



## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE PUBLIC REPORT

**Tuesday, September 13, 2022, 7:30 p.m.  
Zoom Meeting**

**Trustees Present:** Lynn Scott (Trustee), Keith Penny (Trustee), Justine Bell (Trustee), Donna Blackburn (Trustee), Rob Campbell (Trustee), Lyra Evans (Trustee), Mark Fisher (Trustee), Wendy Hough (Trustee), Jennifer Jennekens (Trustee), Sandra Schwartz (Trustee), Tabarak Al Delaimi (Student Trustee), Antong Hou (Student Trustee)

**Staff Present:** Camille Williams-Taylor (Director of Education), Brett Reynolds (Associate Director of Education), Carolyn Tanner (Human Rights and Equity Advisor), Nadia Towajj (Superintendent of Program and Learning K-12), Michele Giroux (Executive Officer of Corporate Services), Prince Duah (Superintendent of Instruction), Mary Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Paula Hall (Superintendent of People, Culture and Leadership), Richard Sinclair (General Counsel), Reg Lavergne (Superintendent of Instruction), Shawn Lehman (Superintendent of Instruction), Susan MacDonald (Superintendent of Instruction), Shannon Smith (Superintendent of Instruction), James Proulx (Executive Officer, Information Technology and Digital Transformation.), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Kelly Granum (Teacher, Nepean High School), Christine Lanos (Principal, Office of the Associate Director), Sandra Owens (Manager, Business & Learning Technologies), Diane Pernari (Manager, Communications & Information Services), Nicole Guthrie (Manager of Board Services), Michael Guilbault (Central Audio Visual Technical Specialist), Mellissa Applewaihe (Board/Committee Coordinator)

**Non-Voting Representatives Present:** Stephanie Kirkey (Secondment, Seconded - OSSTF), Melodie Gondek (OSSTF- ESP), Jean Fulton-Hale (OCSSAN), Thomas Holloway (OCASC), Pat Dixon (OCEOTA-ALT), Seema Lamba (ACE), Lili Miller (IEC), Suzanne Lyon (PIC)

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

Vice-Chair Penny called the meeting to order at 7:56: p.m.

2. Land Acknowledgement

Vice-Chair Penny acknowledged that the meeting is taking place on unceded Algonquin Territory and thanked the Algonquin Nations for hosting the meeting on their land.

3. Approval of Agenda

Moved by Trustee Evans,

THAT the agenda as amended be approved.

Carried

4. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

No declarations of interest were filed.

5. Briefing from the Chair of the Board

Chair Scott acknowledged the reign and recent death of the Queen of England. She advised that OCDSB schools will be open on 19 September 2022 which is a provincial Day of Mourning for the Queen. She noted that a moment of silence will be observed in schools.

6. Briefing from the Director

Director Williams-Taylor reported that it had been a pleasure to welcome new and returning students, families, and staff back to school. She thanked staff for ensuring that schools were ready for students to return with educational and administrative support in place. The Director provided the following updates:

- Approximately 7,500 students participated in summer programs, including summer school, reach ahead credit programs, literacy programs, international language classes and camps, and programs designed specifically for Indigenous, Black and 2SLGBTQ+ students;
- Significant upgrades have been completed in District schools including new science labs and program upgrades, accessibility improvements, windows, electricity, roofing, paving and site upgrades and additionally the completion of ventilation and HVAC work in 51 schools;
- Before the first day of school, staff participated in a number of learning opportunities:
- Principals and vice-principals attended a presentation on building teams with an emphasis on kindness, led by Dr. Brian Goldman, host of CBC Radio's White Coat, Black Art and veteran emergency room physician;
- A Professional Activity (PA) Day on 2 September 2022 was structured to provide staff members with time to familiarize themselves with health and safety protocols and to complete the required Sexual Abuse Prevention Program training; and

- A session was facilitated to assist families to support their children's well-being as students prepare to learn and additional mental health guidance was provided to families and staff to help students adjust to the new year.

Director Williams-Taylor noted that the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA) website should be monitored closely for updates and cancellation details.

The Director noted that the Ontario government provides guidance to school districts on the management of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases in schools. Information provided by Ottawa Public Health (OPH) supplements this guidance. She noted that the District worked hard throughout the pandemic to ensure the safety of students, staff, and families and reported that at the start of the 2022-2023 school year improvements and upgrades in air quality and ventilation have been implemented. Director Williams-Taylor advised that OCDSB continues to promote safety measures recommended by OPH including:

- Daily screening for symptoms using the updated daily screening tool;
- Staying home when sick or experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19;
- Continuing to wear a mask, after your isolation, when out in public for 10 days from when symptoms began;
- Avoiding non-essential visits to high-risk settings such as hospitals and long-term care for 10 days from when your symptoms started;
- Using Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) as needed; and
- Ensuring children and youth are up to date with their COVID-19 vaccine.

Director Williams-Taylor noted that the OCDSB will continue to monitor school operations and planning, making adjustments as needed by utilizing guidance from provincial, local health, and education authorities.

