

Chignecto-Central Regional School Board

Regular Meeting

09-02 Minutes

August 21, 2002

The regular monthly meeting of the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board was held on Wednesday, August 21, 2002, in the Board Room of the Administration Offices, 60 Lorne Street, Truro commencing at 7:00 p.m.

Present:

Kaaren Barkhouse
Jim Grue
John Henderson
Bernie Knockwood
Mark Lavers
Mary Macaulay
Lawrence MacKinnon

Ron Marks
Marilyn Murray
Robert Parker
Mackie Ross
Cheryl Samson
Marilyn Thompson
Trudy Thompson

In Attendance:

Doug Benedict
Valerie Gauthier
Gary Miller

Dale Sabeau
Linda Campbell
Bruce MacIntosh, Board Solicitor
Dave White, Regional Education Officer

Absent:

Robin Bourque, with regrets
David Myles, with regrets

Raymond Tynes, with regrets

Board Chair Robert Parker called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone back from the summer break.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

It was MOVED by Mary Macaulay, seconded by John Henderson
THAT THE AGENDA BE APPROVED AS PRESENTED.

MOTION CARRIED

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APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

It was MOVED by Jim Grue, seconded by Trudy Thompson
THAT THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON JUNE 12, 2002 BE APPROVED AS CIRCULATED.

MOTION CARRIED

It was MOVED by Marilyn Murray, seconded by Jim Grue
THAT THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON JUNE 17, 2002 BE APPROVED AS CIRCULATED.

MOTION CARRIED

It was MOVED by Marilyn Thompson, seconded by Mary Macaulay
THAT THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON JULY 8, 2002 BE APPROVED AS CIRCULATED.

MOTION CARRIED

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:

In response to a question raised regarding the new Truro Junior High School, Dale Sabeau, Director of Corporate Services, indicated that in recent conversation with the Minister of Education's office staff he had been informed the opening date has been delayed to January 2004. Official written confirmation is yet to be received.

In light of this information, there was **agreement** with a suggestion made by Mary Macaulay that the Superintendent direct correspondence to the *Deputy Minister of Education* requesting financial support for the additional expenses that will be incurred by the Board for the utilization of gymnasium facilities, as a result of moving the targeted opening date from September 2003 to January 2004.

CORRESPONDENCE:

The Board Secretary reviewed the following items of correspondence.

Thank You Notes – Summer Academy Students:

Board members have received notes from students throughout the Region expressing thanks for the Board's support of their attendance at a summer academy held at St. Francis Xavier University in July.

Minister of Education – BLAC Report Funding:

Correspondence of July 5th was received from the **Minister of Education** in response to a letter sent by the Board Chair expressing the Board's concern on the lack of funding for implementation of the **BLAC Report on Education**.

Ms. Purves indicated \$150,000. had been made available to Boards through application to the Department in support of race relation initiatives. In addition, she stated, as more resources become available, the Government will co-ordinate with the Council of African-Canadian Education, school boards and other stakeholders to ensure full implementation of the Report.

Board members were provided with a copy of this letter in their Board packages.

Responding to a request for clarification, Doug Benedict, Director of Education Services, explained that school boards had been invited to submit applications, in support of initiatives relevant to BLAC report recommendations, for portions of the \$150,000. He indicated the Board was awaiting approval on its submission for \$30,000. of the available funding.

Minister of Education – Education Act Amendments Summary:

A letter dated July 12th, 2002 was received from the **Minister of Education** accompanied by a summary of the amendments made to the Education Act in the spring of 2002 to ensure accountability and financial responsibility in the public education system.

The summary outlines the impact of each amendment and indicates the appropriate next steps to effect the change.

The Department has advised that Board senior staff will be contacted concerning these changes.

Minister of Education – Defining Audit Committee Regulations:

The Board Chair received correspondence, dated July 15th, from the **Minister of Education** thanking the Board for providing detailed information on action taken in response to the Sampson, Grant Thornton and Minister's Reports.

