

**PROVINCE OF QUEBEC**

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE SIR WILFRID LAURIER SCHOOL BOARD HELD ON 2012-05-09**

A Special meeting of the Council of Commissioners of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board was held in the boardroom of the Administration Centre, 235 Montée Lesage, Rosemere, QC on Wednesday, 2012-05-09.

Present: Commissioners Steve Bletas, Chairman; Carolyn Curiale, Vice-Chairman; Georges Benoit, Mario Di Domenico, Robert Dixon, Nazario Facchino, Walter Fogel, Steve Kmec, Peter MacLaurin, Nick Milas, Steve Mitchell, Tom Mouhteros, Grace Nesi, Albina Pace, Merle Parkinson, Mike Pizzola, William Pollock, Nancy Rupnik and Edward Turchyniak; Parent Commissioners Roberto Bomba and Angelo Grasso; and Robert Vallerand, Director General.

Also present were: Clifford Buckland, Interim Assistant Director General; Marie-Claude Drouin, Secretary General; Gaëlle Absolonne, Director of School Organization; Johanne Brabant, Strategic Plan Advisor; Line Desgroseilliers, Director of Information Technology; Linda Di Domenico, Director of Human Resources; Heather Halman, Director of Adult Education & Vocational Training; Stephanie Krenn, Director of Complementary Services; Livia Nassivera, Director of Financial Resources; Gerry Robillard, Director of Educational Services; Jocelyne Thompson-Ness, Administrative Assistant; and Members of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier Administrators Association (SWLAA). Several other persons were also in the audience.

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 19:31 hours.

The Chairman asked that the agenda items be reorganized as follows:

2 4.0	<i>Chairman of the Council of Commissioners</i> .....	RES
1 2.0	<i>Report of the Working group tasked by the Council to look into the SWLAA Concerns as Contained in their Letter to the Director General Dated April 24, 2012</i> .....	RES

The following addition to the agenda was also proposed:

3.0	<i>LRHS Pool Rejuvenation Project</i> .....	RES
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In response to a question from Commissioner Walter Fogel, the Director General explained that the Education Act (R.S.Q., Chapter I-13.3) allows for items to be added to the agenda if all Commissioners are present and all agree to the amendment of the agenda, which is the case this evening therefore, the addition to the agenda is legitimate.

In response to a question from Commissioner Peter MacLaurin, the Director General noted that the Québec Government has made an additional 50 000 000\$ to the *Programme de soutien aux installations sportives et récréatives* available for sport infrastructures and that, in order to benefit from these funds, the partnership (MRC d'Argenteuil, the Ville de Lachute, Commission scolaire de la Rivière-du-Nord and Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board) must submit the project no later than 2012-05-18.

**CC-120509-CA-0103**

Commissioner Carolyn Curiale MOVED THAT the agenda be approved as amended in document #SWLSB-2012/05/09-CA-001

**Carried unanimously**

**1.0 CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF COMMISSIONERS:**

The Chairman made the following statement:

May 9, 2012

Dear Colleague Commissioners,

Dear Director General,

*It is with regret that I am writing to inform you today of my decision to resign as Chairman of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board, effective immediately.*

*Please understand that I have given this decision a lot of thought. Although my responsibilities here bring me a great deal of satisfaction, they also require my complete attention and availability seven days a week. I have been advised by my doctor that at this point in my life, I have to concentrate fully on my health situation should I wish to recover and get better.*

*I have been involved in education for many years in various capacities and as Chairman of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board since 1998. It has been my pleasure to serve as Chairman for the past fourteen years and I am proud of what was accomplished over these years.*

*I feel it is now time to make room for someone with the time and energy to devote to the position. I would like to express my gratitude for all the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board has brought to my life and I have made many friends with whom I hope to keep in contact.*

*Please accept my heartfelt thanks for your support, encouragement, and cooperation over the years. I have been fortunate, indeed, to work for the best English School Board in the Province. It is truly disheartening that the condition of my health must govern my decision to resign.*

*Rest assured that I will continue to offer my best as commissioner of ward 13 and contribute my years of experience with the Council of Commissioners and its new Chairman.*

Sincerely,

Steve Bletas

Commissioner Steve Bletas relinquished the chair to the Vice-Chairman of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board.

In a "point of order", Commissioner Walter Fogel indicated that the election of a new Chairman should take place this evening.

The Council entered into discussion and it was pointed out that the Education Act allows a school board thirty (30) days to replace a Chairman and during that period all duties and powers of that position are assumed by the Vice-Chairman until a replacement is elected.

