



SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE PUBLIC REPORT

**Tuesday, August 24, 2021, 7:00 p.m.
Zoom Meeting**

- Trustees Present: Justine Bell, Donna Blackburn, Rob Campbell, Chris Ellis, Lyra Evans, Mark Fisher, Wendy Hough, Jennifer Jennekens, Keith Penny, Sandra Schwartz, Lynn Scott, AmaturRaheem Salam-Alada (Student Trustee), Charles Chen (Student Trustee)
- Staff Present: Camille Williams-Taylor (Director of Education), Brett Reynolds (Associate Director), Mike Carson (Chief Financial Officer), Janice McCoy (Superintendent of Human Resources), Michele Giroux (Executive Officer, Corporate Services), Susan MacDonald, Prince Duah (Superintendent of Instruction), Mary Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Shawn Lehman (Superintendent of Instruction), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Nadia Towaij (Superintendent of Programming and Learning K-12), Reg Lavergne, Superintendent of Instruction, Carolyn Tanner (Human Rights and Equity Advisor), Stacey Kay (Manager of Learning Support Services), Karyn Carty Ostafichuk (Manager of Planning), Sandra Owens (Manager of Business & Learning Technologies), Richard Sinclair (Manager of Legal Services and Labour Relations), Nicole Guthrie (Manager of Board Services), Michael Guilbault (Central AV Technician), Leigh Fenton (Board/Committee Coordinator)
- Non-Voting
Representatives
Present: Christine Moulaison (OCASC), Christine Lanos (OCEOC), Steve Spidell (OCSSAN), Susan Gardner (ETFO), Stephanie Kirkey (OSSTF), Kelly Granum (OSSTF-Secondary Occasional Teachers), Pat Dion (OCEOTA), Melodie Gondek (OSSTF-District 25), Sonia Nadon-Campbell (SEAC), Seema Lamba (ACE) Lili Miller (IEAC)

1. Call to Order - Vice-Chair of the Board

Vice-Chair Penny called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. He acknowledged that the meeting is taking place on unceded Algonquin Territory and thanked the Algonquin Nations for hosting the meeting on their land.

2. Approval of Agenda

Moved by Trustee Schwartz,

THAT the agenda be approved with the following amendments:

A. THAT the agenda be amended to move item 4.2, COVID-19 Update, to become item 3.0 and to move item 3.0, Delegations, to become item 4.0; and

B. THAT the Board resolves to an in camera session following item 4.0, Delegations.

Carried, as amended.

3. COVID-19 Update

3.1 Update from Ottawa Public Health (OPH) (Dr. Brent Moloughney et al)

Dr. Brent Moloughney, Deputy Minister of Health for Ottawa Public Health (OPH), provided an oral presentation on COVID-19 and the re-opening of schools for the 2021-2022 school year. Representatives from OPH present were Manager of the School Health Branch, Marino Francispillai, and Dr. Michelle Foote, Associate Medical Officer of Health.

Dr. Moloughney stated that parents and staff can feel comfortable and confident about a return to in-person learning. He attributed the low-transmission rates of the COVID-19 virus to a high vaccination rate in Ottawa. He acknowledged that infection rates in the city are slowly rising due to the highly transmissible delta variant. He encouraged families to get vaccinated as they become eligible; age 12 and over, citing that the risk of hospitalization due to a COVID-19 infection becomes lower when vaccinated. He noted that those who are vaccinated have a 20% lower risk of contracting the virus when comparing rates of the fully vaccinated population versus the unvaccinated population in Ottawa. He advised that higher vaccination rates in the community help children and others who are unable to be vaccinated.

Dr. Moloughney highlighted that for 2021-2022 school year when a vaccinated student or staff member has been exposed to a positive case of COVID-19 in the classroom and does not exhibit symptoms, they will not be required to self-isolate. To facilitate access to vaccinations, four large community clinics have opened and are accepting walk-ins. In addition, community vaccination hubs are now located in communities that have lower vaccination rates. As schools re-open, public health nurses will be available in schools to educate and promote the benefits of becoming vaccinated.

Dr. Moloughney underscored the continued necessity for layers of protective measures in schools, advising that these measures may be adjusted over time. Students in grades 1 to 12 are required to wear masks and Kindergarten students are strongly encouraged to wear masks. Practicing good hand hygiene is important to stop the spread of the virus. Physical distancing is considered an important safety measure. Students

and staff must continue daily self-screening before entering school buildings. The OPH screening tool is available online. The province will be updating their screening tool and OPH plans to align their screening tool with the provincial tool. Dr. Moloughney noted that COVID-19 testing partners have greater capacity and can provide faster results in September 2021 as compared to September 2020. He noted that a pilot program ran in the summer with special education day camp students using home testing kits. At this time OPH is working with the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) to integrate home testing kits in 80 schools over the region.

