



## SPECIAL BOARD PUBLIC MINUTES

**Tuesday, October 15, 2024**  
**Board Room**  
**Administration Building**  
**133 Greenbank Road**  
**Ottawa, Ontario**

Trustees Present: Justine Bell (electronic communication), Donna Blackburn, Donna Dickson (electronic communication), Lyra Evans, Jennifer Jennekens, Nili Kaplan-Myrth, Matthew Lee, Cathryne Milburn, Suzanne Nash, Amanda Presley, Lynn Scott

Staff Present: Pino Buffone (Director of Education), Brett Reynolds (Associate Director, Academic), Jesse Mark (Executive Officer, Corporate Services), James Proulx (Executive Officer of Technological Support Services), Richard Sinclair (General Counsel), Sandy Owens (General Manager, Business & Learning Technologies), Diane Pernari (General Manager of Communications & Public Relations), Susan Baker (General Manager, Board Services), Michael Guilbault (Multimedia Coordinator), Darren Gatley (Senior Board Coordinator)

1. Call to Order -- Chair of the Board

Chair Scott called the public meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

2. Acknowledgment of Territorial Lands

Chair Scott 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 Jennekens, seconded by Trustee Lee,  
THAT the agenda be approved.**

**Carried**

## 5. Candidate Presentations

Following a review of the guidelines for the meeting, Chair Scott called upon each candidate, in the order listed on the agenda, to make a five-minute presentation to the Board. A brief summary of each candidate's presentation is provided below.

### 5.1 Andrea Ghazzawi

Andrea Ghazzawi noted that she was born and raised in Ottawa, spending a significant part of her life in Kanata North, and attended Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) schools before pursuing university studies. She reflected on her multi-ethnic origin and noted her experiences of discrimination at OCDSB schools which has informed her understanding of its impact on students. Holding a PhD in Management with a specialization in Health Systems, she emphasized the importance of education and safe learning environments. Her doctoral research focused on vulnerable children and communities, also highlighting her advocacy for the reduction of systemic barriers in education. As a parent of an 11-year-old in the OCDSB English stream, she noted that she is actively engaged in her school community. She added that she currently manages a data analytics and business intelligence team at Public Services where she values authenticity and advocates for an inclusive, respectful, and safe work environment. She expressed her intention to run in the next municipal election.

### 5.2 Nicholas Beaudin

Nicholas Beaudin noted that he is a manager at Vista Centre Brain Injury Services and that his career has focused on service to others, specifically those who are disenfranchised or who experience systemic barriers. He is currently the Chair of Centre 33, a local Kanata based charity that organizes an 2SLGBTQ+ youth centre. Having run for municipal office previously, he noted his familiarity with governance procedures and noted his intent to run in the next municipal election. His background in recreation therapy before further pursuing political science at University of Ottawa has informed him on how health policies are created which has allowed him to provide more effective services to his clients. He expressed his commitment to advocate for diversity and inclusion, noting his experiences as a member of the 2SLGBTQ+ community has provided him with an understanding of the importance of safe and inclusive spaces. He added that his work with brain injury patients provided him with experience and understanding of the individual needs of others and the impact of systemic barriers. He noted that his previous experience as an executive director and work with other boards and committees has provided him with a financial background that would provide value to developing budgets.

### 5.3 Shalu Darshan

Shalu Darshan expressed her passion for education and desire to give back to society. She noted that she holds a PhD in chemistry with a significant background in academia, teaching immigrant children math science and chemistry. She noted that she is active in her child's school, has coached students in science presentation skills, judged the Ontario Science Fair, and has conducted guest lectures at the University of Ottawa. She expressed the view that one of the key functions of a trustee is stakeholder engagement and with 15 years experience as a project manager in University of Ottawa, other universities and government departments, she noted that these experiences provided ample opportunity to engage with stakeholders and students. She highlighted her previous work experience in policy creation and working within budget constraints. She added that her experience in consultations between universities and governmental departments between Canada, USA, and Costa Rica provided her with the skills and understanding of the importance of effective communication and dispute resolution. She expressed her intention to run in the next municipal election.

