

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A Monthly Report to the Eastern School Board

December 2009 Board Meeting

School Board Elections

Congratulations and welcome to all new and former school board members who will serve on the Eastern School Board for the next four years. We look forward to working with each of you and advancing the many education initiatives we have undertaken in our District.

We thank former trustees Rosalind Robere, Jack Murphy, Jerry Rice, David Dibbon, and Jeff King for their dedicated service on the Board and wish them well in their future endeavours.

H1N1 Update

The month of November proved to be a particularly busy month as the H1N1 virus spread throughout the province and impacted attendance in our schools.

As per our District H1N1 plan, we immediately implemented daily attendance monitoring and reinforced the three Cs with school children: Clean, Cover and Contain. In some schools, absentee rates were as high as 91 per cent but generally most school absenteeism rates were in the 30-40 per cent range. These levels usually only lasted for a couple of days before attendance returned to more normal levels.

In mid-November, Eastern Health implemented a school vaccination program which by all reports was very well organized.

On October 29, the Department of Education implemented a travel ban preventing students from travelling throughout their communities to play sports or participate in school-related events. This was followed-up by a district directive preventing participation in inter-school events and field trips.

With attendance levels returned to normal, and the school vaccination program completed, the provincial and district travel bans were lifted on Friday, November 27, 2009.

Human Resources Update

Recruitment has been very busy during the month of November, both internally and externally. Due to the high level of absenteeism related to H1N1 and the need for replacement workers, Human Resources Managers and Senior Education Officers have been focusing their efforts on external recruitment.

The Human Resources Division has placed additional advertisements for substitute teachers and has encouraged retired teachers to apply for the substitute list in response to the H1N1 situation and in preparation for future absenteeism due to seasonal illness.

The Division has increased efforts to recruit support staff in all categories to the call-in list. Many casuals have been interviewed, references checked, codes of conduct submitted, and employment offers made. Since the start of the 2009 school year, there have been approximately 75 new casuals added to the call-in list.

Facilities Update

In late October, Holy Cross Elementary, Holyrood was closed due to the presence of rot and mould in a portion of the exterior wall structure. The students and staff were relocated to Roncalli Central High in Avondale. The District is currently in consultation with the Department of Education and their architectural consultant to determine a scope of work to repair the building.

New school construction at Torbay, Paradise I and II (all K-6 schools) and the new Grade 7-Level III school in Placentia continue to be on schedule for occupancy in the fall of 2010.

School extension projects at Beachy Cove Elementary, St. Edward's Elementary (Kelligrews), St. Bernard's Elementary, Upper Gullies Elementary and St. Peter's Junior High (Mount Pearl) are in progress. An April 2010 occupancy is anticipated for all schools pending winter weather conditions.

The extension to Roncalli Elementary (Phase II) is scheduled for occupancy November 30, 2009.

An air quality test for St. Bernard's Elementary, Witless Bay, recommended further investigation. The school was closed to conduct the investigation, which included both a visual and air quality clearance test. Upon confirmation of a clearance test, which concluded that there was no mould source in the school, the building was reopened for students.

Healthy Living Funding

Eastern School District has recently received funding to the amount of \$101,200 for our proposal "Building upon Active Schools to Increase Family & Community Involvement in the Promotion of Health & Wellness".

This proposal was prepared in partnership with Nova Central School District, Eastern Health, Central Health and Memorial University with a purpose to increase physical activity opportunities for students. Through this funding, Eastern School District will be able to expand the Eastern Active Schools Program to 11 new schools within the District and use this program as an avenue to engage families and the community in the promotion of health and wellness which will facilitate consistent health messages for children and youth where they work, live and play.

Beyond the Hurt Program

The Eastern School District and the Canadian Red Cross have partnered to help combat bullying and harassment in schools with the Canadian Red Cross *Beyond the Hurt* youth training program. This is a student-driven bullying prevention plan that is designed to help empower youth.

Four schools in our District are participating: Christ the King (Rushoon), Holy Cross Junior High (St. John's), St. Peter's Junior High (Mount Pearl) and Persalvic Elementary (Victoria). In addition, on November 25 and 26, a group of students at Holy Cross Junior High were trained to become Youth Peer Facilitators.

Thanks to a gracious corporate donation from Statoil Hydro and financial support from the Red Cross, the \$20,000 cost of providing the *Beyond the Hurt* Program to the schools in the Eastern School District was provided at no cost.

Vale Inco Scholarships

Vale Inco Newfoundland and Labrador Limited has recently informed the District and administrations of Crescent Collegiate, Laval High School and Fatima Academy of \$57,600 worth of scholarships that will be made available to graduating students of these schools over the next four years.

Six hundred dollar (\$600) scholarships will be awarded equally to male and female graduates who are enrolled in post-secondary industrial trades and technology programs or science and engineering university programs. The scholarships are provided to support the construction and subsequent operation of the Long Harbour Nickel Processing Plant and to foster gender employment equity.

Eastern School District thanks Vale Inco for their generous investment donation in the future of our students and in the bright future of our province.

Passion for Projects

Emily Elliot, a grade 10 student of Gonzaga High School, saw a need and came up with an idea to help students of low-income families create better school projects. Emily has partnered with the community organization *Bridges to Hope*, to launch "Passion for Projects". The program was officially launched on November 23, 2009.

Through this program, all schools within Eastern School District will receive project kits worth about \$25 to \$30 which consist of the necessary materials to complete a major science or social studies project. Approximately 610 kits are available at this time and will be supplied to schools within the Eastern School District prior to the Christmas break.