While she acknowledged the establishing of an audit committee as an appropriate step, she indicated changes may be required once regulations defining audit committees for all school boards have been finalized. Ms. Purves further indicated consultation with all boards will be part of this process.

Minister of Education –

New Glasgow African Nova Scotian Community Development Association:

A letter, dated July 30th, was received from the Minister of Education acknowledging receipt of

correspondence from the Board with regard to informing the **New Glasgow African Nova Scotian Community Development Association** of prospective employment opportunities arising through new school construction.

The Honourable Ms. Purves advised that all work for the two Pictou County schools will be bid through the Government Public Tenders office. She therefore suggested the Association be advised of the process involved in bidding on these projects.

This correspondence was referred to the Director of Corporate Services for action and was circulated to Board members for information.

Minister of Education – Elementary Mathematics Assessment Results Reporting:

In correspondence dated July 30, the **Minister of Education, Jane Purves**, responded to a letter sent by the Board Chair on behalf of the Board regarding the reporting of the results of the elementary mathematics assessment.

The response has been shared with Board members and indicates, in part, that the action plan provided with the assessment results, acknowledges the need to provide additional support for teachers of mathematics, through professional development, additional classroom resources and ensuring the provision of sufficient time to learn.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE:

Vice-Chair Trudy Thompson reported that no Committee-of-the-Whole meeting had been held since the June regular Board meeting. Subsequently there was no report to bring forward.

CORPORATE SERVICES:

Lawrence MacKinnon, Committee Chair, provided a report on a meeting held on June 19, 2002.

Draft Policy - Foods in Schools

A draft Policy and Procedures for *Foods in Schools* was shared with the Committee for review and information. This draft Policy will be distributed to all schools for school and community input in September with feedback also being sought from nutritionists and public health services.

Draft Policy - Advertising in Schools and on School Property

The Committee received a draft copy of the policy and procedures for *Advertising in Schools and on School Property* for review and information. This draft policy will also be sent out to schools in September for input.

School Facilities & Grounds: Enhancements/Joint Use Agreements

The Department of Education has asked that the Board develop (before the end of September '02) partnership agreements where community money is being invested for enhancements to new schools. As a result, the Committee received a sample copy of a *Joint Use Agreement* and **agreed** to review it and bring back suggestions for additions or deletions at a future meeting.

Non-Union Employees Handbook

The Committee received a copy of the *Non-union Employee Handbook* (November 1, 1997 to June 30, 2001) for information. As a result of the recent signing of the NSGGEU and CUPE agreements, it was recognized that this handbook needs to be updated. Procedures entitled, "*Compensation Packages for Non-union Employees*" was also approved by the Committee. As a result, the Committee agreed to obtain the external services of a consultant/firm to review and recommend salary ranges for the Board's non-union employees. Recommendations will be reviewed by the Corporate Services Committee at a future meeting.

Draft Policy – Use of Volunteers in Schools

The Committee received a draft policy on *Use of Volunteers in Schools* for review and information. They were informed that correspondence from the Minister of Education advised that the Department of Education and School Board Human Resources staff have developed a model protocol in obtaining reference checks for all new school staff, volunteers and applicants for employment with contracted-out services that are generally provided by Board or school employees. The requirements identified in the correspondence from the Minister will be incorporated into the draft *Use of Volunteers in Schools Policy* with a review of the proposal by the Committee at a future meeting.

Probationary Period – Non-union Employees

The Committee **agreed** to recommend to the Board the approval of the "*Probationary Period for Non-union Employees*" form [copy on file].

NSTU (CRCC) Local Bargaining

Correspondence was received from the Chignecto Regional Representative Council in which they serve notice that they wish to begin local bargaining on the Professional Agreement between the Regional Board and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. An exchange of packages will take place in September.

New School Construction Update

A report identifying the progress as of June 18, 2002 for Elmsdale, South Colchester, Pictou East, Pictou West, Truro Junior and Brookfield Memorial (renovations) was reviewed with the Committee.

It was MOVED by Lawrence MacKinnon, seconded by Marilyn Murray

THAT THE BOARD ADOPT THE CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT TO THE BOARD.