5.4 Manubhai Devani

Manubhai Devani noted that he has lived in Canada for 55 years, 35 of which were in Newfoundland where he worked as a teacher and school principal. He retired in 1994 due to a health issue. He added that his work in Ottawa focused on helping local and international students. He expressed the view that his educational background makes him qualified for the position of trustee.

5.5 Michael Edwards

Michael Edwards noted that he was a former candidate for the position of trustee and an advocate to build bridges to drive positive change. He noted that he has 30 years experience in education and has worked with students with a wide range of lived experiences. He expressed the view that students thrive when we give back and that diversity, equity and inclusion are the bedrock for the school community, adding that each child should see themselves represented in their school. He stressed the importance of collaboration between schools and the community and that shared goals of students can harness collective strength. He noted that the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan provides direction in guiding students to success. He expressed his intention to run in the next municipal election.

5.6 Ashley Darling McCallum

Ashley Darling McCallum noted that she is seeking the role of trustee due to her passion for education and that she attended schools within the Ottawa Public School Board. She noted that she obtained a diploma in Early Childhood Education (ECE) from Algonquin College, followed by a Bachelor of Arts in Child Studies from Carleton University. After

completing her degree at Carleton, she was accepted into the On-Site Bachelor of Education program at the University of Ottawa where she gained practical experience in OCDSB classrooms and earned her B.Ed. for Primary and Junior divisions. She expressed her intention to run in the next municipal election and that she came in second place behind Trustee Aziz at the last municipal election. She added that she made and maintains connections within the community made during her initial campaign. She noted the importance of equity in the education system and highlighted the Right to Read initiative. She expressed the view that enrolment numbers have dropped and that she would be interested in exploring solutions and to foster collegiality within the Board. She added that she is pragmatic and would listen to all viewpoints while also working to improve staff well-being and retention. She reflected on her international work experience which provided her with a robust cultural understanding which allows her to be sensitive to the diverse needs of the school community.

#### 5.7 Julia Fortey

Julia Fortey noted that she is a former student of Earl Of March Secondary School as are her two sons who are currently attending. She noted her long time intention to run for trustee Zone 2 and expressed her intention to run in the next municipal election. She reflected on her personal educational experiences in university, college, and apprenticeship pathways noting that these lived experiences provide her with understanding to support inclusive learning. She noted that she has had various roles including being an architectural designer, cabinetmaker's apprentice, an educator at Algonquin College in construction related programs, and currently an academic administrator with the academic integrity office at Algonquin College. She expressed the view that she believes in accommodations rather than modifications to support student learning. She holds a Master's degree in educational leadership where she focused her research on Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and neurodivergent learning and noted that teaching at Algonquin College exposed her to the level of need for accommodations within her programs. She added that this led her to pursue education in adults with learning disabilities and to advocate in the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL). She noted that her experience with her son's Individual Education Plan (IEP) and previous experiences with student mental health needs would allow her to further the elements of the Strategic Plan to improve student learning and the school environment. She expressed her interest in the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and that she supports the Elementary Program Review (EPR). She expressed her commitment to fair and equitable decision making and her continued advocacy for Truth and Reconciliation allyship and how these principles would guide her approach to governance.

## 5.8 Guled Aden

Guled Aden provided a land acknowledgment and noted how it related to his personal journey in furthering inclusion and reconciliation. He reflected on his experience navigating the school system as an immigrant to Canada with non-English speaking parents. He expressed the view that the role of trustee is critical in advocating to ensure that all voices within the school community are heard. He expressed the importance of lived experiences in order to understand the needs of the school community and that each family should be able to engage with the Board. He added that equitable resource allocation is required to ensure that the needs of each school are met. He noted that emotional learning must be fostered to empower students to enable them to reach their full potential. If selected as trustee, he noted that these equitable principles will be reflected within budgets and policy making. He expressed the importance of diverse representation in decision making and that he would bring integrity to his role in governance.

## 6. Appointment of Election Assistants by the Director and Secretary of the Board (2)

Director Buffone appointed Executive Officer of Corporate Services Jesse Mark, and Associate Director of Education Brett Reynolds, to the role of election assistants.

## 7. Preliminary Voting

Chair Scott called for trustees to cast their votes for up to three candidates. She noted that any candidates who receive two or more votes will proceed to the interview stage.

