

ADVOCACY STRATEGY COMMITTEE

June 19, 2023, 12:00 pm
Trustees' Committee Room
133 Greenbank Road
Ottawa, Ontario

Members: Alysha Aziz, Suzanne Nash, Cathryne Milburn (electronic communication), Amanda Presley (electronic communication)

Staff Present Janice McCoy (Executive Officer, Corporate Services), Nicole Guthrie (General Manager of Board Services), Diane Pernari (General Manager of Communications), Darcy Knoll (Communications Advisor (Media))

1. Call to Order

Chair Aziz called the meeting to order at 12:06 p.m.

2. Acknowledgement of Territorial Lands

Chair Aziz acknowledged that the meeting is taking place on unceded Algonquin Homelands and thanked the Algonquin Nations for hosting the meeting on their land.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were filed.

4. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Trustee Nash,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Chair Aziz requested that the agenda be amended to include the addition CitySHAPES and Transportation as item 6.3 under matters for discussion.

Moved by Trustee Nash,

THAT the agenda be approved, as amended.

Carried

5. Matters for Action:

5.1 Approval of Terms of Reference

Moved by Trustee Presley,

THAT the Terms of Reference for the Advocacy Strategy Committee be approved. (Attached as Appendix A).

Carried

6. Matters for Discussion:

6.1 Memo 23-046 Developing the 2023-2024 Advocacy Strategy

Members reviewed the list of items for the priority work of the committee in the 2023-2024 school year outlined in Memo 23-046.

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

- As the committee begins to develop a plan, consideration should be given to the Board's capacity to complete the work. Staff suggested that the Committee may wish to limit their initiatives to a few key areas that will most impact the students and staff. A smaller, focussed strategy will ensure that efforts have an impact and that staff and board resources are available to support the efforts;
- Memo 23-046 specifically references the following issues:
 - Noise By-law - City of Ottawa;
 - Bill 98 Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act and related regulations - Ministry of Education;
 - Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) and number of days for retirees;
 - Transportation funding formula;
 - Protest free zones;
 - Special Education Funding; and
 - Increased Provincial Funding.
- The Board has a finite amount of funding and must focus on student achievement but recognize that the greening initiative is important. CitySHAPES and other groups within the city of Ottawa could assist and collaborate on the greening initiative;
- Staff encouraged the Committee to contemplate the Board's role as the organization's political arm, the Board's fiduciary duties, and the areas that the Board is specifically charged with;
- Under the broader heading of funding for education, there are specific, urgent areas of need like transportation;

- Members discussed the opportunity for conversations with local Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) or City Councillors and the value of having two or three areas of focus which are within the City's sphere of influence and aligned with the district's strategic priorities. For example, a conversation with City Councillors could focus on the noise by-law greening initiatives, including composting;
- The Committee requested that an outline and draft plan be presented for review and approval at the next committee meeting, tentatively scheduled for 5 October 2023, with a goal to have Board approval by the end of October 2023;
- Members discussed the possibility of a meeting with the new director and city councillors;
- Staff suggested that the priority areas will differ depending on the level of government. The message to each audience should be considered to maximize effectiveness and impact;
- Another consideration is the timing of the Ontario Liberal Party leadership election and the potential for it to create unique advocacy opportunities;
- The members discussed the option of a meeting with local MPs and MPPs in November 2023. Staff encouraged the members to contemplate a date in late November or early December. The late fall timing will give the Board and staff time to schedule the meetings and prepare. The past practice has been for a morning or breakfast meeting to ensure the MPP can manage their constituency work. Other times should also be explored; and
- The Committee agreed that they would focus on community building and sustainable funding as the two major priority areas, nesting particular issues under these categories as appropriate.

6.2 Menstrual Equity (ME) Program

Trustee Presley shared that she had received comments from students on the operationalization of the Menstrual Equity (ME) Project and the lack of product availability and the limited range of available products.

Staff noted that the query is predominantly an operational matter and that the questions might be better posed to the Associate Director of Operations and the System Principal with responsibility for the program to help identify the advocacy need and where the Committee might play a role.

Superintendent Lavergne and Principal Arden should also be consulted and may be able to provide more details on the issues that were heard at the Student Senate meeting.

Should it be warranted, after conversations with staff, there may be an advocacy piece tied to funding of products which may better support the continued implementation of the program.

6.3 CitySHAPES and Student Transportation

Chair Aziz noted that she had preliminary conversations with CitySHAPES, a new Ottawa not-for-profit organization which aims to help cities and communities work with urgency to deliver solutions in climate, housing, transportation and governance. She spoke about the possibility for a meeting with the organization specifically focusing on the matter of student transportation.

Staff noted that the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA) has a well-established walking school bus program and that the Committee may first seek to review the current program.

Trustee Nash noted that the Ottawa Safety Council has also been active in the support of the walking school bus program and should also be considered regarding transportation alternatives.

Chair Aziz shared that it was her intention to begin conversations with CityShapes in an effort to advocate to City Council to extend bus passes to students over the age of twelve and sought consensus from members on whether or not to engage with CityShapes on the initiative. Staff encouraged the Committee to finalize their strategy and plan prior to a meeting with CityShapes. The members agreed that a meeting should be arranged for late November, early December of 2023.

7. New Business -- Information and Inquiries

There was no new business.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:08 p.m.

Alysha Aziz, Chair, Advocacy Strategy Committee