Board members raised questions related to several issues including Joint Use Agreements, N. S. T. U. Local Bargaining and OPP housing accommodation.

In response to a question concerning the draft policy, Advertising in Schools and on School Property, Dale Sabeau circulated copies for information and review. He asked that Board members forward suggestions to the Corporate Services Committee for consideration at a future meeting.

Questions were posed with regard to new school construction. The Director of Corporate Services verified that the following projects are included on the Board's school construction list (renovations): Stellarton Middle School, Oxford High and Springhill High.

With the question called.

MOTION CARRIED

EDUCATION SERVICES:

Committee Chair Marilyn Thompson provided the following report from a meeting held on June 20, 2002.

Homeless Youth Project

Heather Young, Project Coordinator, distributed a copy of the final report on the *Homeless Youth Project* and gave a brief overview. The Chignecto-Central Homeless Youth Project, funded by Human Resources Development Canada and sponsored by the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board, was created to explore the depth of the homelessness issue in the School Board Region by examining its causes, identifying the needs of homeless youth, and determining appropriate solutions to the homelessness problem. It was determined through the research process that the extent of homelessness among youth is widespread in the Colchester-East Hants, Pictou County and Cumberland County areas, and that there is still a great deal that needs to be done to properly address this issue. It was recommended that the information collected in this report be shared among stakeholders and community members so that more people are aware of the extent of the homelessness issue. It was also determined that this report has the potential to serve as a resource to improve existing programs and services for youth, as well as provide the information necessary to implement new programs that will meet the specific needs of the homeless youth in this area. The report was received by the Committee.

The Director of Education Services addressed questions from Board members on points for clarification. Mr. Benedict advised the recommendations presented in the Homeless Youth Project Report are being itemized and will be made available to Board members for information.

Data on Report Card

Kim Sullivan, Coordinator of Literacy and Assessment, distributed a copy of the Report on the *2001-2002 Report Card Pilot Project* that includes a copy of the revised Report Card. Ms.

Sullivan advised that revisions had been made based on parent and teacher feedback form results, parent and teacher anecdotal comments, provincial reporting policy, trial use by 26 schools, revisiting thinking and beliefs, common concerns by all stakeholders, and the process of improvement. It was noted that the Report Card Pilot will continue in the same 26 schools for the next school year, however, if there are other schools that request to use the pilot, permission will be granted. The report was accepted by the Committee.

Correspondence

Mr. Benedict reviewed a letter from Dr. L. L. Charmley, Chairperson of the School Advisory Council, E. B. Chandler Junior High School, addressed to the Minister of Education voicing their concern with the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board's decision to prohibit the grade 7 only orientation day in the fall of 2002, and requesting that the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board be directed to review their policy of prohibiting this day and allow for the continuation of this valuable service to the students. Mr. Benedict indicated that this practice has been discouraged based on direction from the Department of Education. The Committee **recommends** that the Board continue to concur with the direction from the Department of Education to limit restrictions on classroom instructional time, and the letter from Dr. Charmley be accepted for information.

Acadia-Temperance Abeyance Staffing (Referral from Corporate Services Committee)

Board Member Mary Macaulay shared information received by the Corporate Services Committee at their meeting on June 19th regarding staffing at Acadia and Temperance Schools in New Glasgow. It was suggested at that meeting that Mr. Benedict be requested to review the allocation of teachers, the abeyance last year and the reason for the reduction this year. Mr. Benedict will provide the information to the Corporate Services Committee with a copy to members of this Committee.

Report - Chignecto-Central West Science Fair

A copy of the Report on the Chignecto-Central West Science Fair submitted by Steve Karrell, Co-Chair was distributed. It was noted that the Science Fair Committee, in conjunction with other groups, is exploring the possibility of submitting a bid to host the Canada Wide Science Fair in Truro in 2007. Further information will be shared as it becomes available.

Technology Update

A copy of the Technology Service Record for the month of May was shared with Committee members showing the number of requests received and completed.