#### **CC-120502-CA-0104**

Commissioner Steve Mitchell MOVED THAT that the issue concerning the election of a new Chairman be tabled.

<b>THIS MOTION WAS CARRIED ON THE FOLLOWING DIVISION:</b>	
<b>Commissioners voting YEA:</b>	<b>Georges Benoit, Steve Bletas, Carolyn Curiale, Mario Di Domenico, Robert Dixon, Peter MacLaurin, Steve Mitchell, Grace Nesi, Albina Pace, Merle Parkinson, Mike Pizzola, William Pollock, Nancy Rupnik, Edward Turchyniak</b>
<b>Commissioners voting NAY:</b>	<b>Nazario Facchino, Walter Fogel, Steve Kmec, Tom Mouhteros</b>
<b>Commissioners ABSTAINING:</b>	<b>Nick Milas</b>

#### **CC-120502-CA-0105**

WHEREAS Commissioner Steve Bletas informed the Council of Commissioners today of his decision to resign as Chairman of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board, effective immediately;

Commissioner Peter MacLaurin THAT the Council of Commissioners of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier

School Board receives the resignation of Steve Bletas as the Chairman of the Council, effective immediately;

AND THAT the Council of Commissioners extend its appreciation to Mr. Bletas for his years of service and contributions as the Chairman of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board.

<b>THIS MOTION WAS CARRIED ON THE FOLLOWING DIVISION:</b>	
<b>Commissioners voting YEA:</b>	<b>Georges Benoit, Steve Bletas, Carolyn Curiale, Mario Di Domenico, Robert Dixon, Peter MacLaurin, Nick Milas, Steve Mitchell, Grace Nesi, Albina Pace, Merle Parkinson, Mike Pizzola, William Pollock, Nancy Rupnik, Edward Turchyniak</b>
<b>Commissioners voting NAY:</b>	<b>Steve Kmec</b>
<b>Commissioners ABSTAINING:</b>	<b>Nazario Facchino, Walter Fogel, Tom Mouhteros</b>

Commissioner Walter Fogel asked that the record show that there is no need for a resolution to accept the resignation of Commissioner Steve Bletas as Chairman of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board.

## **2.0 REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP TASKED BY THE COUNCIL TO LOOK INTO THE SWLAA CONCERNS AS CONTAINED IN THEIR LETTER TO THE DIRECTOR GENERAL DATED APRIL 24, 2012**

The Director General presented and read into the minutes the conclusions and recommendations of the Working Group that was tasked by the Council to look into the concerns of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier Administrators Association (SWLAA) as contained in their letter to the Director General dated April 24, 2012 and received by him on April 25, 2012.

On a "point of order", Commissioner Walter Fogel indicated that given the nature of the letter nothing should be read from the report into the minutes.

The Acting Chairman advised that what is being presented is a summary report for public presentation not the confidential report.

**CONCLUSION 1:** The working group is convinced of the authenticity of the SWLAA letter and unanimously believes that its content has the support of an overwhelming majority of the SWLAA membership.

**CONCLUSION 2:** It is the unanimous conclusion of the working group that:

- a) Calls were made by the Chairman of Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board that interfered with the Principals' administrative role.
- b) Abusive accusations via phone calls to SWLAA members from the Chairman of Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board were made
- c) Contradictory information was provided to SWLAA members by the Chairman
- d) Meetings took place between members of Governing Board and the Chairman with regard to school projects or school organization. No mandate had been conferred on the Chairman to intervene on behalf of Council in these matters.

- e) SWLAA members were in fact contacted by the Chairman between the April Executive Committee meeting and the April Council meeting confirming the 2012-2013 assignments or confirming the transfer of vice-principal to new assignments.
- f) We believe that the Chairman did make derogatory remarks relating to senior leadership.
- g) We believe that the Chairman invited SWLAA members to contact other members to undermine the credibility and effectiveness of senior leadership.

**CONCLUSION 3:** The working group unanimously concludes that this type of behaviour on the part of the Chairman has been prolonged and sustained in spite of repeated requests to refrain from such intervention.

**CONCLUSION 4:** The working group unanimously believes that the reason for the frequency and intensity increase of interventions was directly attributable to the concurrent Assistant Director General posting and the student registration period for school year 2012-2013 in the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board.

