

PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, October 14, 2020

6:00 pm

Zoom Meeting

- Members:** Mostafizur Khan, Diana Mills, Malaka Hendela (OCASC Member), Martyn Reid (OCASC Member), Amber Labelle (OCASC, Alternate), Kahmaria Pingue
- Non-Voting Members:** Wendy Hough (Trustee), Brett Reynolds (Associate Director), Sarah Pope (Principal, Castlefrank Elementary School)
- Staff and Guests:** Dr. Vera Etches (Medical Officer of Health, Ottawa Public Health), Dr. Marino Francispillai (Program Manager, Ottawa Public Health), Lynn Scott (Trustee), Justine Bell (Trustee), Christine Boothby (Trustee), Michele Giroux (Executive Officer, Corporate Services), Diane Pernari-Hergert (Manager of Communications), Andrea Rahim (Strategic Business Analyst), Nancy Solange Dean, Lynda Hinch, Natalie Lair, Susan Johnston, Carolyn Kropp, Tasha Truant, Carolina Suarez, Nicole Guthrie (Manager of Board Services), Rebecca Grandis (Senior Board/Committee Coordinator), Darren Gatley (Board/Committee Coordinator)

1. Call to Order

Chair Khan called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. Approval of Agenda

Moved by Ms. Pingue,

THAT the agenda be approved,

Carried

3. Guest Speaker- Dr. Vera Etches, Ottawa Public Health

Chair Khan introduced guest speaker, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) Medical Officer of Health Dr. Vera Etches.

Dr. Etches expressed the importance of OPH connecting with parents and members of the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) to gather input from a school community perspective on COVID-19 management.

During Dr. Etches presentation on the work of OPH, the following points were noted:

- the goals are first to minimize COVID-19 related deaths and hospitalizations, as well as allowing hospitals to catch up on surgeries and to address other health needs and to minimize societal interruption on families work, income and mental health;
- COVID-19 cases are rising in Ottawa with more outbreaks across communities, hospitals, long-term care and retirement homes, schools, group homes, and congregated care settings;
- In almost 300 schools in Ottawa, there have been 21 outbreaks, with 10 still active. However, Dr. Etches noted that the low number of outbreaks is attributed to schools taking the proper precautions and working closely with OPH to establish best practices;
- 45 nurses have been hired to help manage COVID-19 measures in schools;
- a team has been implemented to manage information and data flow to streamline communications;
- OPH recognized the barriers to booking tests. Phone lines have been setup for families to call and book COVID-19 testing appointments;
- Anyone that tests positive for COVID-19 must self-isolate;
- OPH works closely with principals to help identify any potential close or high-risk contacts as part of their investigation within 24 hours of a positive case to the school community;
- Families can help the process by ensuring contact information is up to date;
- Dr. Etches reminded members that wearing masks and maintaining two meters of distance is the most effective means to stop transmission; and
- Prevention measures are essential as screening is not perfect;

During the question period, the following points were noted:

- School Councils could provide a platform for sharing information to parents. Dr. Etches noted that OPH could provide a list of information that underlines key messages to reach out to parents weekly;
- OPH will continue to look at providing information in multiple languages;
- Dr. Etches noted that when children are sent for COVID-19 testing, only 2% of them test positive, which is why schools are not sending the entire class home if a student has symptoms. Symptomatic students are sent home to self-isolate and OPH will confirm a positive case and notify any contacts;

- Dr. Etches noted that once a COVID-19 vaccine is available, it will not likely be mandatory. The COVID-19 vaccine model will be based on the influenza model for distribution with a focus on either the elderly or students;
- Schools will not likely become public vaccination sites as that may encourage large gatherings;
- Surfaces are not the primary source of transmission but rather contact in enclosed spaces (i.e., coughing and singing);
- Members expressed concern that play structures and outdoor classrooms are not in use. Dr. Etches recommended that high traffic contact areas such as those require frequent cleaning and that has to be considered in terms of usage;
- Mr. Reid noted that the District has invested in outdoor classrooms that are not in use and requested that staff investigate the matter;
- Parents noted that children could use age-appropriate materials to learn and understand COVID-19 and how it affects them. Ottawa Carleton Assembly of School Councils (OCASC) has information on their website and Facebook page and would welcome OPH to add any educational material they feel appropriate;
- Current cold and flu season has many students with symptoms being sent home for isolation and the tiered symptom flowcharts on the OCDSB website are helpful;
- Dr. Etches noted that formal OPH testing sites are an ideal way to get tested; however, OPH is working on alternative testing sites for those with limited transportation options;
- OPH is working with community leaders where there are higher transmission rates to determine how to advertise different testing options in those areas. OPH works closely with local community health centres and is working on arranging transportation to community health centres;
- New technology in COVID-19 testing such as the “spit test” could help reduce barriers for those that need testing where the sample could be mailed or picked up; however, decisions by the federal government have delayed the distribution of these tests;
- Dr. Etches noted that portable testing centres were not as successful as expected when introduced in August. Members noted that now children are back in school, the community mindset has changed and recommended that OPH reintroduce portable testing centres to ensure parents can have their children tested with reduced barriers;