It was **MOVED** by Marilyn Thompson, seconded by Mark Lavers

TO ACCEPT THE EDUCATION SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT TO THE BOARD.

In response to a question posed by Mary Macaulay, Doug Benedict clarified that direction from the Department of Education, concerning orientation day for students entering a school, resulted from a concern with some students losing instructional time from classes in order to accommodate the orientation day for incoming students only and not with the

orientation session itself.

During discussion on staffing at Acadia and Temperance Street schools several issues were raised by Dr. Lawrence MacKinnon including: the administrative allocation of abeyance staff, actual student enrollment, possible alternative solutions and the involvement of the School Advisory Council.

*It was **agreed** that Superintendent Gary Miller would meet with Dr. MacKinnon to further address his concerns.*

Doug Benedict, in responding to a question posed by Mark Lavers, indicated he would ensure that schools participating in the Report Card Pilot Project provide parents/guardians with pertinent information on the new report card in advance of issuing report cards to students.

The question was called.

MOTION CARRIED

FINANCE:

Committee Chair Ron Marks provided a report on a Finance Committee meeting held on June 25, 2002.

Salary and Expense Report 2001-2002

The Salary and Expense Report 2001-2002 was reviewed in draft form and will be submitted to the *Department of Education* by June 30, 2002.

Financial Statements – March 31, 2002

The Committee recommended that the Board spend \$300,000. from the surplus, and ask the Superintendent to provide recommendations for allocation based on programs/projects with the highest need. *This motion was addressed at a special meeting of the Board on July 8, 2002.*

It was MOVED by Ron Marks, seconded by Trudy Thompson

TO RECEIVE THE FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT TO THE BOARD FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES.

Mary Macaulay expressed concern with the timing of information to Board Members of the surplus resulting from Board operations to March 31, 2002.

In response, Finance Committee Chair Ron Marks, indicated that with the July 1st holiday, the summer break in progress and regular Board meetings not scheduled, the Committee had made the

decision to schedule a special meeting at the earliest opportunity.

The question was called.

MOTION CARRIED

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CONFERENCE REPORTS:

▪ **Nova Scotia Pupil Transportation Conference:**

Board Member Kaaren Barkhouse reported on her attendance at the *Nova Scotia Pupil Transportation Conference* held in Dartmouth, N. S. She presented highlights of the various sessions in which she participated and thanked the Board for the opportunity to attend an enjoyable and informative conference.

▪ **NSSBA – Annual General Meeting:**

Board Member Cheryl Samson shared information on the *Nova Scotia School Boards Association – AGM* held in Yarmouth, N. S. on May 30th, 31st and June 1st entitled “*Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Education*”. She presented an account of the business session and reviewed the resolutions which had been submitted by the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board, all of which, following debate at the annual general meeting, were ratified by the NSSBA. Ms. Samson indicated it was especially interesting to be privy to the varied perspectives on how the resolutions presented would possibly impact on other Boards.

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▪ **CSBA Congress 2002:**

The *CSBA Congress 2002 – Education for Tomorrow: One Child at a Time*, held July 4 – 6 in St. John’s, Newfoundland was attended by Board members Mark Lavers and Mary Macaulay. Both described the conference as excellent.

In his report, Mark Lavers focused on the various workshops he had attended. Of particular interest to Mr. Lavers was an address entitled, *The Future of Public Education in Canada*, by Dr. Michael Walker, Executive Director of The Fraser Institute, who spoke on the importance of assessing students and standardized testing. An interesting opposing view was presented by Dr. Bruce Sheppard, CEO of Avalon West School Board who posed the question “*Is the school system really that bad?*”

Board Member Mary Macaulay provided an overview from some of the sessions in which she participated. Included was a presentation by Liz Sandals, President of the Ontario Public School Boards’ Association – *Academic Success* as well as a session called *Values-Based Decision Making* which centered on identifying and resolving ethical dilemmas. Copies of the handout provided at this workshop will be circulated to all Board members

for information.

