

PROVINCE OF QUÉBEC
Ville de Rosemère

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, Rosemère, Québec, on Wednesday June 12, 2024, and via videoconference at 6:30 p.m., at which were:

Present: Paolo Galati, Chairperson; and Russell Copeman, Director General.

Present via videoconference: Commissioner Bob Pellerin, Alternate Vice-Chairperson; Commissioners Anick Brunet, Vincent Cammisano, James Di Sano, Stéphane Henley and Désirée Ramacieri; and Parent Commissioners Chloée Alary, Tara Anderson and Elena Ferrato.

Also present: Roma Medwid, Interim Assistant Director General; Giovanna Ortona, Interim Secretary General and Director of the Legal, Corporate and Communications Department; and Robin Bennett, Director of Information Resources.

Also present via videoconference: Lynda DaSilveira, Director of Pedagogical Services; Daniel Harvey, Director of Financial Resources; Anne-Marie Lavoie, Director of Human Resources; and Jocelyne Thompson-Ness, Administration Officer.

Absent: Commissioner Melissa Wall, Vice-Chairperson; Commissioners Donna Anber and Barbara Barrasso.

Guest: Dr. Myrna Lashley

The Chairperson called the meeting to order and confirmed quorum with the Interim Secretary General and Director of the Legal, Corporate and Communications Department.

The Interim Secretary General and Director of the Legal, Corporate and Communications Department confirmed quorum and advised that all legal requirements for this meeting were followed.

TIME: 18:02

1.0 Opening of Meeting

1.1 Acknowledgement of the Land

I would like to honour the existence of the First Peoples by acknowledging that the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board is on the traditional land of the Kanien'keha:ka or Mohawk nation.

The Mohawk Nation is also known as the "Eastern Door Keepers" and are a member of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy which also includes the Seneca, Cayuga, Tuscarora, Onondaga and Oneida Peoples.

In the spirit of truth, reconciliation, and collaboration, we honour our relationship with the Indigenous Community and respect the history, culture, and language of Canada's original peoples.

2.0 Approval of the Agenda

Approval of the Agenda

CC-240612-CA-0122

Parent Commissioner Elena Ferrato MOVED THAT the June 12, 2024, agenda of the special meeting of the Council of Commissioners of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board be approved as presented in document no. CC-SWLSB-2024/0612-CA-001.

Carried unanimously

3.0 Presentation of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Report

The Chairperson welcomed Dr. Myrna Lashley to the meeting, noting that it is an honour to have her present this evening.

The Director of Pedagogical Services provided background information on Dr. Lashley noting that she has been working with the school board for the past two and a half years on this project. Dr. Lashley has conducted extensive work in EDI and has authored two training manuals.

As part of the EDI projects, the school board committed to conduct an environmental scan (the scan) to hear from students, parents, employees and other stakeholders on their experience with EDI. Dr. Lashley worked with Dr. Geneviève Légaré, Pedagogical Consultant and Geoffrey Hipps, former Director of Pedagogical Services, to analyze the results of the scan for the report being presented this evening.

Dr. Lashley thanked everyone for having her here this evening and expressed her appreciation to Dr. Légaré and Mr. Hipps for their assistance because the data for this report would not be available without all their work.

She went on to present the report noting that after some background information the focus of tonight's presentation will be section 9 of the report or the conclusion:

- A qualitative approach was used because it was the only way to gather the required information;
- 3,076 responses were received through the scan, 302 employees, 621, parents and 2,553 students;
- There were 92,280 points of data analyzed or three groups of ten questions each multiplied by the number of respondents. The data points were examined, themes created and then a deep examination of the data was done within the groups using a process based on research;
- No schools or persons are identified in the scan;
- Looked at the theoretical factors that influence people such as identity, respect, allyship (how to engage, how to achieve and who is responsible), truth and reconciliation, resilience, school to prison pipeline, health and exclusion, family structures, justice and fairness, the roles of schools, teachers and other educators, bullying, and abilities;
- There were some limitations to the scan due to a computer glitch that, to their knowledge, did not send the definitions to the parents and students. The glitch turned out to be a good thing because it provided information from a different perspective;
- The results of the scan indicated that people want to be involved in ensuring that EDI becomes an integrated part of the school board therefore, this report should be published online;
- There were some respondents that indicated that they did not quite understand the purpose of the scan while many elaborated on how they viewed it;
- There were some serious problems expressed in the scan and these were sent immediately to the Director General;
- Children do not need protection from EDI because it is an adult problem;
- The perception that the Division Argument divides people is not true. The Division Argument must be read as a whole;

- There were some students that said terrible things therefore, it is strongly suggested that every teacher read this report;
- The Division Argument has been present for many years and the opportunity is upon us to reduce said divide;
- The students, parents, employees and stakeholders need to know that this scan was not to make people feel bad about any family history concerning ancestors but to point out that EDI issues are systemic in that ancestors and themselves may have benefited while a disservice was being done to another;
- Everyone needs to work together to dismantle the things that cause harm and make people feel less than.