**FINAL CONCLUSION:** We conclude unanimously that the concerns brought forth in the letter from SWLAA are valid. That these concerns with regard to the actions of the Chairman have deteriorated the working environment in our schools/centres and have resulted in adding undue confusion and stress to our instructional leaders in their respective professional relationships, their relationship with the senior leadership group, with commissioners and in many instances with parents.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. That the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board code of ethics be revisited so as to add a section dealing with the approved lines of communications between the Chairman, commissioners and the personnel of Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board;
2. That the Chairman publicly apologize for his inappropriate actions to the entire personnel of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board as these unfortunate interventions go beyond one specific employee group;
3. That Council make clear that the personnel of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board do not, under any circumstance, work under the authority of the Chairman and that this be reiterated in the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board policy "Role of the Chairman" in a separate section;
4. That the SWLAA Executive be given a copy of the full report in response to their letter to the Director General dated April 24, 2012; and lastly
5. That the Chairman gives serious reflection on his ability to continue to act in his capacity as Chairman of Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board.

In response to a question from Parent Commissioner Angelo Grasso, the Director General advised that there is a deadline for the submission of the project for the rejuvenation of the swimming pool at Laurentian Regional High School of 2012-05-18 and if presented at the 2012-05-23 meeting of the Council the partnership would lose out on the funding.

In response to a request from Commissioner Mario Di Domenico, the Director General noted that after the mandate was given by the Council at the 2012-04-25 meeting to create a Working Group composed of the Vice-Chairman of the Council, the Chairman & Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee and himself, the following took place:

- The President of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier Administrators Association (SWLAA) was contacted and a meeting was held with its Executive on Friday, 2012-04-27. It was a 3 hour meeting where the Working Group asked the SWLAA Executive questions concerning the validity of the contents of the letter and sought clarification. Each of the 7 allegations of intervention was looked at individually. Minutes of this meeting were taken but are of a confidential nature and only shared with the Working Group and the SWLAA Executive. The Working Group met after this meeting to process and understand the information received.

Commissioner Mike Pizzola left the meeting.

TIME: 19:54 hours

- On Saturday, 2012-04-28 the Working Group met with the Chairman for 2.5 hours here at the Administration Centre and explained what information was received at the meeting of 2012-04-27 and he admitted that some of the information received at this meeting was true. After this meeting the Working Group discussed options to resolve these allegations. The Director General was advised by the other members of the Working Group that everything learned would be taken into consideration and that the Commissioners of the Working Group would advise him on what might be the best avenue for the resolution of these allegations.

Commissioner Mike Pizzola returned to the meeting.

TIME: 19:56 hours

- A special meeting of the Council was called by the Chairman for Wednesday, 2012-05-02 to clarify and add a complement to the mandate of the Ethics Commissioner was approved.
- On Friday, 2012-05-04 the Director General felt that the report of the Working Group should be acted upon quickly so he drafted one and called a meeting of the Working Group for Saturday, May 5, 2012.
- On Saturday, 2012-05-05 the members of the Working Group met and the draft report was reviewed and revised. All members of the Working Group unanimously agreed to sign the final version of the report.

The Director General noted that he recommended that the Working Group respond quickly to SWLAA so the Vice-Chairman and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee convened tonight's special meeting, as per the Education Act (R.S.Q., Chapter I-13.3), in writing to himself and that he then advised the Secretary General on Saturday, 2012-05-05 of this and notice of such was sent by the Secretary General to all Commissioners on Monday, 2012-05-07.

He further advised that on Tuesday, 2012-05-08, Commissioner Steve Bletas advised him of his intent to step down as Chairman of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board.

In response to a comment from Commissioner Tom Mouhteros, the Acting Chairman noted that the only people that were part of the working group were those named in the resolution approved on 2012-04-25.

#### **CC-120509-CA-0106**

WHEREAS the Council of Commissioners of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board adopted resolution CC-120425-CA-0091 mandating the Director General to meet with members of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier Administrators Association (SWLAA) to address a letter of concerns from its membership;

WHEREAS a working group composed of the Director General, the Vice-Chairman of the Council of Commissioners, the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee met with the SWLAA Executive on April 27, 2012;

WHEREAS the working group also met with the concerned commissioner on April 28, 2012;

WHEREAS a report assessing those concerns was drafted by the working group and is now presented to the Council of Commissioners.

Commissioner Nancy Rupnik MOVED THAT the Council of Commissioners of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board approve the report presented by the working group.

AND THAT a copy of this report is given to Sir Wilfrid Laurier Administrators Association (SWLAA).

