

PEEL DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Minutes of a Supplementary Meeting of the Board, held in the Board Room, the H. J. A. Brown Education Centre, 5650 Hurontario Street, Mississauga, Ontario on Tuesday, March 24, 2020 at 19:40 hours. The meeting was held by electronic means, under Ontario Regulation 463/97, as amended.

Members present:

Brad MacDonald, Chair	Nokha Dakroub
David Green, Vice-Chair	Will Davies
Susan Benjamin	John Marchant
Stan Cameron	Kathy McDonald
Robert Crocker	Balbir Sohi

Member absent: (apologies received)

Carrie Andrews

Student Trustees:

Kenisha Arora, Student Trustee South
Prabhleen Nar, Student Trustee North

Administration:

Tania Alatishe-Charles, Controller, Finance Support Services
Donna Baptie, Executive Assistant
Paul Da Silva, Superintendent of Education
Patrika Daws, Superintendent of Education
Lawrence De Maeyer, Superintendent, Leadership Development and School Support Services
Debbie Donsky, Acting Superintendent of Education
Jaspal Gill, Associate Director, Operational Support Services
Soni Gill, Acting Superintendent of Education
Adrian Graham, Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction Support Services
Poleen Grewal, Associate Director, Instructional and Equity Support Services
Mark Haarmann, Associate Director, School Support Services
Antoine Haroun, Chief Information Officer, Learning Technology Support Services
Nina Jaiswal, Superintendent of Education
Peter Joshua, Director of Education
Matthew McCutcheon, Superintendent of Education
Carla Pereira, Director, Communications and Community Relations Support Services
Jamie Robertson, Superintendent, Human Resources Support Services
Dana Sheahan, Superintendent of Education
Gale Solomon-Henry, Superintendent of Education
Thomas Tsung, Controller, Corporate Support Services

Nicole Fernandes, Board Reporter

4. Minister's Directions to the Peel District School Board (Continued)

Chair MacDonald reported that, on March 13, 2020, the Minister submitted a letter to Peel District School Board with 27 Directions and corresponding timelines and deliverables. As such, regular reports will be provided to ensure the actions identified by the Minister of Education are completed within strict timeframes. Chair MacDonald explained that the first action is to submit a letter to the Minister of Education committing to participate fully in mediation in accordance with Direction 1. The letter must be submitted by March 26, 2020. He stated that, in order to comply with the immediate timelines of March 26, 2020, for certain Directions, recommendations are being brought to this Supplementary Meeting of the Board.

i) Commitment to Ministry Directions

Resolution No.20-100 moved by David Green
seconded by Kathy McDonald

Resolved, that the Peel DSB receive the Minister of Education's 27 Directions to the Peel DSB for information, and commit to completion of the deliverables and timelines as indicated therein.

.....

A trustee stated that, while the Review Report notes discrimination against LGBTQ, Indigenous, and South Asian, particularly Punjabi, students, the Minister's Directions do not contain recommendations for these groups. She suggested that in focussing on the Minister's Directions, the Board can also incorporate anti-oppression work in relation to other marginalized communities. Another trustee agreed with the suggestion, adding that the work on the Directions should include actions to resolve the neglect of other communities as well.

.....

Resolution No.20-100 carried

ii) Participation on Staffing Panels (Direction 2)

Resolution No.20-101 moved by Kathy McDonald
seconded by Nokha Dakroub

Resolved:

- a) That, effective immediately, Peel District School Board trustees cease all participation on hiring, promotion and appointment panels, including for temporary or acting positions, except for the position of Director of Education; and
- b) That, a draft policy restricting Board members from participating on hiring promotion and appointment panels for positions, other than the Director of Education, be brought to the May 26, 2020 Regular Meeting of the Board for approval.

.....

4. Minister's Directions to the Peel District School Board (Continued)

A trustee noted that one of the Minister's Directions is to hire an additional Integrity Commissioner, and she asked as to who will be on the hiring panel. Another trustee expressed the opinion that Direction 2 relates to hiring of staff who are ultimately responsible to the Director of Education, whereas the position of Integrity Commissioner is independent. She suggested that this matter be verified with the Ministry, and that hiring be done through a Request for Proposal process. Chair MacDonald confirmed that hiring will be completed through an RFP, identical to the RFP process undertaken in hiring the current Integrity Commissioner. He indicated that he will verify with the Ministry regarding the composition of the hiring panel. A trustee commented that the RFP should be reissued if only one person submits a bid.

.....

