



Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Red Deer Catholic Separate School Division, held March 25, 2025.

Present: S. Heistad,
C. Leyson
D. Lonsdale
A. Watson, Trustees
K. Finnigan, Superintendent of Schools
L. Latka, Secretary-Treasurer
R. Ledene, Associate Superintendent - System Services
R. Sawula, Associate Superintendent - Curriculum
J. Smith, Associate Superintendent - Human Resources
M. St. Pierre - Executive Assistant

Present via Zoom K. Pasula, Trustees

Not in Attendance M. Hollman

*Vice-Chair Watson called the meeting to order at 3:30 P.M.
Trustee Leyson read an opening prayer aloud.*

03/25/25-01-Leyson

THAT THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MOVE IN CAMERA AT 3:31 P.M.

CARRIED.

03/25/25-02-Lonsdale

THAT THE BOARD MOVE OUT OF CAMERA AT 4:59 P.M.

CARRIED.

*Vice-Chair Watson called for a recess at 5:00 p.m. and called the meeting back to order at 5:33 p.m.
Trustee Heistad read an opening prayer aloud. Associate Superintendent Sawula read the Land Acknowledgement aloud.*

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

03/25/25-03-Lonsdale

THAT THE AGENDA BE ACCEPTED AS PRESENTED.

CARRIED.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

03/25/25-04-Heistad

THAT THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF FEBRUARY 25, 2025 BE ADOPTED AS PRESENTED.

CARRIED.

3. DELEGATIONS: There were no delegations at the meeting.

3.1. ALBERTA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION (ASBA) ZONE 4: EDWIN PARR
NOMINEES - PRESENTATION

Vice-Chair Watson introduced the Edwin Parr Award nominees for Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools. She shared that among all first-year teachers in the division, two outstanding educators, Avery Lajeunesse and Jillian Klevyer, had been nominated. Both were recognized and celebrated at the meeting for their exceptional contributions. Watson noted that Jillian Klevyer was selected as the division's finalist and will represent Red Deer Catholic at the Zone 4 Edwin Parr event on May 26. Zone 4 comprises eight school divisions, with one nominee advancing to represent the region at the provincial level. The nominees were accompanied and supported at the meeting by their respective school principals, Teresa Borchers, St. Gregory the Great Catholic School and Gary Gylander, St. Joseph High School.

3.2. COUNCIL OF CATHOLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS OF ALBERTA (CCSSA):
EXCELLENCE IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION - PRESENTATION

Vice-Chair Watson introduced Linda Downey as Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools' winner of the CCSSA Excellence in Catholic Education Award. Linda Downey was recognized at the meeting for her outstanding commitment to Catholic education. She was accompanied and supported by her school principal, Jeff Tuchscherer and Vice-Principal, Stacey Martz. The award is presented annually at the SPICE conference by the CCSSA.

4. ACTION ITEMS

4.1. THREE-YEAR CAPITAL PLAN

Associate Superintendent Ledene presented the Three-Year Capital Plan. He provided an overview of the capital planning process, including how enrolment projections inform the division's future capital needs. The projections are based on student roll-ups (students advancing to the next grade level), historical enrolment trends, and population trends within the division's communities. Ledene added that the plan aims to anticipate both short-term and long-term infrastructure needs to support expected growth and program demand.

Ledene reported that the division is anticipating approximately 2% enrolment growth overall, consistent with trends observed over the past few years. He noted a projected 4% increase at the high school level, attributing this to students from the broader community choosing to enrol in Red Deer Catholic high schools to access specialized programs. He also highlighted a noted decline in enrolment in French Immersion programming.

Trustees discussed enrolment trends and future infrastructure needs and expressed concern about declining French Immersion enrolment. Ledene acknowledged the French immersion trend, noting it is not an immediate concern but is being monitored. Associate Superintendent Sawula added that declining French Immersion enrolment is a trend across Canada and is also linked to a shortage of qualified teachers and shifting views on the value of second-language skills in the job market.

Ledene outlined several site-specific concerns within the division including high utilization rates at St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Martin de Porres and the potential opening of a new high school in Sylvan Lake potentially impacting French Immersion enrolment at École Secondaire Notre Dame High School. To help address these pressures, Ledene noted that the division may consider relocating specialized programming to schools with lower utilization in order to better balance enrolment across the system. He added that while the opening of a new Sylvan Lake high school could draw French Immersion students away from École Secondaire Notre Dame High School, continuing to bus those students to Red Deer may affect the new school's viability, as it would require a minimum enrolment of 250 students to operate effectively.

Modular relocations were also noted, with two modular classrooms to be moved from École Camille J. Lerouge to École Secondaire Notre Dame High School to support space needs during the planned modernization of the amphitheatre into four new learning spaces.