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

- In response to a query on whether the OCDSB had received any instructions that differ from those issued by Dr. Vera Etches, OPH Medical Officer of Health, Director Williams-Taylor noted that there were no additional recommendations and that the OCDSB will adjust practices to enhance student safety as needed;
- Associate Director Reynolds noted that the District has continued to work with the other three local school districts and OPH. At a recent meeting, there was no indication of a change in direction or strategy. School districts should continue to align practices with provincial and local guidance and monitor the situation. Protective Personal Equipment (PPE) is provided in schools and upcoming OCDSB communications will highlight OPH guidance that PPE should be worn in cases where physical distancing is not possible;

- Some of the material on the OPH website is outdated and OCDSB is collaborating with OPH to provide updated revisions;
- In response to a query on why the 2022-2023 kindergarten students all started on the same day as opposed to the staggered intake of previous years, Superintendent Towajj reported that the previous practice had not served parents from an equity standpoint as many parents had limited options for childcare and had to stay at home to look after their children. Following two years of collaboration with community partners and other school districts that view kindergarten intake from an equity lens, the OCDSB is now able to offer access to all kindergarten students on the first day of school. Superintendent Towajj noted that two educators are placed in each classroom to welcome students and the new model provides a maximum number of instructional days for the OCDSB's youngest learners;
- In a response to a query for an update on the schools affected by the derecho storm on 21 May 2022, Associate Director Reynolds reported that all related repairs have been completed with the exception of Castor Valley Elementary School which is awaiting some windows;
- In response to a request for clarification on when the District will make class size adjustments to adhere to Ministry of Education requirements, Associate Director Reynolds noted that the usual staffing adjustments will occur at the end of September 2022 to ensure that class sizes fulfill compliance regulations; and
- In response to a query on the use of portables, particularly in Merivale High School and on the long-range planning for the area, Director Williams-Taylor noted that she would work with the planning team to provide a more fulsome response at a future meeting.

## 7. Delegations

### 7.1 Michael Teper, re Memo 22-081, Responding to Concerns About Antisemitism

Mr. Teper introduced himself as a member of the Canadian Antisemitism Education Foundation. He advised that the Jewish community is losing confidence in OCDSB and that he has received feedback from Jewish leadership about incidents where OCDSB Jewish students have experienced antisemitic comments and actions. He noted that many Jewish parents are transferring their children to the Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB).

Mr. Teper expressed the opinion that the District should reconcile with the Jewish Federation of Ottawa and other representative bodies of the Jewish community. He requested that the District not utilize the services of people who do not have the support of the Jewish community for equity training.

Mr. Teper noted that Memo 22-081 explained the cancellation of an appearance by the Canadian special envoy, the Honorable Irwin Cotler. Based on the results of a Freedom of Information Request, Mr. Teper requested that Memo 22-081 be amended.

Mr. Teper noted that the definition of antisemitism in the memo pre-dates the Canadian 2019 adherence to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism. That definition has been adopted by other Canadian provinces and 35 governments, including the government of Canada. Mr. Teper expressed the opinion that OCDSB should adopt the IHRA definition.

Director Williams-Taylor noted that the District recognizes that Jewish students and staff have experienced antisemitism. She advised that the District's goal is to ensure all students and staff feel heard, valued and safe and that the subject matter requires complicated and complex work. She assured that the OCDSB aims to act with respect while recognizing the need to balance and maintain the integrity of human rights for all. Director Williams-Taylor noted that the District is working with the Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship (CHES) and agreed that there is more to learn. She added that the District has a responsibility to Jewish and all other communities. The District remains committed to partnership, learning and in the act of good faith and as such may need to assess and readjust.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- The IHRA is an international inter-governmental organization with 35 member countries and 8 observer countries. The statement for the definition of antisemitism was established by experts within the organization. While it does not have legally binding status in Canada, it is used frequently by school boards and other organizations for guidance and statistical purposes. Further detail on the statement can be found in the European Commission handbook.
- The York Region District School Board (YRDSB) is currently debating a motion to adopt the definition; and
- The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) provides an example of best practice by the implementation of a detailed screening and scoring process when using external speakers before allowing speakers to present to the board. This practice evolved from previous experiences with speakers who held conflicting political views.

## 8. Report from Statutory and Other Committees

### 8.1 Parent Involvement Committee (PIC), 13 April 2022

Moved by Trustee Lyra Evans,

THAT the report from the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC), dated 13 April 2022, be received.

Trustee Scott requested that her name be included on the attendance list.

**Moved by Trustee Lyra Evans,**

**THAT the report from the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC), dated 13 April 2022, be received, as amended.**

**Carried**

9. Information Items:

9.1 Report from OPSBA (if required)

Trustee Jennekens reported that she and Chair Scott are to attend an Ontario Public School Board Association (OPSBA) Directors meeting on 30 September 2022 to 1 October 2022 and will provide an update at a future meeting.

9.2 New Ministry Initiatives Update (if required)

There were no new Ministry updates.

9.3 OSTA Update

There was no OSTA update.

a. 25 April 2022, OSTA Minutes

Provided for information.

b. 30 May 2022, OSTA Minutes

Provided for information.

10. New Business - Information and Inquiries

Chair Scott and Trustee Jennekens requested an update on the status of current new school construction projects as follows:

- Shingwàkons Public School currently housed at the DA Moodie site;
- The new high school in Stittsville;
- Half Moon Bay Elementary School;
- Riverside South High School; and
- Findlay Creek Elementary School.

Director Williams-Taylor noted that she will inquire with Planning and Facilities to provide a response in the form of a memorandum.

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

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Keith Penny, Vice-Chair