

FROM THE CHAIR

Highlights of the Board of Trustees

Meeting held Tuesday, August 23, 2011

The Board of Trustees of Palliser Regional Schools held its first meeting of the 2011-2012 school year at Palliser Centre in Tuesday, August 23, 2011.

- The Board of Trustees decided to break from its tradition of devoting time to a book study at its regular meetings to a new model for advancing professional learning. The Board will set aside up to 30 minutes at each meeting for presentations from school and Central Office staff on education topics and initiatives, such as inclusive education or innovative projects in the schools. The Board will continue to pursue professional development by sharing and reading recommended books but they will not devote meeting time to group discussion.
- The Board will create a committee of trustees, principals and senior administration to review Administrative Procedure 544, Community Use of School Facilities, to ensure the procedure appropriately addresses security, financial implications and fees charged for use of Palliser sites. Community use practices now vary from school to school. The existing procedure gives the school principal authority over community use bookings and conditions. The trustees discussed the importance of school facilities to our communities and the need for any new procedure to be flexible and responsive to individual community needs. Trustees Jean Mrak, Robert Strauss and Joe Watson volunteered to represent the Board on this committee. Interested administrators will also be invited to participate.
- The Board received a report on recent work being done by the Palliser Maintenance Department. Key projects include a new building maintenance system in all Palliser schools outside Calgary, which will enable Maintenance staff to monitor boilers and other mechanical systems in those schools from the Lethbridge office. Another major undertaking has been the installation of new doors to facilitate Palliser's key fob system which records whose fob has been used to enter the school and at what time. The fobs can also be programmed to provide access to a school for as little as one day, to accommodate community use of sites. Other projects include installation of suspended ceilings and new lighting and lockers in Barons School; upgrades to the Cultural Recreation Centre kitchen, renovations to the office, and creation of meeting space in County Central High School in Vulcan; new floors and gym lighting in Dorothy Dalgliesh, Picture Butte; gym roof replacement at Noble Central School, Nobleford; new fire alarm panels in Sunnyside School, near Lethbridge, Coalhurst Elementary and Coalhurst High School; and a new phone system in Vulcan Prairieview School.
- Associate Superintendent (Education Services) Dale Backlin and trustee Joe Watson were excused from the meeting in order to attend a startup meeting with the contractor and architect working on the modernization of Picture Butte High School. Construction on the project ceased

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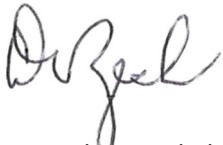
in December 2010 when the general contractor sought protection from its creditors. The company went out of business, prompting a process of working with the bonding company and searching for a new contractor. Ward Bros. Construction Ltd. of Lethbridge was chosen out of the retender process. Although the process has been slow, the Board welcomed news that construction would soon resume.

- The Transportation Department recommended a change to the bus protocol for renting our buses out to organizations outside of Palliser. When a Palliser bus is rented to a community organization, Palliser has allowed the organization to provide a driver as long as the organization showed the driver had the appropriate licence and training. The change, supported by the Board, will now require the organization to hire a Palliser bus driver to operate the vehicle on the community organization's outing and be responsible for the condition and use of the bus.
- Superintendent Kevin Gietz shared with the Board a letter received this summer from Education Minister Dave Hancock. The letter commended the Board of Palliser for its performance in the 2010 Accountability Pillar results. The pillar was the best yet for Palliser. Overall evaluation of education quality was deemed excellent, as was Palliser's provision of safe and caring school environments and its provincial achievement test results, citizenship education and parental involvement. "Your board's support of the principal leadership committee recognizes the importance of school leadership in transforming education," the letter states. "The board's decision to improve communication with school councils and other stakeholders demonstrates the understanding that we cannot be effective alone. I encourage you to continue the good work you are doing in your communities to achieve these results." The Superintendent also shared that five Palliser high schools were ranked in the Top 42 high schools in the annual Fraser Institute rankings.
- The Board voted to move its February meeting from the regular third Tuesday of the month to the second Tuesday. The Board will meet Feb. 14, 2011 at the regular start time of 9 a.m.
- The Board received a letter from the Vulcan and District Historical Society Archives notifying Palliser that a new book "School Bells and Children's Yells," about the small rural schools in the County of Vulcan area is now available for sale. The book, compiled by Norma Aldred, is available for sale for \$50 at locations in Vulcan and area or can be shipped for an additional \$12. The Board recommended purchase of the book for school libraries in Vulcan and Vulcan County.
- During the lunch break, trustees met with two dozen teachers who are joining Palliser staff this year. The teachers were at Palliser Centre participating the division's beginning teacher induction program, which supports them through orientation, professional development programs and mentorship through their first three years in Palliser. Associate Superintendent (Human Resources) Kevin Garinger said he has had a busy summer of hiring teachers. Palliser had 20 teacher resignations last year, and had planned to reduce by only nine positions, so the division was left in a hiring position for 2011-2012.
- The Board approved its Accumulated Operating Deficit Elimination Plan, as required by Alberta Education. Palliser had an accumulated operating deficit of \$952,151 as of August 31, 2010. In the wake of budget concerns, the Superintendent scheduled meetings with all school administrators and department heads to discuss a plan to start eliminated the accumulated

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operating deficit. Some expenditures were put on hold. A detailed analysis of the budget in July 2011 found Palliser spending had dropped significant from what the 2010/11 budget had projected. On the net assets schedule in the 2011/12 budget, the division was anticipating a deficit of \$255,516 for the 2010/11 school year which would bring the accumulated operating deficit to \$490,731. Pallier now does not expect the division to incur a deficit for 2010/11 which should leave the accumulated operating deficit at \$235,215 as of August 31, 2011. Palliser's budget for 2011/12 projects a modest surplus of \$88,000 for the year. Assuming there is not a huge impact on enrolments and/or funding deviating from the budget, Palliser expects to reduce the accumulated operating deficit by \$100,000 in 2012/13 and eliminate what remains of the deficit in the 2013/14 school year.

- The next regular meeting of the Palliser Board will be Tuesday, September 20, 2011 at Palliser Centre in Lethbridge.



Don Zech, Board Chair
Palliser Regional Schools