<b>THIS MOTION WAS CARRIED ON THE FOLLOWING DIVISION:</b>	
<b>Commissioners voting YEA:</b>	<b>Georges Benoit, Carolyn Curiale, Mario Di Domenico, Robert Dixon, Nazario Facchino, Peter MacLaurin, Nick Milas, Steve Mitchell, Grace Nesi, Albina Pace, Merle Parkinson, Mike Pizzola, William Pollock, Nancy Rupnik, Edward Turchyniak</b>
<b>Commissioners voting NAY:</b>	<b>Walter Fogel, Steve Kmec, Tom Mouhteros</b>
<b>Commissioners ABSTAINING:</b>	<b>Steve Bletas</b>

Commissioner Steve Bletas presented the following apology:

*Good evening,*

*Earlier in this meeting the Working Group deposited a summary of its recommendations concerning the letter received by the Director General from the Sir Wilfrid Laurier Administrators Association on April 25, 2012. Given that, it was recommended that the Chairman of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board issue a public apology for his interventions. I would avail myself of the opportunity that this meeting provides to follow up on recommendation #2.*

*I would like to apologize first, to all the members of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier Administrators Association for my behaviour. I fully realize that the positions you hold require your complete attention and that unnecessary confusion and needless interventions serve only to detract from your effectiveness as the school board's Instructional Leaders. This is not something that I want to happen.*

*Secondly, to all the other employees of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board, I would likewise extend my apologies. My intent was always to bring improvements to this school board and I now realize that my actions complicated your tasks.*

*Thank you*

The Director General advised the Council that he had received a letter from the President of the Association of Administrators of English Schools of Québec (AAESQ) on this situation with SWLAA and has assured the Executive Director of the AAESQ that all Council members would receive a copy.

### **3.0 MATERIAL RESOURCES**

The Director General commented on the need to add this item to the agenda given the time constraints for the submission of the project to be considered for funding.

In response to a question from Parent Commissioner Angelo Grasso, the Director General noted that it was his intention to join the Material Resources Committee earlier this evening to present this resolution but he could not as he had a 3 hour meeting with the Ethics Commissioner that did not finish until 7:00 p.m. He did meet briefly with the Commissioner Steve Kmec, Chairman of the Material Resources Committee, prior to this meeting and received permission to proceed with the presentation of this resolution this evening.

#### **CC-120509-MR-0107**

Commissioner Walter Fogel moved to table the resolution for the partnership project for the rejuvenation of the swimming pool at Laurentian Regional High School.

<b>THIS MOTION WAS DEFEATED ON THE FOLLOWING DIVISION:</b>	
<b>Commissioners voting YEA:</b>	<b>Walter Fogel</b>
<b>Commissioners voting NAY:</b>	<b>Georges Benoit, Steve Bletas, Carolyn Curiale, Mario Di Domenico, Robert Dixon, Nazario Facchino, Steve Kmec, Peter MacLaurin, Nick Milas, Steve Mitchell, Tom Mouhteros, Grace Nesi, Albina Pace, Merle Parkinson, Mike Pizzola, William Pollock, Nancy Rupnik, Edward Turchyniak</b>

Commissioner Steve Kmec, Chairman of the Material Resources Committee, noted that it was important that this resolution be presented this evening so as to not lose the funding therefore, he concurred with the Director General on the necessity of proceeding.

In response to a question from Commissioner Merle Parkinson, the Director General noted that the same project was submitted under Phase I for funding but that it was not retained by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS). Given the recent additional funding for Phase II of the *Programme de soutien aux installations sportives et récréatives*, all of the partners in this project have adopted resolutions confirming their respective participation.

The Council entered into discussion.

In response to a question from Commissioner Walter Fogel, the Director General noted that the school board is already a co-owner of the swimming pool through the Tripartite Agreement.

*WHEREAS the Council of Commissioners of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board adopted resolution CC-100127-MR-0085 mandating the Director of Material Resources to submit a shared cost project to the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) for the rejuvenation of the swimming pool at Laurentian Regional High School within the Programme de soutien aux installations sportives et récréatives in partnership with MRC d'Argenteuil and Commission scolaire de la Rivière-du-Nord;*

*WHEREAS the contribution of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board in this shared cost project for the pool rejuvenation project had been established at 491 805,00 \$;*

*WHEREAS Phase 1 of the Programme de soutien aux installations sportives et récréatives has been completed and the project must now be resubmitted within **Phase II**;*

*Commissioner Mike Pizzola MOVED THAT, on the recommendation of the Material Resources Committee, the Council of Commissioners of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board authorize the presentation of the shared cost pool rejuvenation project to the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) within **Phase II** of the Programme de soutien aux installations sportives et récréatives.*

*AND THAT the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board agree to pay its share of the project and ongoing operating costs.*

*FURTHER THAT the Chairman, and in his absence or with his knowledge the Vice-Chairman, as well as the Director General, and in his absence or with his knowledge the Assistant Director General, be authorized to sign all documentation concerning this project.*

In response to several questions concerning the use of the pool it was noted that it is used by the students of Laurentian Regional High School, Laurentian Elementary School and Grenville Elementary School.