Ms. Macaulay, as voting delegate, reported that several resolutions had been ratified during the business portion of the conference including one she had proposed that focused on the issue of taxes on school board members for travel.

In concluding her report, Ms. Macaulay advised that *Congress 2003 – Public Education: Strength in Diversity* is scheduled for July 3 – 5, 2003 and will be held in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Superintendent Gary Miller indicated he would not highlight items from his administrative report; instead he would take the opportunity to make some comments.

He stated that in his view, during the last year the school system met its obligations to its students, teachers and support staff in an exemplary way. Mr. Miller advised he was particularly pleased with the process used in the planning, development and execution of the budget – having found the process to be transparent, open and fair. He indicated while the decisions taken were difficult, they were made by Board members who were well informed.

Mr. Miller reported senior management will be reviewing effective solutions to the challenges presented in operationalizing the new structure as envisioned in the Gillis Report. In addition, senior management will discuss other recommendations contained in the Gillis Report.

Although the challenges of 2002 – 2003 are great, Mr. Miller indicated it is his belief that staff and Board members together have the expertise, commitment, wisdom and the courage to make the difficult decisions that will be necessary to address those challenges. He presented a number of challenges which he indicated would be included in his September Board Report.

In conclusion, Mr. Miller expressed assurance that through Board and staff working effectively together an already fine school system would become an even better system.

CHAIR/VICE CHAIR REPORT:

Board Chair Robert Parker reported on several issues and initiatives which included Pictou East and Pictou West Sod Turnings, a meeting with Pictou County Municipal officials, a Provincial governance issue, a tentative meeting with Cabinet Ministers and proposed Chair/Vice-Chair school visits.

Mr. Parker encouraged Board members to attend the Board Workshop scheduled to be held

in Debert on September 20-21. He asked that those unable to be in attendance notify the Board Secretary by September 5th.

NOVA SCOTIA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION:

Board representative to the NSSBA Board of Directors, Ron Marks, noted the following had been circulated for information: June - NSSBA Month in Review, May 31, '02 – AGM Minutes, June 13/14 Board of Directors Special Meeting Minutes, July 29 – Board of Directors Special Meeting Minutes, July 29 – Communication Strategy Board of Directors Minutes, July 29 Highlights and Volume 24, No. 2 NSSBA Matters.

N. S. School Charity:

Mr. Marks provided an update on the N. S. School Charity indicating a motion had been passed to receive and proceed with the implementation of the final business plan. He added that 3 Wise Chicks Inc. will be proceeding on the conditional basis that seed money is in place before continuing with the project. A golf tournament is to be held as a fundraiser for the charity and will take place in Bridgewater in late September.

It was indicated that NSSBA Committees have CCRSB representation as follows:

- Communications Committee – Trudy Thompson
- Education Committee – Doug Benedict
- Resolutions and Election Committee – Mary Macaulay
- Finance Committee – Ron Marks
- Employee Benefits – Ron Marks
- Pension Committee – Mary Macaulay

Mr. Marks noted a *School Board Member Governance Workshop* is scheduled for October 24th and 25th.

NEW BUSINESS:

There was no new business to bring forward to the meeting.

NOTICES OF MOTION:

There were no notices of motions brought forward.

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PUBLIC QUESTION PERIOD:

There were no questions raised by the public in attendance.

IN-CAMERA SESSION:

It was MOVED by Trudy Thompson, seconded by Cheryl Samson

THAT THE MEETING MOVE TO IN-CAMERA SESSION TO DISCUSS PERSONNEL ISSUE.

MOTION CARRIED

It was MOVED by Cheryl Samson, seconded by Trudy Thompson

THAT THE MEETING RECONVENE IN PUBLIC SESSION.

MOTION CARRIED

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DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The next public Board meeting is scheduled for September 11, 2002 and will be held in the **Dr. W. A. MacLeod Elementary School**, Riverton beginning at 7:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT:

On motion, the meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Robert Parker, Board Chair

September 12, 2002

Date

Linda Campbell, Board Secretary

September 12, 2002

Date