During discussion and in response to questions, the following points were noted:

- OPH supports masking in the Kindergarten age group considering children in this age group, who are not eligible for the vaccination, tend to visit with one another in close proximity and do not always practice a good standard of hand hygiene;
- OPH is generally supportive of any policy that provides for the vaccination of adults and staff who interact with students. Dr. Moloughney reflected that each employer must consider their own structure and implementation;
- Dr. Moloughney stressed that in the case of mandatory vaccinations for all eligible students, the province is the policy leader through the *Immunization of School Pupils Act*. It would be helpful to OPH to acquire information on the location of schools with lower vaccination rates to be able to provide additional resources promoting the benefits of vaccination. He noted that there are potential inequities in vaccine accessibility for all communities;
- OPH is prepared to bring mobile vaccination programs to the schools; however an education program about the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccinations is required as a preliminary step;
- Dr. Moloughney stated that in medical practice, providing information for youth to help them arrive at better decisions is common practice;
- In response to a query by Trustee Lyra Evans, Mr. Francispillai stated, in his opinion, as health care professionals, nurses can assess whether a student is competent to make their own medical decisions;
- When transmission rates are higher in the community, there is a greater risk of infections in schools. The current delta variant is more transmissible than last year's Alpha variant;
- OHP is constantly assessing the risk variables and making adjustments as needed for the protective measures to keep the school

community safe. OHP is in partnership with thirty-four other health units to find ways to streamline the approach;

- The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) clinical trial findings suggests that the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna mRNA vaccines provide very good protection against symptomatic COVID-19 infection and have a favourable benefit versus risk profile in adolescents 12 years of age and older;
- In Canada, citizens who have had two doses of the approved vaccinations are to be considered fully vaccinated;
- Since March 2020, OPH and members of the senior administration of all four school boards have met on a weekly basis to assess the measures in place to keep the school community safe. Communication about COVID-19 protocols to parents and caregivers are multi-pronged and continuous;
- OPH becomes involved in the role of the testing process at schools when a positive case has been disclosed and through contact tracing, any vaccinated or unvaccinated high-risk contacts are required to be tested if symptoms of COVID-19 are present. OPH is responsible for managing COVID-19 cases, including providing guidance to schools on confirming and controlling outbreaks;
- Dr. Moloughney noted that any employee policy that pertains to self-testing should weigh the legitimacy of test results such as the efficacy of self-administration, following the manufacturer's instruction for use, proof by photograph including a date stamp, etcetera;
- Dr. Moloughney attested to the fact that with the rapid antigen tests, Panbio, used in long term care facilities, measured the virus with accuracy approximately 50% of the time. He anticipated that this same testing tool will be used in schools and other settings;
- Dr. Moloughney reported that from a medical standpoint, an exemption should be granted to those likely to experience an anaphylaxis reaction to the vaccination;
- Dr. Moloughney noted that high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters are an improvement to ventilation within buildings; however most viral transmission comes from close interactions between people;
- OPH will be providing added recommendations to local school boards before the launch of the 2021-2022 school year;
- The Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils (OCASC) offered to assist in distributing communication to parents. Mr. Francispillai maintained that OPH nurses are involved in engaging youth in every

community. Community hubs have been critical as nurses are trusted professionals working with specific neighbourhoods;

- In Ottawa there have been cases of mild COVID-19 infections in people who have been vaccinated; and
- The District's COVID-19 dashboard was updated in the 2020-2021 school year in accordance with the Ministry guidelines.

4. Delegations

4.1 Jennifer Salahub, re Ottawa-Carleton District School Board Return to School Plan

Ms. Salahub, expressed concern about the province's guidance to plan for unmasked indoor activities in schools

She inquired about the opportunity for families to change their decisions from in-person learning back into the Ottawa-Carleton Virtual (OCV) campus. She requested further information on the District's implementation of the province's guidance on the re-opening of schools and suggested no return to singing and wind instruments in school.

Trustee Scott confirmed with staff that some topics raised by Ms. Salahub will be addressed in the planning forward update.