Ledene summarized three priorities within the division. The first is a new high school in Sylvan Lake, for which pre-planning funding has been received. The second is the proposed modernization at École Secondaire Notre Dame High School, which has strong potential for funding and focuses on making efficient use of existing space. The third priority is securing a permanent Catholic school facility in Innisfail, where the community is beginning to experience population growth and enrolment is expected to surpass the capacity of the current temporary space. Due to ongoing challenges related to funding and facility upgrades

within the shared building, he stated that now is a timely opportunity to advocate for a dedicated Catholic school in the area.

Trustees emphasized the importance of long-term planning for French Immersion, highlighting the need to balance program viability with the capacity pressures faced by growing schools. It was also noted that continued bussing of French Immersion students from Sylvan Lake to École Secondaire Notre Dame High School remains a potential solution.

03/25/25-05-Leyson

**THAT THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES APPROVE THE 2025-2026 to 2027-2028
THREE YEAR CAPITAL PLAN AS PRESENTED.**

CARRIED.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

5.1. BOARD AND SUPERINTENDENT SCHOOL VISITS - SPRING

Superintendent Finnigan presented the proposed schedule of school visits for the spring, noting that the duration has been extended to one hour to allow for a more meaningful experience, as previous visits felt rushed. Finnigan shared that administrators are seeking clarity on the purpose of these visits and requested direction from trustees regarding the intent.

Trustees engaged in a discussion on how to approach the upcoming visits, with various perspectives shared on the value, format, and purpose of the visits. Suggestions included incorporating more meaningful interactions with staff, offering teachers the option to engage directly, and aligning visits with strategic priorities. Trustees expressed differing views on whether to proceed with a formal schedule or allow for more flexible, individual visits. It was agreed that further input is needed from both the ATA and the division's administrators. As such, it was decided that the matter will be tabled and brought back to the April board meeting for further discussion and direction.

5.2. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS: APRIL 15 AND APRIL 16, 2025

Superintendent Finnigan presented the report, noting the importance of two key dates for online and in-person stakeholder engagement sessions. She emphasized that the budget remains the top priority. She added that while the provided questions may not fully guide the discussion, they will help steer it.

Trustee Lonsdale expressed concern that, given the recent budget announcement, the Secretary-Treasurer may not have sufficient time to prepare. Secretary-Treasurer Latka noted that the funding profile had been received and indicated that timelines should be

manageable. Trustee Leyson confirmed her intention to attend the RDCRS stakeholder engagement despite a conflict with an ACSTA event on the same day.

5.3. ADVOCACY REQUEST TO RESTORE PROGRAM UNIT FUNDING (PUF) - LETTER

Superintendent Finnigan presented and explained an advocacy letter received from the Alberta Medical Association (AMA) Section of Pediatrics, addressed to the Minister of Education. The letter outlines concerns regarding changes to the PUF model made in 2020, which reduced funding eligibility from three years to two and lowered the age of eligibility.

Superintendent Finnigan noted that Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools continues to support students requiring early intervention in Grade 1, despite the fact that PUF funding is no longer available at that level. These supports are instead funded through the Inclusive Education budget. Finnigan also shared that one-on-one educational assistants are no longer provided due to funding constraints and emphasized the increasing complexity of classroom needs. The Board acknowledged the advocacy letter and its alignment with the division's experience and ongoing concerns related to adequate supports for students with complex needs.

Trustees also discussed the importance of reviewing internal systems and resource allocation to determine how the division might continue to advocate for increased funding through budget considerations and strategic planning.

03/25/25-06-Lonsdale

THAT THE SUPERINTENDENT WRITE A LETTER OF RESPONSE TO DR. SAM WONG IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FOR A LETTER OF ADVOCACY WITH CARBON COPIES GOING TO THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, MINISTER OF HEALTH, PRESIDENT OF ASBA, AND CHAIRS OF OTHER DIVISIONS ACROSS ALBERTA, UNDER THE SIGNATURE OF THE BOARD CHAIR.

CARRIED.

5.4. CENTRAL ALBERTA PRAYER BREAKFAST

Vice-Chair Watson shared that RDCRS has been invited to attend the Mayor's Prayer Breakfast on April 29, with the option to purchase a table of eight for \$300 or individual tickets for \$39. Trustees discussed whether participation should be pursued and noted that, in accordance with the fundraising policy, a motion would be required to approve the purchase. Considerations included a potential scheduling conflict, current financial constraints, and the potential value of engaging with community stakeholders. Trustees expressed hesitation in

purchasing a full table due to the difficulty in filling all seats and the cost involved. It was agreed that trustees wishing to attend may do so by purchasing a ticket individually, at their own expense.

