

**P.E.I. Home and School Federation
Semi-Annual Meeting, Tuesday, October 21, 2014
Queen Elizabeth Elementary School, Kensington, P.E.I.**

Staffing in Schools

Session One

Parents didn't feel that the response to the resolution on staffing was satisfactory. Clarification is still required.

One parent suggested forcing students to go to school within their zones. Bob Andrews replied that often the students are given permission on compassionate grounds, for example, if there is bullying. There is a practice in place for transfers and parents are required to supply transportation to the school that is out of the zone. Another parent supplied an example where a bus route is considerably longer because they go out of their way to collect a student who is out of zone. Bob will look into that.

Discussion about the unequal distribution of students in schools and resources, including suggestions that some schools be closed. Specific examples were given. Bob explained that Charlottetown schools could be redistributed in theory, but the distance rural kids would have to travel on the bus would be too long to redistribute rural kids. He gave examples of attempts to move even Charlottetown kids from one school to another and the parents, staff and students rebelled.

Discussion about changes in teaching staff throughout September. Individual examples of classroom sizes and school capacity issues. Bob: Decisions are made for ELSB as a whole. If a teacher is gained in one area, they have to be lost in another. There is a shortage of French Immersion teachers and the budget is stretched too far.

All the parents in the room seem concerned about class size/student teacher ratio/strain on teachers. Bob responded that the advocating for staffing needs to go to politicians and that we can work together with the school board for that.

Session Two

Peter suggested that parents read the minister's directive on staffing. One parent suggested that maybe we should look at how this directive might be changed to include particular needs and work together with the ESLB to do that. Peter suggested that the Board is our natural partner.

Several examples were given regarding large class sizes and schools filled past capacity, and schools that have classroom sizes of two. The lack of French Immersion teachers was discussed.

School zoning and closure was discussed and Wayne Noseworthy mentioned that in PEI, governments have been won and lost on the school closure issue. A parent questioned the lack of focus by the board on the issue of class size and would like to see research documenting the impact of large class size on student achievement. Wayne Noseworthy responded that class size is not really a problem. The strongest kids are often put in the larger class sizes and that they still do well. If a class is large, it is because the kids in the class can manage that size. He gave a description of the context of the Maritime Provinces and that they are all facing similar issues.

He described the decision-making processes of the ESLB regarding staffing and the window they have for moving staffing resources around. In the first few weeks of September there is some movement of FTE positions, but after a point they cannot move people. In past years, they have sometimes managed to pick up more support for some classes, but this year the tank is empty. He asked parents to trust that they are doing what they can with what they have.

Personal Reflection

Frustration levels in both sessions were quite high. Bob and Wayne did a good job of responding to questions in a detailed way, that illuminated their role in the decision making process, but I think there is still a sense amongst parents that the response is that “it is what it is” and that parents can only trust that the ESLB and Minister are doing the best they can with what they have.