

Special ETSB meeting with class action lawsuit on the agenda

By Matthew McCully

The Eastern Townships School Board has announced a special meeting of the council of commissioners this Tuesday, May 15 at 6:45 p.m. at the board office in Magog.

The sole item of note on the agenda is the class action lawsuit, filed against 68 of Quebec's 72 school boards in 2016.

According to media reports released late last week, the suit, launched on behalf of the parents of roughly 900,000 Quebec students, was settled out of court and could result in a payout of up to \$28 per student per year for the period covered by the suit.

Fees mentioned in the suit date back as far as the 2008-2009 school year.



A musical year at Sherbrooke Elementary School

THE RECORD

THE VOICE OF THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS SINCE 1897

Page 4

A musical year at Sherbrooke Elementary School

By Matthew McCully

Things are quieting down a bit now at SES, according to Rivette, as the students wind down the school year and prepare for graduation, an emotional time for older students preparing for the big leap to high school.

The spring concert held last Thursday, May 10 at Sherbrooke Elementary rounded out a huge musical year for the school, according to SES Music Specialist Tracey Rivette.

The year started out with a special performance by the 'Musécole Choir', comprised of SES students, at the Why We Sing Musécole fundraiser held at the end of September.

Then there was the Christmas concert in December, followed by the United in Music Festival where SES students joined over 400 other ETSB students on stage.

Most recently, over 100 students from SES participated in the spring concert last week, which included two parts.

The first hour featured instrumentals and songs from various ensembles, including the school's rock band. According to Rivette, one of the groups performed the iconic theme from Star Wars.

The second half of the concert was a performance of the musical 'Dig It', by Hal Leonard.

Between 15-20 students acted and sang in the production, which also included a choir with roughly 65 members.

"It was amazing," Rivette said, adding that lots of parents came to the concert to support the students.



NICOLAS LAPOINTE OULLINNET



JENNIFER PALIK



JENNIFER PALIK



The Record, May 17, 2018

ETSB approves school fees class action settlement

By Matthew McCully

During a special meeting held Tuesday evening, the Eastern Townships School Board (ETSB) adopted a resolution approving the terms of a settlement regarding the class action lawsuit filed against the province's school boards for charging parents school fees beyond what is allowable in public schools according to the Education Act.

The suit covers eight years; the 2009-09 school year, until 2016.

All school boards involved in the lawsuit held similar meetings this week to either approve or reject the proposed settlement.

If majorities on both sides agree and the judge presiding over the case deems the settlement reasonable to both parties, then the process to pay parents of the roughly 925,000 students involved in the class action will move forward.

According to media reports, the amount of the proposed settlement is \$153 million, breaking down to between \$25 and \$28 per student per year covered by the lawsuit.

Since the settlement is not yet official, Chairman Mike Murray could not confirm what the financial consequences would be for the ETSB.

"There seems to be a willingness on both sides to move ahead," Murray said, explaining the board's decision to approve the proposed settlement.

"It was a genuine nuisance lawsuit. It probably should never have happened," commented Murray.

According to Murray, the Education Act, which limits permissible fees to writing tools and instruments on which they write, is not up to date with modern education and the current needs in the classroom. It also doesn't account for cultural enrichment activities, he said.

"It's money taken away from education," Murray said, "which is not exactly over-funded."

As for the payout, Murray said the money will come from boards by appropriating surpluses, borrowing from the ministry or reorganizing budgets.

School boards currently have a lawsuit pending against insurers, Murray said, to hold them responsible regarding the class action lawsuit.

"We're left in limbo until we get this settled," Murray said, explaining that approving the settlement was in no way an admission of guilt. The ETSB simply wants to be able to prepare for next year knowing what is and isn't allowed in terms of school fees.

The logistics of the settlement have yet to be worked out, Murray said.

The first step is for the majority of the 68 boards involved and the class action members, led by Saguenay parent Daisye Marcil, to agree to the settlement.

The judge hearing the case can then take an unlimited amount of time to approve the settlement.

Then the calculations begin, and will include the specifics about how to contact parents eligible for a payout and what proof will be required to make a claim.

When all is said and done, it will be a considerable amount of time before payments will reach parents, Murray said.

As for resolving the school supplies issue, Murray said it is now up to the education ministry to come up with guidelines for school boards to follow.

In September of 2017, Education Minister Sebastien Proulx asked boards to submit recommendations regarding

school fees.

The school boards chose not participate.

According to Murray, the timeline provided (end of September to mid-December) was too short a timeline to do a proper study. He added that there was a concern that anything said could compromise the lawsuit.

"It's money taken out of education one way or another," Murray said, regarding the class action suit.

"The real penalties will be imposed on some student, somewhere, eventually."