Resolution No.20-101

..... carried

iii) Trustee Code of Conduct Complaints (Direction 3)

Resolution No.20-102

moved by Susan Benjamin
seconded by Robert Crocker

Resolved, that until the Minister of Education is satisfied that the Board of Trustees is able to work together and with the Director of Education and Associate Directors to provide good governance (Direction 1), the Board suspend all complaints, whether formal or informal, pertaining to the Code of Conduct for Members of the Peel District School Board, including any and all open investigations, and any and all reports that are yet to be considered by the members of the Board in a public meeting, and that the Chair of the Board communicate this decision to the Integrity Commissioner.

.....

A trustee asked whether a conflict of interest needs to be declared if they are aware that they are the subject of complaints to the Integrity Commissioner. Chair MacDonald clarified that he did not see the need to declare a conflict of interest as this is the Minister's Direction.

.....

Resolution No.20-102

..... carried

iv) Retain Pro-tem Parliamentarian (Direction 5)

Resolution No.20-103

moved by Robert Crocker
seconded by Stan Cameron

Resolved, that the Board retain, on a temporary basis, the services of an external parliamentarian/governance expert to establish governance procedures and practices, and such services shall be retained until such time as the Ministry approves a progress report from the expert confirming that such practices and procedures are in place.

.....

4. Minister's Directions to the Peel District School Board (Continued)

Referring to the recommendation to hire an expert, a student trustee asked about the process to hire experts in mediation and governance. Chair MacDonald indicated that the parliamentarian/governance expert will report to the Director of Education. He noted that the Ministry has assigned a governance expert, and a contract will be drawn up.

.....

Resolution No.20-103 carried

v) Centralized Applicant Tracking and File Management System (Direction 25)

Resolution No.20-104 moved by Sue Lawton
seconded by Will Davies

Resolved, that on or before April 1, 2020, all members of the Board of Trustees submit to the Director of Education all documents in their possession or advise the Director of Education if they have no such documents regarding past hiring, promotions and temporary appointments of employees of the Peel District School Board, for preservation by the Peel District School Board, and that the Director of Education or his designate confirm this step to the Minister of Education by March 26, 2020, in accordance with Direction 25.

.....

Chair MacDonald provided clarification on the dates contained in the recommendation, indicating that Director of Education, Peter Joshua, should confirm to the Ministry that the step to request from trustees all documents regarding past hiring, promotions and temporary appointments of Peel DSB employees has been made by March 26, 2020. Trustees are required to provide all such documents to Director Joshua by April 1, 2020. In response to a question, another trustee noted that the Direction covers all documents of past hiring, promotions or appointments, which would include any such paperwork a trustee would have in their possession.

.....

Resolution No.20-104 carried

vi) Chair's Authority

Resolution No.20-105 moved by Balbir Sohi
seconded by John Marchant

Resolved, that the Chair of the Board, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, will regularly communicate the Board's progress to the Minister of Education, including submission of all formal recommendations, reports and action plans as required by the Minister's Directions to the Peel District School Board, numbered 1 through 8 inclusive, and 13.

..... carried

4. Minister's Directions to the Peel District School Board (Continued)

In response to a trustee's request, Chair MacDonald invited trustee's comments on the report. Trustees offered comments and opinions, including that the report confirms racism against the black community, as well as LGBTQ, indigenous and South Asian communities, and that the Minister's Directions will facilitate expeditious action, to help regain trust. They thanked the reviewers for their time and effort in investigating and reporting on the matter, as well as the Minister of Education for responding to the Board's request for help. It was noted that the Directions provide a baseline to move forward in making concrete changes. A trustee reported that she had spoken to the administration about the neglect of the South Asian community, especially Punjabi youth. Another trustee commented that Peel DSB is not particularly unique in terms of anti-black racism, and she expressed the hope that the Directions provide guidelines for implementation across school boards in Ontario and Canada.

A student trustee noted the review finding of 70% of secondary suspensions and 40% of elementary suspensions not meeting the Ministry's definition of "Other Reasons". She asked as to the reasons for such suspensions in Peel. Director Joshua confirmed that, in accordance with one of the Directions, a report will be brought forward which will provide more information. The student trustee indicated that many students had communicated to her that guidance counsellors should accommodate and help students with their needs, rather than make decisions for students. Another student trustee remarked that equity in education is not a choice but is mandatory, especially for a diverse school board like Peel. She voiced the hope that the findings will remove barriers and help to celebrate and accept the diverse backgrounds of students.

A trustee recalled his lived experiences as a person of colour in the school system, and also stated that the racism findings from the review are not uncommon in the education system. Thanking members of the community who participated in the review, he stated that the Directions are a good starting point. He remarked that there are areas that the review does not touch upon; however, these areas can be explored by the Board to ensure that each student who is marginalized feels valued, can speak openly, and believes that they belong. He indicated that he looks forward to working with the Chair, Board of Trustees, administration and the community to ensure progress and accountability in accomplishing each task for the safety of students, and in the best interests of students.

