

Author makes a surprise visit to LES

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In December, Lennoxville Elementary School students from Mrs. Luce's former Grade 2/3, (the children, who are now in Grades 4 and 5) were all summoned to the media room for a "surprise" presentation. They had no idea what to expect and when some of them saw their parents in attendance, they were exceptionally baffled. Well, come to find out, a very important project that they had been involved with when they were in Grade 2/3 had come to fruition and they were there to view the final product first hand. You see, they had worked with Canadian author Stephanie McClellan over a period of time to create illustrations for a book that she was working on titled "The Christmas Wind". Stephanie had the brilliant idea of presenting the children with text from her book and asking them to draw illustrations to go with the text. She was so impressed with the children's ideas and the collaboration that took place that she decided to come to L.E.S. to do a personal reading of her newly published book. What a treat to hear the book read from the author who wrote it, props and all, and to see the influence that their illustrations had had on the final product. She didn't come empty handed either! Each child received a card with a handwritten personal message and a small gift. What an amazing experience for Mrs. Luce and her former students!



First ETSB meeting in the new year with the new DG

By Matthew McCully

Newly appointed Director General Kandy Mackey addressed the Eastern Townships School Board (ETSB) council of commissioners and guests publically for the first time at Tuesday evening's meeting.

While the tradition is usually for a new DG to introduce themselves to the council, Mackey, with 21 years of experience with the ETSB as a teacher, principal and director, referred to the small learning curve and said she was ready to get to work.

"It's a privilege to be your DG," Mackey said, explaining that a focus of hers would be on leading with heart.

She mentioned four key words, collaboration, (continuous) improvement, excellence and trust as the basis of her leadership approach, and said she looks forward to continuing her work with the board in her new role.

During opening question period Appalachian Teachers Association President Megan Seline asked the board if anything had come from the discussion of the policy on employment practices on the agenda at the recent Human Resources Advisory Committee meeting.

The board said yes, revisions had been made and the changes were expected to go through a consultation process in the coming weeks.

Seline also asked if the board was sending representation to an upcoming consultation on vocational education. Chairman Mike Murray replied that the board was allowed to send the chairperson as well as one member of the general directorate, which they will.

In new business, the board passed a resolution to approve the expulsion of a student from Richmond Regional High School.

The resolution explained that over

the last two years, 'student A' had been suspended regularly for reasons related to violence and not respecting rules. The student was out of school for most of last year.

According to the resolution, the student refused the option of a transfer to a program that might be more suitable at a different school. After breaching a contract signed at the beginning of the year to be respectful of school rules and because of the level of difficulty and the potential of putting other members of the school population at risk, the board determined that 'student A' should be expelled from RRHS.

Commissioner Richard Gagnon pointed out that it should be specified that the student has been expelled from RRHS, not the ETSB, and still had the right to explore other resources within the ETSB.

The board confirmed an amendment to the head office administrative structure. In simple terms, Mackey and new Assistant Director General Michel Soucy's internal moves as well as a vacancy in the International Student Program have left some holes to fill. The board will try out a new organogram in the coming months with the modification of some roles as well as the fusing of the Director of Pedagogical Services position with Technology Integration, to see how things work.

A recommendation to implement an extended model (part-time) Community Learning Centre at Sunnyside Elementary School was approved by the board. The new CLC was made possible by a \$15,000 grant awarded to the ETSB. No timeline was mentioned as to when the initiative will launch. ETSB Communications Consultant Sharon Priest said the CLC coordinator position will be posted next week and could have someone in place by March break.

During the Chairman's report, Mike Murray referred to a recent announcement of \$340 million in additional resources for Quebec schools. He also mentioned the upcoming reduction in school taxes expected to take effect in the coming school year.

Murray also mentioned that it is an election year for school boards. In an effort to make the process more meaningful, Murray said the board has been in touch with Townshippers' Association to discuss ways to engage with the Anglophone population and generate interest before the vote this fall.

The majority of the advisory committees have not yet met in the new year and had little to report.

During the comments portion of the meeting, commissioner Frank MacGregor expressed concern about governing boards' requirements to approve school activities as simple as bringing a class for a field trip down the street.

"It's a burden for administrators and schools," MacGregor said, suggesting things could be done more efficiently if more power were delegated to the principal, as was the case when he was an administrator. At a recent meeting MacGregor attended there wasn't quorum so all decisions needed to be emailed to members for approval.

Murray pointed out that the participation of a governing board in school decision-making is a stipulation in the Education Act.



During the second question period of the meeting, Megan Seline referred to a recent incident at Heroes' Memorial where the building temperature was cold for a prolonged period of time. According to Quebec occupational health and safety regulations, students require a minimum temperature of 20 degrees Celsius for classroom learning.

