Corporate Assistant was asked to circulate a hard copy for your records.

- Motion:** Moved by George Sheppard, seconded by Derek Winsor that staff are to complete their internal research on the Paradise/Mount Pearl/CBS area of our district.
- A draft report for this area of our district be prepared for consideration at the February board meeting. This report should include consideration of the following:
 - i. The current and projected enrollments for the Holy Spirit/Villa Nova/Topsail Elementary.
 - ii. The current and projected enrollments of the Holy Family/Paradise Elementary School Systems.
 - iii. The current/projected enrollment of the Mount Pearl School System.
 - iv. All available statistics from municipalities regarding housing starts, current and projected.
 - v. Any other relevant information.
 - This draft document will lay out a vision for this part of our district that will
 - vi. provide adequate facilities for all of our students,
 - vii. ensure overcrowding is eliminated, and
 - viii. ensure that appropriate structures are a part of any and all new construction to allow for expansion should student enrollment continue to increase.

This will be facilitated through the regular committee process, with a recommended plan to be tabled at the February Board Meeting.

Carried.

Trustee Dibbon noted that he felt there is a perception that the Board is reactive and not pro-active with respect to assessing the condition of all our schools. Given what has been experienced at Paradise Elementary and St. Lawrence Academy and in light of the similar case in Corner Brook, and also given the Board's responsibility to ensure a healthy learning and working environment for our students and staff; and given what is known about the age and condition of the schools in the district:

- Motion:** Moved by David Dibbon, seconded by Melvin Lambe, that the professional staff be directed to develop a 12 month plan that calls for independent air quality and other relevant environmental testing for all of the schools in the district, beginning with the oldest buildings and buildings that are known to be in poor condition and that the plan be brought back to the Board for approval at the April 2007 meeting.

Furthermore, that this plan be presented to the appropriate Government officials and that the Board communicate, unequivocally, our expectation that this initiative be financed 100% by the Provincial Government.

Carried.

- 7.3 Education Foundation Update** The Chair of the Foundation gave an update on business.
- 7.4 Capital Priorities/Phase II.** The Director provided an update on all projects identified. Dr. King noted that Phase II of the Multi-Year Planning would begin early in the new year, with the Board retreat expected to be organized for February.
- 7.5 Report from NLSBA Meeting.** This item was reported under Item 6.1

8. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Director gave an overview of the issues for the past month. Thanks were brought from the St. Lawrence School Council to senior administration for the work carried out on that project. The Director expressed gratitude to Mr. Pat Royle, Manager of Facilities, for his dedication, professionalism and willingness exhibited during the various challenging projects undertaken recently.

The Director congratulated Mr. Luke Pike, former student of John Burke High, who was the most recent recipient of the Rhodes Scholarship.

9.. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m. on a motion by Eric A. Snow.