Commissioner Nancy Rupnik noted that something should be added concerning the project not being retained for phase I. Commissioner Mike Pizzola accepted this amendment.

**CC-120502-MR-0108**

WHEREAS the Council of Commissioners of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board adopted resolution CC-100127-MR-0085 mandating the Director of Material Resources to submit a shared cost project to the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) for the rejuvenation of the swimming pool at Laurentian Regional High School within the Programme de soutien aux installations sportives et récréatives in partnership with MRC d'Argenteuil and Commission scolaire de la Rivière-du-Nord;

WHEREAS the contribution of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board in this shared cost project for the pool rejuvenation project had been established at 491 805,00 \$;

WHEREAS the shared cost project for the pool rejuvenation project was not retained within Phase I of the Programme de soutien aux installations sportives et récréatives;

WHEREAS Phase 1 of the *Programme de soutien aux installations sportives et récréatives* has been completed and the project must now be resubmitted within **Phase II**;

Commissioner Mike Pizzola MOVED THAT, on the recommendation of the Material Resources Committee, the Council of Commissioners of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board authorize the presentation of the shared cost pool rejuvenation project to the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) within **Phase II** of the Programme de soutien aux installations sportives et récréatives.

AND THAT the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board agree to pay its share of the project and ongoing operating costs.

FURTHER THAT the Chairman, and in his absence or with his knowledge, the Vice-Chairman, as well as the Director General, and in his absence or with his knowledge the Assistant Director General, be authorized to sign all documentation concerning this project.

<b>THIS MOTION WAS CARRIED ON THE FOLLOWING DIVISION:</b>	
<b>Commissioners voting YEA:</b>	<b>Georges Benoit, Steve Bletas, Carolyn Curiale, Mario Di Domenico, Robert Dixon, Nazario Facchino, Steve Kmec, Peter MacLaurin, Nick Milas, Steve Mitchell, Tom Mouhteros, Grace Nesi, Albina Pace, Merle Parkinson, Mike Pizzola, William Pollock, Nancy Rupnik, Edward Turchyniak</b>
<b>Commissioners ABSTAINING:</b>	<b>Walter Fogel</b>

**4.0 QUESTION PERIOD:**

In response to a question from Mark Massarelli, President of the Association of Administrators of English Schools of Québec (AAESQ), the Director General advised that the Code of Ethics for the Council of Commissioners will be revised to add a section to establish a clear line of communication between the Council and school board employees. The policy on the Role of the Chairman will also be revised to reflect that the role of the Chairman is only a supervisory role with respect to the position of the Director General.

The Sir Wilfrid Laurier Administrators Association (SWLAA) will be asked to report any interference by a Commissioner on anything that does not pertain to their role, to either the Director General, the Assistant Director General or the Secretary General; and that this will also apply to the Chairman of the various committees associated with the Council.

Mr. Massarelli thanked the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board for taking the concerns of SWLAA seriously.

In response to questions and comments concerning the letter received from the AAESQ, the Director General acknowledged that Council members are elected by universal suffrage and advised that the Secretary General and the Ethics & Governance Committee will be reviewing the Code of Ethics for Commissioners and will bring any recommendations to the Council for its approval.

Commissioner Peter MacLaurin made a statement to his fellow Commissioners:

*"We have had a long period of time leading up to this evening, and as elected members of this Council we have been sitting on our hands. I am ashamed that it took so long to deal with this, and that is was not brought to the attention of the Council by a Commissioner but by an Administrator. We cannot place all the blame on Commissioner Steve Bletas as all Commissioners are equally responsible."*

**5.0 ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING:**

Commissioner Nick Milas MOVED adjournment of the meeting.

**Carried unanimously**

**TIME: 20:27 hours**

**NEXT MEETING ⇨ REGULAR ⇨ 2012-05-23**

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**Marie-Claude Drouin, Secretary General**

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**Carolyn Curiale, Vice-Chairman**