## 8. Candidate Interviews

Following the preliminary voting, the candidates who received two or more votes were called in order to answer three questions from the Board. A brief summary of each candidate's response to the following questions from the Board is provided below.

1. What elements of the 2023-2027 strategic plan most resonate with you and why? What may be missing for you, if anything?
2. What are your views on equity and inclusion in education?
3. What does good governance mean to you?

Andrea Ghazzawi

1. The part of the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan that resonates with her is well-being which coincides with her background in health care and teaching experiences. She emphasized the importance of well-being in schools to foster safe learning environments;

2. She expressed the view that equity and inclusion in education is essential for student learning and that policies should be tailored to ensure that the needs of the school community are met; and
3. She noted good governance begins with a strong governing body which sets the foundation for effective policies and structures. She added that the strength of the governing body influences the entire system, promoting better outcomes through collaboration and a clear commitment to inclusivity.

#### Nicholas Beaudin

1. He noted that barriers and learning gaps within the education system and the Board resonate with him and that solutions including interventions and targeted tutoring could be implemented to create an effective learning environment;
2. He recognized the Board's and his personal commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). He expressed the view that there is a significant gap in DEI within the education system and that collaboration with the community would address these discrepancies; and
3. He referenced the Canadian Constitution's clause "peace order and good governance" and the importance of trustee accountability to students. He expressed the view that transparency and trustee engagement in the community is a key factor in the support of the role of education within society.

#### Michael Edwards

1. Mental health, student wellness, and well-being are the elements of the Strategic Plan that most resonate with him. He noted that he has 30 years of experience working with students with specific needs and noted his appreciation for resources being allocated to these needs. He added that these resources require further implementation to be more effectively utilized in classrooms;
2. He expressed the view that it is important for students to see themselves reflected within the school and that students who cannot relate to their school tend to reduce their classroom attendance. He added that diverse student perspectives brings value to the classroom and that differences should be celebrated; and
3. He noted that the primary goal of governance is to respond to and advocate for families while ensuring that resources are available and effectively used. He suggested that further engagement with the community and utilizing community willingness to help can expand resource capacity and other opportunities.

Ashley Darling McCallum

1. She noted that the current Strategic Plan is encompassing and that pursuing the plan will advance support and student success;
2. She expressed the view that the right to read focuses on available support and strategies to achieve increased language acquisition while acknowledging and understanding the diverse needs of students. She expressed the view that reading is the foundation of both education and life and that the elementary program review (EPR) needs to balance this understanding; and
3. She noted that governance requires all voices within the school community to be heard to ensure the effective use of resources and support. She added that trustees should have a clear understanding of expectations and governance standing rules.

Julia Fortey

1. She noted that well-being is the element of the Strategic Plan that most resonates with her. She noted that educators need to feel supported in mental health and well-being to create a healthy and safe learning environment and noted that her own experiences showed that students have more success when supported this way;
2. She referred to Director Buffone's Thought Leadership Series and how the concept of liberation can evolve from equity. She stressed the importance of removing barriers for students to pursue their goals and reflected on her own experiences of removing barriers to advance student success; and
3. She noted that governance should not instill change but rather assist in change. She added that concerns and views from constituents should be heard while also understanding legislative restrictions that the Board is held to.

Guled Aden

1. He noted that learning, social responsibilities, and equity and inclusion ensures that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed in the education system;
2. He noted that all students should have equal access to resources to provide them with the tools necessary to succeed; and
3. He expressed the view that governance involves putting in place equitable policies and procedures to guide students, staff, and the school community.

9. Election of Trustee, Zone 2 (Kanata North/Kanata South)

Chair Scott called on election assistants to distribute the ballots and outlined the voting process.

Following an election, Chair Scott declared Julia Fortey as Trustee for Zone 2 (Kanata North/Kanata South).

Chair Scott noted that the elected trustee would be sworn in at the 29 October 2024 Board meeting.

10. Motion to Destroy Ballots

**Moved by Trustee Kaplan-Myrth, seconded by Trustee Lee,**

**THAT the ballots for the preliminary voting and the election held during the meeting be destroyed.**

**Carried**

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

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Lynn Scott, Chair of the Board