- Dr. Etches noted that OPH is working to further reduce barriers by providing pathways for primary care providers to conduct COVID-19 testing;
- Children from kindergarten to grade 3 are still not required to wear a mask, but it is encouraged if they can. Recent research has shown that young students are now having an increased rate of mask-wearing that could be attributed to children learning by modeling behaviour of other children wearing masks;
- OPH has been translating information into multiple languages and has focused on communities with higher transmission rates and the languages spoken there. From a diversity perspective, there are also literacy differences and OPH has been working with community leaders and developers that speak a variety of languages to provide different modalities to get information to communities;
- 45 new nurses have been hired and many are from racialized communities. This helps to reduce barriers to communication;
- OPH also communicates directly with communities through Neighbourhood Ambassadors. Youth Ambassadors from the Boys and Girls Club and Crime Prevention Ottawa are already in three neighbourhoods with expansion into a fourth underway; and
- Audio notes from OPH are useful for community members that may have literacy barriers. Partners such as Refugee 613 also help by generating OPH information into video format.

Dr. Etches concluded her presentation with a message of hope. She noted that each person's actions can make a difference and slow down the transmission of COVID-19. She noted that actions such as physical distancing and mask-wearing are driven by care for one another, and examples of this are seen daily. Dr. Etches thanked parents for doing their part and for their valuable feedback.

4. Review of PIC Report, 21 September 2020

Moved by Ms. Mills,

THAT the Parent Involvement Committee Report of 21 September 2020 be received.

In response to a query from Ms. Mills, Ms. Hendela responded that Nancy Dean is affiliated with OCASC as an executive member responsible for communications and is also the Chair of the Arts Advisory Committee.

Moved by Ms. Mills,

THAT the Parent Involvement Committee Report of 21 September 2020 be received.

Carried

5. Discussion Items

5.a Report 20-082, PIC Brainstorming Session - Reimagining Parent Involvement in 2020

Your committee had before it Report 20-082 to facilitate brainstorm strategies to support parent involvement and school councils in the 2020-2021 school year.

Executive Officer Giroux introduced the report and noted that a range of issues had been discussed in previous PIC meetings, such as the PIC work plan, changes in school councils and Ottawa Carleton Virtual (OCV) schools, safety, and other issues. She noted that a brainstorming session using the Thoughtexchange tool with members was intended to help the committee discuss a range of current issues and could provide the committee with input into plans for 2020-2021.

Strategic Business Analyst, Andrea Rahim, facilitated the Thoughtexchange and noted that the purpose of the exercise is to focus on parent's need to get involved, what school councils may look like this year, and to look at things through an equity lens to overcome barriers for parent involvement. She posed the following question and asked the members to participate in the online activity: Given the uniqueness of the 2020-2021 school year, what can PIC do to support parent involvement and school councils?

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- School council chairs should receive training on the Google Meet application to permit virtual meetings and ensure members are comfortable using the technology;
- Executive Officer Giroux noted that the school council newsletter could include Google Meet “tips” and that further training could be provided as part of the school council training;
- Virtual meetings have reached and engaged an increased number of participants this year;
- A Thoughtexchange could be conducted through the school council newsletter;
- PIC needs to discuss which schools were successful in forming school councils and those that had challenges, to help inform future discussions on the matter and to determine what actions to take;
- Members noted that newcomers to Canada may not be aware of parent engagement and involvement in schools or may not participate

due to other socioeconomic barriers. Newcomers need understand the mechanisms in place to participate;

- School councils need to review membership through an equity lens to ensure parents from all backgrounds understand how to participate and feel welcome, as well as to identify any other equity issues that need to be addressed;
- Members queried if there was an engagement model used by school councils and noted that parents have been actively organizing social media platforms on their own to communicate. Members questioned what PIC can do to connect the parent made model or if the District needs to create its own model;
- Principals should also engage with parents to ensure that communication reflects the existence of school councils and PIC to encourage further parent involvement to include more voices; and
- The Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap will help guide actions by integrating an equity and human rights lens on the District's actions.