5. Questions from Trustees

Trustee Sohi asked about updates from the Ministry regarding online learning and supports for students who do not have technology to work online. Director Joshua reported that the Ministry of Education and the Council of Ontario Directors of Education have bi-weekly teleconferences. Currently, students are learning at home on self-directed projects. The Ministry is planning on possible ways to move forward with online learning, access to technology, and availability of internet. As this is in the planning stages, the Ministry has requested boards to wait for directions. Director Joshua indicated that educators can contact students, if possible, from a wellness point of view, and confirmed that trustees will be updated as information comes forward.

5. Questions from Trustees (Continued)

Trustee McDonald reported that she attended a meeting of the Youth Taskforces of the City of Brampton, and there was discussion on ways to serve students at this time. A request was made for access to school portables to access the Board WiFi, while still practicing social distancing. Director Joshua reported that the Ministry has asked about the availability of space across school systems, and staff will be providing this information. He noted that the situation requires significant coordination between the municipalities and the Ministry, and he remarked that the trustee's question will be put forward to the Ministry in upcoming meetings. Trustee McDonald indicated that some students are having a difficult time with isolation, and being in school provided them with their only real meal. She asked as to how the Board can support their mental and learning needs, and support staff who have spoken to the reviewers about their sense of hopelessness. Director Joshua confirmed that online access to mental health resources for students is available, the Ministry has increased access to the KidsHelp line, and in coordination with other Ministries, local supports are being increased. He acknowledged the value of personal contact, but noted the need for social distancing to preserve public safety. Reporting that some of the Board's professional services staff will be helping students especially the most vulnerable, he noted that teams of social workers are looking to continue interaction with students. Associate Director of School Support Services, Mark Haarmann, reported that Lawrence de Maeyer, Superintendent of Leadership and School Support Services, Shawn Moynihan, Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, and Carla Pereira, Director of Communications and Community Relations Support Services, as well as the Social Work department are looking at a variety of mental health supports. An electronic version of the Critical Incident Response Team is being created and, by the end of this week, several supports on mental health will be sent to principals and administrators to help them support staff mental health. Associate Director Haarmann indicated that some direction is expected to be given to teachers regarding contacting students. Carla Pereira will provide a link on the Board's website with a link of curated material for online education. Director Joshua stated that, apart from Homewood Health supports, the administration is continuing discussions with unions and federations to ensure staff are supported. Trustee McDonald asked that some education and COVID-19 related supports for parents be provided on a dashboard on Peel's website.

Trustee McDonald queried the rationale for this meeting's selection of the recommendations arising from the Minister's Directions. Chair MacDonald explained that the recommendations approved by the Board today are specific to submissions with a deadline date of March 26, 2020, in accordance with the Directions.

Trustee McDonald asked whether future meetings will be set up to allow for public participation through delegations and public question period. Chair MacDonald confirmed that staff are working on an efficient process that will allow public participation.

Trustee McDonald asked whether the Board has a mechanism to appeal trespass notices and, if not, how can this appeal process be developed. Director Joshua indicated that this is a legislated process, and the advice of legal counsel is taken. He noted that School Support Services staff will provide clarification when requested. The trustee suggested that the process to appeal the trespass notice be included in the trespass letter. Later in the meeting, Trustee Dakroub asked whether Board members can approve a motion to invalidate a trespass letter sent by the administration. Chair MacDonald explained that a response will be provided.

5. Questions from Trustees (Continued)

Student Trustee Arora noted that the examinations for Advanced Placement have not been cancelled, and that for International Baccalaureate have been moved to an online format. She asked as to how the Board plans to support the students, especially those who do not have internet access. Director Joshua confirmed that this topic will be discussed in table discussions with the Ministry. Teachers and students are anxious and will need to be supported, and alternatives are being explored. He advised that the Ministry is expected to provide directions.

Trustee Dakroub asked for a rationale for cancelling the Regular Meeting of the Board and scheduling this meeting on the same day. Chair MacDonald explained that he was aware that the Minister's Directions were impending. As some of the Directions would require immediate action, the Regular Meeting of the Board was cancelled to allow for discussion only on the Directions. Chair MacDonald indicated that the By-laws permit two kinds of special meetings, Supplementary and Extraordinary Meetings of the Board, which are scheduled when there is a single issue of importance to be dealt with. This meeting was scheduled only to deal with deliverables with a March 26, 2020 deadline. He advised that cancellation of the Regular Meeting of the Board was discussed with the Ministry.

