

ADVOCACY STRATEGY COMMITTEE

**October 1, 2019, 4:00 pm
Trustees' Committee Room
133 Greenbank Road
Ottawa, Ontario**

Trustee Members: Erica Braunovan, Christine Boothby, Wendy Hough, Keith Penny, Lynn Scott

Staff Present: Camille Williams-Taylor, Director of Education; Mike Carson, Chief Financial Officer, Michele Giroux, Executive Officer, Corporate Services; Susan Baker, Acting Manager of Board Services; Nicole Guthrie, Senior Board Coordinator

1. Call to Order

Chair Braunovan called the meeting to order at 4:11 p.m.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Trustee Scott,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Carried

3. Review of Report of Advocacy Strategy Committee, 22 May 2019

Moved by Trustee Scott,

THAT the report of the Advocacy Strategy Committee dated 22 May 2019 be received.

Carried

4. Matters for Action/Discussion:

4.1 Proposals for Engaging With Area Members of Provincial Parliament

Trustee Scott noted that, following the professional development session on 5 September 2019, several trustees expressed interest in hosting a meeting with local MPPs. She noted that in the past, all MPPs, regardless of party affiliation, were invited.

Trustee Boothby advised that OPSBA is hosting an advocacy day in Toronto on 25 November 2019 and she and Trustee Penny plan to attend.

She indicated that it would be helpful to have speaking notes about local issues to address at the session.

Trustee Penny suggested that trustees meet with local government MPPs to discuss local issues that are of concern and impact education.

Chair Braunovan noted that the focus should be on governing Conservative members. There will be opportunities to meet with other parties in the future.

Trustee Scott suggested the meeting be open to any trustee available to attend.

Executive Officer Giroux noted that the meeting could include the Chair and Vice-Chair, if available, as well as trustees who may have pre-existing relationships with the MPPs. Trustees are advised to determine if they are advocating for a particular issue, combating the current political agenda, or optimizing opportunity within the scope of the government agenda. There are a variety of tactical strategies that may be applied.

Director Williams-Taylor advised trustees to formulate clear recommendations and offer practical strategies to ensure the MPPs can move the advocacy goals forward.

Trustee Scott noted that if trustees expect to influence the MPPs, framing of the issues will be critical.

CFO Carson queried the purpose of the meeting and noted that when we have hosted meetings with MPPs in the past trustees informed MPPs of broad issues impacting school boards in general and the specific impacts on schools in the District. He suggested that, within the space of an hour, the meeting should not be focused solely on requests for funding. He suggested that priorities may be better discussed in individual meetings of the zone trustee and their associated MPP.

Trustee Hough noted the District is significantly more privileged in relation to other school boards across the province and that the meeting agenda must be carefully structured.

4.2 Priority Items for Advocacy

During the discussion of priority items for advocacy, the following points were noted:

- Trustee Boothby noted that class size will be a significant issue during the 2020-2021 budget deliberations and should be a priority for discussion with the MPPs. Additional concerns include mental health, lack of clarity on the Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline (PARG), and lack of adequate special education funding. The items should be linked to a provincially-stated focus, for example equity, to ensure that

it is clear that the Board seeks to work with the government. She added that graduation rates and the dual degree programs at Algonquin College are also issues of concern;