Vice-Chair Watson called for a break at 7:12 p.m. Vice-Chair Watson called the meeting back to order at 7:26 p.m.

6. INFORMATION ITEMS

6.1. SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Superintendent Finnigan presented the report for information. Trustee Leyson shared positive feedback from the Faith Team on recent initiatives, including school-based rosary celebrations and the impact of seminarian Andrew Sheedy's Ash Wednesday reflection. She commended the Faith Team for their work in supporting faith development across the division. Superintendent Finnigan noted the focus on supporting seminarians and their presence in schools, along with events like the Flying Fathers. Vice-Chair Watson thanked Superintendent Finnigan for organizing the recent joint school council session and acknowledged Alberta School Councils' Association involvement.

6.2. SECRETARY-TREASURER REPORT

Secretary-Treasurer Latka presented the report as information, highlighting the newly included projected variance column. She emphasized that the report contained a high level of detail and invited questions. Trustees sought clarification on the type of feedback being requested regarding school fees. Latka explained that preliminary feedback or direction was being sought prior to budget development, with the full report scheduled to return in April for approval. Trustees reviewed the fee template and expressed appreciation for the feedback opportunities provided to schools, principals, and school councils. Trustee Pasula reiterated the importance of ensuring equitable access to student activities, regardless of a family's financial situation, and advocated for a dedicated line item in the budget to support students who may be unable to pay. Vice-Chair Watson added that it would be helpful to confirm that school councils at each school have had the opportunity to review the fee information.

6.3. SYSTEM SERVICES REPORT

Associate Superintendent Ledene presented the report for information.

6.4. CURRICULUM AND INCLUSION REPORT

No report was provided for this item.

6.5. HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

Associate Superintendent Smith presented the report as information. It was noted that the

cost of psychological safety courses has increased significantly, and, while a discount was previously available, the discount is no longer offered. Smith explained that with limited funds available for teacher professional development, the low participation in the course could be attributed to cost rather than a lack of interest or value.

6.7. GrACE CHAMPIONS APRIL 2025

Superintendent Finnigan shared that RDCRS will be featured in the April GrACE Champions newsletter, highlighting this as a celebration of the division's work. It was suggested that the feature be forwarded to parish secretaries for inclusion in their bulletins.

6.6. TRUSTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES

- BOARD AND SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATIONS
 - Trustee Pasula informed trustees that the Board and Superintendent Evaluations Committee is in the process of identifying external firms to conduct the evaluations, with a recommendation anticipated in April.
- ALBERTA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION (ASBA)
 - Trustee Heistad shared that the ASBA highlights were distributed to trustees.
- ALBERTA CATHOLIC SCHOOL TRUSTEES ASSOCIATION (ACSTA)
 - Trustee Leyson shared that the Annual General Meeting Planning Committee meeting is scheduled for April 8, and the Board of Directors meeting will take place on May 27–28 in Leduc. She also shared that she will be unable to attend the Zone 4 Edwin Parr Awards scheduled on the same date.
- RURAL CAUCUS OF ALBERTA SCHOOL BOARDS
 - Trustee Heistad reported on informal discussions held at the Alberta Education Rural Symposium, which included topics such as student governance, classroom complexities, rural subsidies, and mental health. The conversations involved various leaders from the rural caucus. There is another meeting scheduled for June 2 prior to the spring meeting. It was also noted that the Superintendent, along with two trustees, attended the symposium—an event highlighted in the Superintendent's report—and that the sessions provided excellent professional development opportunities.
- CATHOLIC EDUCATION FOUNDATION
 - Trustee Pasula presented a written report, with a meeting date to be determined for reviewing proposals and setting the granting committee's budget. It was noted that applications have been sent out, and a request has

been received to utilize the foundation's raffle license for a project. The request will be reviewed at the upcoming meeting. Appreciation was expressed to the Superintendent for initiating the process in her role as a director of the foundation.

6.7. CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

No report was provided for this item.

6.8. UPCOMING EVENTS - Trustees reviewed upcoming events as presented.

Trustee Lonsdale read a closing prayer aloud. Vice-Chair Watson called for a break at 7:58 p.m.

103/25/24-07-Lonsdale

THAT THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES GO INTO CAMERA AT 8:13 P.M.

CARRIED.

03/25/24-08-Heistad

THAT THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MOVE OUT OF CAMERA AT 9:51 P.M.

CARRIED.

03/25/25-09-Lonsdale

THAT THE MEETING ADJOURN, THE TIME BEING 9:51 P.M.

CARRIED.

(CHAIR)

(SECRETARY-TREASURER)