4.2 James Graham, re Trustee Notice of Motions

Mr. Graham voiced his concern over the motions put forward by Trustee Lyra Evans. He contended that these motions fail to provide appropriate accommodation to individuals who remain unvaccinated. He noted his concern that policies cannot be crafted without considering tangible data. He presented charts on a compilation of findings which studied the infection rates of COVID -19, highlighting that young children are not becoming severely ill with Covid-19. He refuted the claim that administering vaccinations will protect children. He stressed that the student body, aged 18 and under, are best served when not vaccinated, in order to build natural immunity. Children who get infected typically show no symptoms or do not get particularly ill.

Mr. Graham stated that there is no data to support mask wearing for Kindergarten aged children. He requested that the committee consider the ramifications of Trustee Lyra Evans' motion campaigning to empower students to make informed medical decisions related to the COVID-19 vaccine. He expressed the view that this policy will cause unnecessary harm to the students, parents and staff. He proposed that schools improve education around self-assessment and self-protection. He proposed providing support to students, staff and parents on how to cope with situations where they should remain at home until all symptoms are resolved.

4.3 Sharon Brez, re Use of Schools as Voting Sites

Ms. Brez advised that the schools should not be used for polling stations, citing the prevalence of the COVID-19 delta variant is increasing. She noted her concern that it may be a challenge to clean exposed surfaces at entrances, in gyms, hallways and washrooms before classes resume. She expressed the opinion that alternate venues for voting should be encouraged, despite short timelines. New Brunswick and Manitoba have decided not to use schools as polling stations during the pandemic.

Trustee Schwartz sought clarity from staff on the ability of the District to opt out of using schools for voting sites. She requested that Director Williams-Taylor provide an update on the matter during the staff report.

4.4 Greg Macdougall, re COVID-19 Safety Approaches for the 2021-2022 School Year

Mr. Macdougall expressed concern with adequate ventilation in school buildings. He noted his objection to the mandatory vaccination of staff and students. He recommended that no decision be made until the trustees are able to communicate an understanding of the major concerns around vaccine mandates, including people's rights, longer-term thinking around antibodies, boosters, and variants.

4.5 Jennifer Robertson, re Mandatory Vaccinations of Students and Mandatory Masking of Kindergarten Students

Ms. Robertson, a registered nurse, noted that it is a legal requirement under the professional nursing license to advocate for patients when a health intervention by the medical team is not consistent with best practice and the best information available. She expressed the opinion that COVID-19 vaccinations remain in the clinical trial phase and the medical community may not be certain of the risks associated with vaccines. She advised that nearly 100% of children who have contracted COVID-19 in Canada have recovered. There is no significant data that suggests cloth and paper masks are effective. The Government of Ontario website states that face coverings do not stop the transmission of COVID-19.

Trustee Bell drew attention to the rules in place on social media and other online platforms when raising the subject of COVID-19 vaccinations. She queried the District's protocol on "fact-checking" the statements made by delegates, based on the truthfulness and bias of the information presented.

4.6 Pamela Bowles, re Removal of the Requirement to Use Masks in Elementary Schools

Ms. Bowles did not appear for the delegation.

4.7 Carolyn Moffat, re Concern Regarding Unmasked Activities During School Hours

Ms. Moffat spoke in favour of mandatory vaccinations for both students and staff entering school property. She expressed the view that kindergarten students should be required to wear masks and expressed concern about unmasked activities at school, particular at meal times.

Ms. Moffat requested more information on the District's plan in preparation for an influx of students from the Ottawa-Carleton Virtual (OCV) school.

Trustee Campbell urged staff to review the procedure on delegations to ensure the public feels safe speaking about their varying narratives at OCDSB public meetings.

The Committee resolved in camera at 9:03 pm.

Chair Penny called the public meeting to order at 10:21 pm.

**Moved by Trustee Lyra Evans,
THAT the meeting be adjourned.**

Carried

5. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:24 p.m.

At the time of adjournment the following items had not been dealt with:

4.3 Staff Update

5.1 Memo No. 21-094, COVID-19 Vaccination Disclosure Policy

5.2 Notice of Motion re Mandatory Vaccines for Staff

5.3 Notice of Motion re Amendments to Policy P.067.SCO, Volunteers

5.4 Notice of Motion re Access to School Board Property

5.5 Notice of Motion re Mandatory Masking for Students in Kindergarten Classes

5.6 Notice of Motion re Empowering Young People to Take Action for Their Own Health

Keith Penny, Chair