Sunnyside bikes all ready to roll

Stanstead Journal, May 16, 2018



photo Stanstead Journal

Last Wednesday, Sunnyside students once again had the chance to have their bikes tuned up, for free, and also learn about fixing their bikes themselves. Jacques Bureau, of La Ruche high school, brought his "Adopte un velo" program, along with several student bicycle technicians, to Sunnyside to show the students how to keep their bikes well-maintained.

High School Winners Chosen in Excel In the Estrie Essay Challenge

Townshippers' Association Special collaboration Sherbrooke

Townshippers' Association's Make Way For YOUth (MWFY) project is pleased to announce the winners of its essay challenge to describe overcoming obstacles during high school. Junia Goddard and Sunny Skelling Brooks, both from Alexander Galt Regional High School, have won top prizes for their essays on the theme.

Each year the Excel in the Estrie Essay Challenge invites graduating high school seniors from across the historical Eastern Townships to share stories of overcoming challenges – academic, social or personal – on their path to graduation and to share their plans for living and working in the region in the future. This year students had the option of submitting either written essays or short video essays.

Junia and Sunny's written essays focused on building confidence and transitioning into adulthood. Both entries clearly illustrated the authors' attachment to the region and their plans to build their futures in the community after pursuing their educational dreams, for Junia as a future journalist and Sunny as an emergency room or neonatal care nurse.

"Picking winning essays from the pool of articulate entries was quite a challenge," said Bethany Vanasse, MWFY migration agent. "Participating students wrote with such clarity and enthusiasm. The goal of the essay is to remind students of the impact they have in directing their lives, to inspire them by reminding them of their past actions and to spark their confidence as they start the next leg of their educational journey. I think we've achieved that with these essays."

The essays were reviewed by a selection committee of community sector representatives: MWFY Migration Agents Holly McMillan and Bethany Vanasse, Townshippers' Employment Liaison Coordinator Katie Bibbs, and Jayme Marotte and Jody Robinson from Phelps Helps. Scores were based on student's creativity and originality, and effectiveness in communicating ideas and meeting the essay requirements.

The winners will receive their awards following Townshippers' Annual General Meeting, which begins at 5:30 pm, Friday, June 8, at the Johnville Community Center (62 Jordan Hill). This free event is open to the public. Light refreshments will be served, and a cash bar available. RSVP is not required.

For more information about the challenge visit Townshippers.org/Essay, or contact the MWFY Migration Agent at mwfy@townshippers.org, or call 819-566-5717 (toll-free: 1-866-566-5717).

Make Way for YOUth Estrie is an initiative of the province-wide Place aux jeunes en region, which encourages the migration and settlement of youth in areas outside of Quebec's large city centres and is offered to the English-speaking community by Townshippers'. MWFY's activities are made possible thanks to the financial support of the Secrétariat à la Jeunesse du Québec and numerous businesses and organizations throughout the Estrie region.

Townshippers' Association is a non-profit, non-partisan community organization that has been serving the English-speaking community of the historical Eastern Townships since 1979. For more on the Association and its activities, connect online at Townshippers.org or contact Townshippers' in Sherbrooke at 100 – 257 Queen, 819-566-5717, toll-free: 1-866-566-5717 or in Lac-Brome at 3-584 Knowlton Rd. 450-242-4421, toll-free: 1-877-242-4421.

STANSTÉAD Journal, May 17, 2018

Sherbrooke Transit Corporation prepares for school bus strike

Record Staff
SHERBROOKE

The Sherbrooke Transit Corporation (STS) has announced its preparedness in the event of a province-wide strike by school bus drivers announced for Tuesday, May 15 by the Federation of Public Service Employees (FEESP-CSNO).

Should a strike occur, school transportation will be disrupted in Sherbrooke and the Commission scolaire de la Région de Sherbrooke (CSRS) has already informed its partners unless a the FEESP changes its mind, school transportation of all students will be canceled.

While the STS is still unable to assess the impact of this situation on its urban and paratransit network with any accuracy, but it appears that it could lead to a larger volume of cars on the road than usual, resulting in delays in the network and increased traffic on buses.

As a precaution, the STS is encouraging customers to plan their trips a bit earlier in anticipation of a longer trip to get to their destination. Commuters can follow the situation by visiting the website at sts.qc.ca or the Vermeille mobile

application.

The bus drivers' strike could also disrupt transportation for some students from the Eastern Townships School Board.

According to the ETSB website, Massey-Vanier High School, Farnham Elementary, Knowlton Academy and Parkview Elementary School have transportation contracts with companies Autobus Granby, Sogesco (9292-3068 Québec) and Yamaska, which are part of the FEESP and included in the potential strike action.

Parents are asked to monitor the ETSB website (www.etsb.qc.ca) and the ETSB Facebook page to know whether or not the strike is confirmed. In the event of a strike, schools will remain open and classes will proceed as usual and parents are asked to make arrangements to possibly transport their children to and from school on Tuesday, May 15.

The board also pointed out that the situation will likely result in increased traffic flow around the affected schools and asked that parents or guardians transporting students drive with caution while in school zones.