The results of the PIC meeting Throughtexchange are attached for reference. (Appendix A)

6. Information Items

6.a Chair's Report

Chair Khan congratulated Michael Houghton, a Canadian university professor, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in recognition of his discovery of the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV).

Chair Khan noted that education is a partnership and it is important to work together with all levels of partners. He expressed his thanks to Policy Analyst Ms. Abdel Masieh and the PIC Sub-Committee for their input and outreach for new PIC membership and working with community organizations supporting public education by their unique programs and services.

Chair Khan noted his support of a geography project at Cairine Wilson Secondary School entitled: "Let's Talk Geography, Immigration, and Supporting Newcomers." He referred the geography teacher to Immigrant Services, which has 24 multicultural officers with linguistic diversity that supports immigrant families and refugees, as well as the Integration Director of Operations and Outreach Minister's office at the Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada office and other organizations to support the project. He noted that the "Let's talk Geography" project members had a meeting on 9 October 2020 in which students were able

to engage and ask questions of the representatives. He wanted to take the opportunity to share the project with PIC members for any additional feedback.

Chair Khan stressed the importance of good governance, accountability, and transparency. He noted that section 38 (3) of *Regulation 612/00* speaks specifically about PIC elections. He shared that the regulation only permits parent members with a two-year term to stand for election to chair or co-chair.

On a point of order, Ms. Hendela noted that the Chair was introducing new business in his Chair's Report and she stressed that new information should be listed on the agenda to be formally discussed and new business should not be introduced in the form of an update.

Chair Khan disagreed with Ms. Hendela suggesting his update was meant to inform members of the process, their responsibilities, and the rules within *Regulation 612/00*.

Executive Officer Giroux added that PIC would have a report on the November meeting agenda that details the process for elections of the committee and election of the chair.

Chair Khan noted that the last item he wanted to mention in his Chair's Report was that the Ontario PIC Chair's Meeting was considering another virtual meeting and that he will share what was discussed if one is scheduled. He concluded his report.

6.b Director's Report

Associate Director Reynolds reported that OPH has been an invaluable partner in the management of COVID-19. He recognized that parents have been frustrated with some of the safety measures such as equipment not being used, however, with only 70 positive COVID-19 cases with over 60,000 students, safety measures have been effective.

Executive Officer Giroux reported that the Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap was introduced to the Committee of the Whole (COW) on 13 October 2020.

Executive Officer Giroux noted that the Back to School Survey had over 16,000 participants using the Thoughtexchange tool. She encouraged members to participate before the survey closes on 16 October 2020.

Executive Officer Giroux noted that the Board appreciated the support and advice from PIC regarding school councils and that Ottawa-Carleton Virtual (OCV) is working on creating school councils. Parents of OCV students can also participate at in-person school councils providing membership vacancy.

6.c OCASC Report

Ms. Hendela reported that OCASC had a special meeting to discuss school council elections and rules. She noted that 39 participants registered for OCASC's first virtual Zoom Meeting. Councils taught each other the "pros and cons" of using virtual meetings. She noted that the Board amendment allowing for two-tiered participation caused some challenges. It did not contemplate the notion of the first meeting with an election meeting and this caused some uncertainty of who would be able to participate formally and councils discussed and strategized on how to remain compliant. She noted that the first official OCASC meeting would be on 15 October 2020.

Ms. Hendela added that a major item of importance to students and parents are the high school clubs. She noted that high school clubs are necessary and provide many benefits to students. She suggested that the Board address this concern as a priority and hoped PIC may discuss this at a future meeting.

Ms. Pingue agreed that high school clubs are important as they teach leadership skills and aid students' mental health. She strongly urged members to discuss this matter in the next PIC meeting.

In response to a query from Mr. Reid about raising this issue at a future meeting, Executive Officer Giroux acknowledged the importance of clubs to student engagement in school, PIC's mandate is to support parent involvement and the Committee might want to privilege its meeting time on issues which directly help parents to be engaged in education.

6.d PIC Correspondence

The PIC Correspondence Register was provided for information.

7. New Business

Ms. Dean noted that the Arts Advisory Committee is seeking new members and that the next meeting would take place on 19 October 2020. She noted that this was another opportunity for parent involvement.

In response to a query from Ms. Hendela, Executive Officer Giroux noted that information on the proposed parent conference and school council training day was included as an appendix to Report 20-082. Executive Officer Giroux noted that she appreciated members' feedback and will ensure there is further discussion on the matter.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

Mostafizur Khan, Chair, Parent
Involvement Committee