- Trustee Penny suggested that the removal of the local priorities funding has impacted special education in the District and that the funding was of critical importance;
- Trustee Scott noted she met with Minister MacLeod in September 2019 and autism was not discussed. There is a possibility of advocating for money that school boards could use for local issues such as mental health and special education, without having to fill out numerous application forms. The concept of local autonomy and decision-making is an area that could be addressed;
- CFO Carson noted that local priority funding was used to maintain current positions and it did not create new positions. He noted that, should class sizes be increased, the District will require temporary, transitional funding to assist in the management of the move from the previous model of 22:1 to ensure students are supported. He anticipated that it would require approximately \$8 to \$9 million;
- Trustee Penny noted that financial issues may force the District to provide a response as to why the decision was made to refuse the offer of an audit of finances;
- Director Williams-Taylor suggested that staffing (i.e., recruitment of French language teachers and absenteeism), and math testing for new teachers are important matters. Trustee Penny agreed and noted that more information on recruitment and training is required;
- Trustee Hough suggested that the list feature a few items that are not tied to monetary contributions, for example, exemptions from mandatory math tests for some teachers, or ensuring the PARG is revised and accommodation reviews can recommence;
- CFO Carson noted MPPs can influence capital allocations and PARG. He advised that PARG is not only about closing schools. The process may demonstrate the need to close one school and build two new schools;
- Trustee Boothby noted that the District could highlight that it has rebounded from a structural deficit and is now in a surplus position. It is important that local cabinet ministers Merrilee Fullerton and Lisa MacLeod understand these issues;
- Trustee Boothby noted that the OPSBA resolution requested that the province loosen the rules for recruiting teachers to ensure that the

students see themselves reflected in the classroom. She suggested that the notion be further expanded to include black educators. She suggested that some exceptions may be required in order to recruit staff who are reflective of the student population;

- Trustee Scott remarked that should the province proceed with the class size proposal, 10,000 teachers could be impacted and recruitment will not be an element. Trustees will need to be prudent on how the issue of recruitment/class size is presented to ensure they can assist in making changes within the context of modifications to class sizes and teacher qualifications;
- Trustee Hough noted that the precedent exists in Quebec, whereby individuals from northern communities are specifically trained to be teachers;
- Trustee Scott noted that the OPSBA advocacy day has in the past been focused on large provincial issues. The Board needs to focus on local priorities;
- In response to a query from Executive Officer Giroux, Trustee Boothby noted that the advocacy strategy and its related media is contracted out to Shane Gonzales at OPSBA;
- Trustee Scott noted that it would be best to schedule a local meeting with MPPs on a Friday. She noted that the House will reconvene on 28 October and ideally, the Board should approve a meeting of MPPs at its 22 October 2019 meeting. The meeting could then be scheduled for November 1, 8, 15 or 22;
- Executive Officer Giroux noted that the capacity for staff to prepare the briefing is limited based on the current workload. Staff can generate the committee meeting minutes and circulate a summary of issues for comment and revision prior to the Board meeting on 22 October 2019. Should the Board require a more sophisticated document it would be difficult to achieve;
- Trustee Scott suggested that a Special Board meeting could be called on 5 November 2019 to approve the priorities. She suggested that the trustees could prepare a preliminary draft to accompany the minutes;
- Several issues have been identified but a strategy is lacking. The five issues are class size and related transition funding, PARG, discretionary funding, math testing for French and math teachers and capital funding for new schools;
- CFO Carson suggested that PARG and Capital Funding be combined under Student Accommodation;

- Trustee Braunovan suggested the list be reduced to three items. She suggested that the issue of smaller class sizes reference technology and the Ministry's goal of supporting students into the skilled trades;
- Staff suggested a Google document could be created for the committee and that the members could populate the five areas of focus and reflect on each (Attached as Appendix A);
- Framing the implications of class size, math testing and teacher recruitment will be important. Also important is support for technology and STEM programs to ensure continued student engagement. Some reference to the need for French language teachers in the National Capital region should also be made;
- Director Williams-Taylor noted that many of the items may not be within the scope or jurisdiction of the MPPs. She noted that student accommodation which would include capital investments and the PARG do provide trustees with an opportunity to provide local perspectives;
- Trustee Penny noted that the meeting/briefing must offer potential solutions;
- Trustee Hough suggested that funding for local priorities be requested under a new name of transition funding. Trustees can provide information on anticipated needs and suggest that local autonomy in spending is preferred;
- Trustee Boothby noted that the grades 7 to 12 school model is another possible area of concern. Trustee Scott advised caution about this issue as the District is a late adopter of the model; and
- Trustee Penny suggested bus driver retention as another local issue. Trustee Scott suggested a broader heading might be transportation which would include efficiency, funding and driver retention.

5. New Business -- Information and Inquiries

There was no new business.

6. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Erica Braunovan, Chair, Advocacy Strategy Committee