

Report from Prince Edward Island School Trustees Association

January 2009

I am so pleased to be able to meet and greet with you here in St. John's, Nfld. Some things change, but it seems that no matter what obstacles we face, no matter what mountains we have to climb, trustees go on forever. I bring to you the best wishes of Prince Edward Trustees for a successful and learning-packed conference.

Things change. [Story of little boy, first day in school.] I began my career teaching in such one-room schools with pot-belly wood stoves and all the rest. I remember looking at the big map of the world on the right-hand side of a not-white but black board as a small boy and wondering where the country was that was labelled Neilson's chocolate! (Some of you will remember that?) Newfoundland is no longer a have-not province. **[That's a welcome change-- Congratulations!]** In Education, school facilities and the practices of educators have witnessed radical changes over the past few decades and around much of the world. But for many and varied reasons, our school boards have been slow to react to those changes and consequently have missed opportunities to reflect population shifts, ways of communicating, and the varied needs of our student clientele. Our best efforts to be pro-active have often failed us. Recognizing this, all three Boards on Prince Edward Island seem to have faced up to the real world in our situations and are presently scrambling to improve things. There is no quick fix and, after all, the best changes we can make are measured and responsive ones to the requirements of children today. Prince Edward Island's problems are, perhaps slightly different from those of other Atlantic provinces, though, of course, we share some. Stuart MacLean uses an appropriate labelling for Dave's Record Store which could be applied to PEI: **WE MAY NOT BE BIG BUT WE'RE SMALL!** Many of our activities are similar, but each District has its own character. Here are a few 'thumb-nail' sketches, gathered from spies in our 3 Districts.

It's been a frenetic time for Trustees in the Eastern District, the one to which I belong. On the Board side that district has mounted many Professional Development activities for trustees over the past couple of years so that Trustees may help schools meet the requirements for technological equipment and the provision of specialists in teaching and related disciplines, among other things. The Board has spent a great deal of time reviewing Board policies and regulations and building new ones for "Lockdowns" and the like. But change has caught up with us: This school year the Board is dealing with the possible closure of eleven, count 'em, **eleven** schools of the forty-three, most with enrolments of under one hundred, some with less than forty students, most with multi-graded classrooms, limited specialist assistance, and all that goes with 'smaller schools'. The intent is to honour the Eastern Board's Mission statement which names **the best possible education for our children** as a prime objective. Still, the numbers of meetings with parents, parent-groups and Board meetings are dauntingly large.

One trustee observed to me recently, "It seems we gotta have a meeting to have a meeting!"
Pray for us?

The Western School Board has undergone a major review and reorganization of Board Governance and 'Communities of Learning' policies, specifically concerning:

Nutrition at Intermediate and Senior High in respect to food supplied in schools and used for fund-raising (including a ban on energy drinks);

A prevention/intervention/disciplinary response to Substance Abuse;

A new Lockdown Policy with guidelines /procedures for all schools developed in partnership with RCMP, local police, other emergency responders and the Eastern and French School Boards. All schools held successful practices in October.

Late French Immersion was introduced at Kensington Intermediate High.

A Gymnasium was added to and renovations completed at Parkside Elementary School;

Reduction/restriction of Student fees in all schools with major emphasis on course-related and senior High graduation fees (made possible with assistance from government as part of the annual budget);

A major Leadership initiative in Leadership program for current and prospective school administrators and a committee to review research and best practices in the Teacher Supervision process, the development of workshops related specifically to the role of school administrators;

Dedicated efforts to develop a School Organisational Plan to address continuing enrolments declines across the District and the accommodation of Kindergarten students into schools by 2010;

Common Assessment for elementary and intermediate levels, combined with an emphasis on literacy and numeracy skill development is the focus of system in-services and special initiatives. In addition to the provincially-funded Literacy Coaches and Interventionists, the Western Board has seconded a teacher to assess literacy results at the elementary to assist classroom teachers.

Avec plaisir, je présente maintenant un bref survol des principes réalisations qui on marqué la Commission Scolaire de langue française durant la dernière année.

Permettez-moi, s'il vous plait, de débiter avec la dernière annonce du gouvernement et du ministère de l'éducation et de la petite enfance- la construction d'une école dans la région de Rustico- après beaucoup d'effort et de la détermination, la Commission Scolaire de langue française atteint un objectif qu'elle s'était fixée.

Nous avons présentement et cela depuis seulement le mois de septembre, des secrétaires à plein temps dans toutes nos écoles. C'est un dossier que la Commission Scolaire défendait avec beaucoup d'acharnement.

La CSLF pour la première fois procédera à l'embauche d'un psychologue scolaire qui travaillera à temps plein pour la commission scolaire.

Au niveau de la technologie, nous sommes présentement en mesure de fournir l'enseignement d'une école à un autre ou d'une école à plusieurs écoles par la système vidéoconférence. Toutes nos écoles ont maintenant la technologie.

Beaucoup d'autres projets ont été réalisés:

Construction de classes à l'école François Buote et l'école La Belle-Cloche.

L'ajout de personnel dans nos régions et au bureau de la CSLF.

Nous prévoyons un avenir prometteur mais aussi des défis importants à relever dans les prochaines mois et pour la prochaine année:

Finaliser le dossier scolaire et communautaire dans la région de Rustico, c'est à dire, faire annexer la composante communautaire à la structure scolaire.

Obtenir une école pour la région de Souris pour remplacer l'école actuelle qui est une location.

Fair avancer le projet d'agrandissement du centre scolaire communautaire- Le Carrefour de l'île-Saint-Jean.

Obtenir les facilités afin d'être en mesure d'enseigner les métiers dans nos écoles secondaires.

Se donner un bulletin commun pour les six écoles de la Commission Scolaire.

Obtenir des ressources humaines afin de répondre aux besoins de francisation des élèves de maternelle, de première et de deuxième années.

L'arrivée des élèves de maternelle dans la système publique.

Beaucoup de défis restent, mais combien important le rôle que la Commission Scolaire Française de langue française doit jouer afin qu'assurer que les acadiens et francophones de l'Île-du-Prince-Edward reçoivent une éducation de qualité.