While buildings and grounds workers arrived quickly, Seline said students spent a substantial period in the cold. She asked what the protocol was for situations of that type.

The board replied that the case in question could be considered an emergency and the lowering of the temperature was not intentional.

While it may have been cold in the school, Murray and assistant DG Michel Soucy explained that the board would be reluctant to send kids home not knowing if there were a parent or guardian there to receive them.

Soucy added that the board is working with Santé Publique to try and improve the response to incidents like the one at Heroes'.

Seline pointed out the recent amendments in the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms which now include gender identity and expression as a prohibited ground for discrimination, asking if ETSB policies were aligned with the changes.

Murray referred the question to Director of Complimentary Services Gail Kelso, who said meetings have been held with administrators and the issue is currently under consideration.

Bury elementary students from the French school board likely to move from East Angus to Scotstown

By Matthew McCully

Due to a lack of space at l'École Parchemin in East Angus, roughly 50 students enrolled in the Hauts-Cantons School Board living east of Route 108 in Bury will be transferred to École Saint-Paul in Scotstown at the beginning of next school year, according to Director General Martial Gaudreau.

The council of commissioners for the French board is expected to vote on the resolution approving the transfer at the next meeting, scheduled for Jan.30.

A group of parents from Bury have circulated a petition raising concerns about the transfer, asking the board to explore other options.

Annie Duhaime, who represents the Bury parent's group, outlined a number of issues with the transfer of students from East Angus to Scotstown.

According to Duhaime, the majority of Bury parents work in either East Angus or Sherbrooke. While Scotstown is the same distance from Bury as East Angus, it is in the opposite direction, which would make afterschool activities and school pickups a challenge for parents.

She added that the bus route to Scotstown is a hazard in winter and is often closed due to bad road conditions. Duhaime also said that a lot of parents decided to settle in Bury after visiting Parchemin school in East Angus and based their decision on the assumption their children would attend school there.

"The president of the Hauts-Cantons School Board seems to have already made the decision even before the decision to transfer Bury students has passed," Duhaime commented.

"They have their forecasts five years in advance with the births that are counted, how could they wait till the last moment to tell us about this problem?" Duhaime wondered.

Duhaime said parents were consulted on two occasions about the overcrowding at Parchemin; Once in May and once in November.

On both occasions Duhaime said she got the impression the Scotstown transfer was the only option being seriously considered despite opposition from Bury parents.

According to Duhaime, both the municipalities of Bury and East Angus have expressed concerns about the transfer and asked the Hauts-Cantons School Board to make efforts to keep students at Parchemin.

Hauts-Cantons Director General Martial Gaudreau said the board has formed committees and looked at a

number of different scenarios.

Pointing out that change is difficult, Gaudreau said the board came to the conclusion that transferring some students to Scotstown is the best decision and was made in the interest of the students and their needs.

Among the options explored, Gaudreau said the board looked at expanding the Parchemin school, sending Grade 5 and 6 students to the local secondary school, appropriating classroom space from other locations in town and potentially sharing space with Pope Memorial, the English elementary school in Bury.

Dependent upon funds from the ministry of education for infrastructure, Gaudreau said there is a stipulation that all schools within a certain distance of a school at capacity must be full before an expansion could be funded. Saint-Paul in Scotstown currently has 23 students enrolled.

"Scotstown wants to save their school," Gaudreau said, explaining they have the opposite problem as Parchemin.

Gaudreau said there are roughly 70 elementary-aged students in Bury. Revising the limits of the student basin to transfer students living east of Route 108 to Scotstown would include roughly 50 of those students, Gaudreau said.

When asked about the possibility of sharing space at Pope Memorial, Gaudreau said Haut-Cantons contacted the Eastern Townships School Board. Based on the space needs and the requirements of Bill 101 for separate learning spaces between French and English students, there is not enough room at Pope Memorial.

Gaudreau said the board is looking at ways to minimize impacts to parents and students. They are considering allowing students in Grades 5 and 6 to continue at Parchemin so that they can finish elementary in a school they have been familiar with for years. The transfer would involve students in younger grades who had yet to settle



into the environment.

The board is also looking at an arrangement with the ETSB for daycare services at Pope Memorial, so that Bury parents could bring their children there before school and pick them up from Pope at the end of the day rather than travel to Scotstown.

According to Gaudreau, the student population at Parchemin has grown by 50 students in the last three years. There is not enough space in the gym, the cafeteria or the schoolyard to accommodate the boom in en-

rollment this coming September. He added that an overcrowded school is not a healthy learning environment for students.

Gaudreau is aware of the petition circulating in opposition to the plan to transfer students to Scotstown. The board has received two visits from concerned parents.

"We're open to comments and suggestions," Gaudreau said, but added that the board has not come up with any viable alternatives.