

RAINBOW DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
MINUTES OF THE
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

held electronically via Google Meet
in the Ernie Checkeris Boardroom
at the Centre for Education, 408 Wembley Drive
on Tuesday, March 30, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Trustees: D. Dewar (Chair), B. Clement, L. Debassige A. Gibson, J. Hunda, J. Kosmerly, D. Morrison, K. St. Jean, M. Stringer
Absent: Student Trustee A. Lafrance
Officials: N. Blaseg – Director and Secretary of the Board
D. Bazinet – Superintendent of Business
B. Bourget, J. Noble, K. Wachnuk - Superintendents
N. Charette, H. Thirkill
Others: N. Cecchetto, T. Hayes, N. Mousseau, L. Holm, E. Laberge,
M. McKelvey

Chair Dewar advised that the meeting was being live-streamed.

Chair Dewar read a declaration of land acknowledgement aloud.

Director Blaseg completed roll call to establish who was participating in the Google Meet Board meeting.

A. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: 21-R50, D.Morrison/J.Kosmerly

That the agenda for the Special Board meeting of March 30, 2020 be approved as amended, the amendment being the addition of guest speakers Eric Laberge, president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Association (OSSTF) and Liana Holm, president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO).

Poll vote

Bob Clement: In-favour
Linda Debassige: In-favour
Doreen Dewar: In-favour
Anita Gibson: In-favour
Judy Hunda: In-favour
Judy Kosmerly: In-favour
Dena Morrison: In-favour
Kerrie St Jean: In-favour
Margaret Stringer: In-favour

– Carried

B. PRELIMINARY DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST NIL

C. PROVINCE'S PROPOSED PLAN FOR REMOTE LEARNING

Chair Dewar said that the Ministry of Education has developed a draft plan for the delivery of education in the province of Ontario post pandemic and that the plan is based on remote and on-line learning with implications that could change the delivery of education forever. She said that the purpose of today's meeting is to share information about the proposed plan in an effort to understand the impact those changes will have on our students and staff

Chair Dewar introduced the two guest speakers.

Eric Laberge, president of Rainbow OSSTF, spoke about the time, care and expertise of Rainbow staff in the delivery of education to students in Sudbury, Espanola and Manitoulin. He referenced the *Sick Kids* report dated January 21, 2021 that emphasizes that daily in-person is the best model for teaching students.

Liana Holm, president of Rainbow ETFO, spoke about the world-renowned education system that is in place and the fact that the move to remote learning was put in place as an emergency solution during a world pandemic; stressing that this is not a permanent solution. She voiced her concerns about the negative impact on student learning, the social/emotional well-being of students and staff, the importance of social interactions, the caring adults in schools and the need for a speedy roll out of vaccines.

The federation leaders were thanked for their presentations with acknowledgement that school is so much more than academics.

Chair Dewar called on Director Blaseg.

Director Blaseg referred to the document *Expanding Student Access to Online and Remote Learning – Initiatives Committee – March 22, 2021* which is a confidential, draft document that was leaked to the media. This document had not been released by the Ministry of Education. This document was attached to a CBC news article and provided a plan for remote learning starting in September 2021.

Director Blaseg advised that the Ministry has consistently said the next year will be funded like a normal year; therefore, we have anticipated that next year would be a regular school year. Director Blaseg reminded trustees that it was not until August of 2020 that the Ministry advised that remote learning would be a mode of learning in Ontario for September 2020.

Director Blaseg stated that education in schools is the great equalizer. For the vast majority of the population, it is the single most common shared experience. If this experience is to be overhauled, there is a need to ensure it is done with a clear understanding that all possibilities and ramifications have been considered.

Superintendent Bourget remarked that no on-line teaching can replicate face-to-face learning for students. Superintendent Bourget advised that boards have requested guidance from the Ministry of Education about what schools will look like in September. Unfortunately, the Ministry has not provided any clarification to date. More unfortunate, is the fact that schools must be staffing now for September and this whole process will unravel if/when the Ministry makes a decision about on-line learning.

Superintendent Wachnuk suggested that there has not been time to gather data yet and that the Ministry may be making a decision without data to support their decision. Superintendent Wachnuk provided a list of advantages and disadvantages of on-line learning that her special education staff and mental health staff have observed during the last year.

Superintendent Noble spoke about the Rainbow Elementary Virtual School (REVS). She voiced her concern over the number of CAS referrals that have crossed her desk, as students are not attending, not participating and just being lost in on-line learning. She suggested that hobbies and talents that students usually have the opportunity to explore through their electives (tech, music, athletics, food, etc) have been lost and that these are the reasons that students love school.

Superintendent Noble reported that student senators had been asked at a recent Student Senate Meeting about their experience with on-line learning. These students suggested that screen time is overwhelming (often causing headaches), that it is difficult to learn calculus on-line, that they are observers and not participants and that they miss the interaction with peers.

Superintendent Noble spoke briefly about the e-learning opportunity for students, advising that these courses are mostly for senior students, who have the ability to self-regulate to be successful.

Trustees were appreciative of the wholesome conversation.

Each trustee voiced his/her opinion about the province's plans to continue post pandemic remote and on-line learning, emphasizing that we need to remind the province to do what is in the best interest of the wellbeing of children and young people.

Motion: 21-R51 D.Morrison/K.St.Jean

That the Rainbow District School Board write a letter expressing its grave concerns about the Provincial government's proposed plan for on-line and remote learning.

Poll vote

Bob Clement: In-favour
Linda Debassige: In-favour
Doreen Dewar: In-favour
Anita Gibson: In-favour
Judy Hunda: In-favour
Judy Kosmerly: In-favour
Dena Morrison: In-favour
Kerrie St Jean: In-favour
Margaret Stringer: In-favour

- Carried unanimously

D. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: 21-R52, K.St.Jean/D.Morrison

That we do now adjourn at 7:25 pm. - **Carried**

Official