Dr. Lashley continued by commenting on some of the recommendations as follows:

- There are recommendations in each section of the analysis;
- The creation of a Task Force is one of the most important takeaways from this and it has to be real; it cannot be something that is performative, it must be made up of people truly interested in changing the system;
- It will be necessary to review exiting policies, especially the Anti-Bullying and Anti-Violence Policy;
- Resilience cannot be undertaken in a vacuum it can only happen when there are people around you;
- Conversations need to be held with all stakeholders because students are subject to some very painful things, and they are the ones punished rather than those inflicting the pain;
- Strategies need to be developed for the implementation of policies and measures so that there is a way to measure how the school board is doing because everything needs to be revisited and updated on a regular basis so that things that are not working can be reviewed and fixed;
- The Task Force must review the policies and procedures to gauge their impact on students. Policies might make sense to those who wrote them, but they also must make sense to those they apply to. Policy should encourage, not frighten people;
- The feedback received in the scan came from a very diverse community which was more pronounced by the comments received from the Adult Education and Vocational Training group;
- In the scan results from all groups, it was said that diversity is somewhat lacking in the school board;
- All candidates who apply for a post at the school board should be asked to make a commitment to EDI upon engagement;
- The messages that are sent to the students are very important as they need a guide on how to act on racism in an age-appropriate manner;
- Anti-racism training needs to be looked at from a macro level, engaging in advocacy, and at a micro level, self-reflection. Training will not change anything is people do not apply themselves;
- How to assess anti-racism practices need to be built.

In closing, Dr. Lashley noted that it must be recognized that the face of Canada is changing which makes EDI very important. Undertaking the recommendations within the report is not a passive exercise, hard work will need to be done, the hardest being on ourselves as we will have to look inside.

She will be available to help with the report, but the school board and Task Force must do the work because talking about it will not change a thing.

The Chairperson thanked Dr. Lashley for her informative presentation and he is looking forward to reading the entire report.

In response to questions from those present and online, Dr. Lashley noted:

- There are people who will tell their children that they do not like or support EDI because they are afraid to be open to it as they feel that it can be used to cause hurt.
- People need to stand up to what is known to be morally wrong;
- Students hear the negative at home and bring it to school.
- The school board needs to establish clear definitions as to where it stands on the negative being brought to school, as the school board is producing the citizens of the future, and it is part of its civic responsibility.

Commissioner Stéphane Henley entered the meeting.

TIME: 18:40

- Everyone needs to put themselves in the shoes of another to understand EDI. She noted that, besides herself, she is sure that many around the table or their children, family or friends, have been on the receiving end of racism in some form.
- Treat others with the same respect as we would want to receive.

Dr. Lashley reiterated the importance of publishing the report, *From their voices... Report on the Environmental Scan on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board*, and the Chairperson assured her that this would be done. He also indicated that people of all environments will be encouraged to run as candidates in the upcoming school board elections.

Discussion continued and Dr. Lashley noted:

- One has to stop telling their students/children to be the better person because this is pain that they internalize and they will eventually get tired of doing this.
- There is help for abused women, but not for the children.
- Civic minded people need to stand up and say no.
- The school board needs to do the work while remembering that the work is not to make people feel comfortable because people should feel uncomfortable and encouraged to say how can I contribute rather than trying to run from the discomfort of the issue.
- She will be available to lend support going forward.

The Director General noted that, while the EDI project began under the previous director general, there is a strong commitment from himself and the senior management team to see this project through to the end. The senior management is encouraging that the report be pursued and that the recommendations be applied which makes things real not performative. There are several uncomfortable issues raised within the report that will need to be handled in a head on manner while there are other things that need to be dismantled because they have not worked for this school board. The school board is committed to making EDI a serious focus.

The Chairperson thanked Dr. Lashley, on behalf of the Council, and expressed appreciation for the contributions to the EDI project.

Dr. Lashley left for the evening.

TIME: 18:53

4.0 Question Period

The Interim Secretary General and Director of the Legal, Corporate and Communications Department confirmed there were no questions but that there was a comment from the online audience that they are looking forward to seeing the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board as a leader in EDI.

5.0 Adjournment

Commissioner Anick Brunet MOVED the adjournment of the meeting.

Carried unanimously

TIME: 18:55

NEXT MEETING → REGULAR → June 26, 2024