Trustee Dakroub indicated that one of the Directions with a March 26, 2020 deadline is an apology letter. She queried the reason for this not being included in the agenda. Chair MacDonald explained that the Direction is for the letter to be sent to the Ministry by March 26, 2020 for vetting before it is made public. Referring to the Direction regarding an Equity Office and submission of a plan by March 26, 2020, Trustee Dakroub noted that this was not discussed today. Chair MacDonald explained that this is an operational issue. Director Joshua clarified that the Board has been assigned a team by the Ministry, who will work with the Board. However, this was before the COVID-19 situation. He stated that the Board has put forward some suggestions to the team, and will work with them on a plan. Trustee Dakroub indicated that the Directions include that the Board's Human Rights Office needs to be arm's length, and she asked about the process to implement this Direction in relation to existing human rights complaints. Director Joshua noted that the administration will be working with the Ministry Team with respect to what was outlined in the Review and reality. Referring to the reviewers' remarks that the Director's Office was involved with human rights cases, he confirmed that this was not the case, and stated that he will be working with the Ministry team to look at structures in place. Speaking of the reaction to the review, Trustee Dakroub commented that there is no mention of accountability from the Board. Chair MacDonald explained that the Board is working through the Minister's Directions.

Trustee Benjamin reported that a parent has asked whether teachers will post lessons on Google and whether newsletters will be sent home to parents. Director Joshua reported that next steps will be communicated by the Ministry, and the current message to parents and students is to access self-directed learning resources. The Ministry is inviting suggestions, and is preparing a plan that will be rolled out across the province. He suggested that parents check the Board's website for supports and information. Trustee Benjamin stated that the March 20, 2020 report posted on the website was very useful. The trustee suggested that students can access the online Mississauga Library portals for reading, and that the Board post on media platforms short videos with positive messages. She urged everyone to rigorously follow social distancing.

5. Questions from Trustees (Continued)

Trustee Lawton thanked staff and administration for their hard work and efforts to support students during this time, teachers who are checking in with students, and Central Board Office staff who continue to work on programs.

Vice-Chair Green indicated that he is involved in three associations that are dealing with COVID-19. He reported that the Region of Peel posts information daily on COVID-19 and supports, and he suggested that parents visit the website. Vice-Chair Green spoke about a program for marginalized youth that he operates which is providing a breakfast program in coordination with a food bank. Volunteers, who go door to door, have expressed a need for masks, for which he has placed an order. He requested Director Joshua to ask the Ministry for details regarding learning materials and access to technology, noting that some of the marginalized youth he works with, require intensive support for reading. He thanked the agencies and volunteers working with the community to address issues, and urged them to remain safe. Director Joshua confirmed that more thought is being given to the learning needs of students with special needs, and English Language Learners, acknowledging that online learning may not be the best medium, and alternative ways to learn are to be explored keeping public safety in mind. He expressed appreciation to staff from central teams who are volunteering their help and feedback on how students can learn in the most effective ways, and thanked the many community organizations who are willing to partner with the Board. He stated that the learning and information acquired at this time will serve school boards even after these difficult times have passed.

6. Adoption of the In Committee Report

Resolution No. 20-106 moved by David Green
seconded by Robert Crocker

Resolved, that the report of the In Committee Session regarding: Legal Counsel Review of Directives; Appointment of Mediator, and Draft Apology Letter, be received, and that the recommendations contained therein, be approved.

..... carried

7. Adjournment

Resolution No. 20-107 moved by Nokha Dakroub
seconded by Kathy McDonald

Resolved, that the meeting adjourn (21:30 hours).

..... carried

..... Chair Secretary

March 24, 2020
Supplementary Meeting of the Board:nf
(Electronic)

RESOLUTIONS APPROVED IN IN COMMITTEE SESSION – MARCH 24, 2020

Members present:

Brad MacDonald, Chair
David Green, Vice-Chair
Susan Benjamin
Stan Cameron
Robert Crocker
Nokha Dakroub

Will Davies
Sue Lawton
John Marchant
Kathy McDonald
Balbir Sohi

Member absent: (apologies received)

Carrie Andrews

Part B

1. Approval of Agenda

That, the agenda, as amended, be approved.

2. Legal Counsel Review of Directives

That, the oral report re Legal Counsel Review of Directives, be received.

3. Appointment of Mediator

That, the Peel District School Board retain the services of Kim Bernhardt to complete the mediation and conflict resolution steps as described in the Minister's Direction 1, and the Chair shall advise the Minister of Education on or before April 17, 2020 that this person has been retained. (Appendix I)

4. Draft Apology Letter

That, the Draft Apology Letter arising out of Directive 13 of the Minister's Directions, be approved. (Appendix II)