



Jay Aspin, Chair

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Craig Myles, Director of Education

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The December 20, 2021 **Public Session Special Board Meeting** of the Near North District School Board was held via teleconference and videoconference.

**Trustees Present:**

Jay Aspin, Chair  
John Cochrane, Vice-Chair  
Al Bottomley  
Bill Steer  
Caren Gagne  
Donna Breault  
Louise Sargent  
Nichole King

**Administrative Staff Present:**

Craig Myles, Director of Education  
Gay Smylie, Superintendent of Education  
Josh Casey, Communication Coordinator  
Krista Messenger, Executive Assistant  
Melanie Gray, Superintendent of Education  
Seija Van Haesendonck, Superintendent of Business  
Tim Graves, Superintendent of Education

**Other:**

Media and community partners

**Trustee Regrets:**

Rob Learn  
Student Trustee C. Darling

**1.0 Call to Order**

Chair Aspin called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm.

**1.1 Land Acknowledgement**

Chair Aspin read the land acknowledgement aloud.

**1.2 Attendance**

Attendance indicated that eight trustees are present for the meeting.

**1.3 Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Nil.

**2.0 Approval of the Agenda**

Chair Aspin offered introductory remarks to note this meeting has been called as a Special Meeting of the Board, convened at the call of the Chair.

It is noted that Special Meetings are convened for a specific need, therefore only time-sensitive items have been included for discussion. It is confirmed that the board has met the regular notice period and material distribution means so trustees have received their

agenda package within the usual expected timeline, and it was posted to the website within the normal timelines for public review in advance of the meeting.

*Motion: 21-12-01, J. Cochrane/ A. Bottomley*

That the agenda for the Special Board meeting of December 20, 2021 be approved as presented. - **Carried.**

### **3.0 New Business**

#### **3.1 COVID-19 Management Update**

Chair Aspin provided introductory remarks to note a joint letter was received by the Board Chair and members of senior administration on behalf of all employee union partners. The letter was received on December 13<sup>th</sup> and called for staff to be provided with rapid antigen testing kits consistent with those dispatched to students over the holiday break. This request was reviewed and the options available to the Board were considered and discussed with the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit. Director Myles was to speak to this item. Highlights of the information presented are noted as:

- A quick note of thanks to trustees for taking time today to join this Special Meeting, and to Chair Aspin for recognizing the value in joining together.
- It is recognized that the Omicron variant is spreading very rapidly, with Ontario and Quebec recording the highest number of cases in recent days. Increased restrictions are expected over the holiday season
- NNDSB continues to prioritize the safety and well-being of staff and students. With how quickly things are shifting, administration wanted to ensure trustees were apprised of recent actions leading into the school winter break.
- As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, the possibility of a transition to remote learning remains. While NNDSB has received no indication from either the Ministry of Education or public health officials that schools will close, the board wanted to make sure it is prepared to facilitate a smooth transition to remote learning if directed to do so.
  - Out of an abundance of caution and to ensure families are prepared- communication was sent out late last week to confirm that learning materials would be sent home with students.
  - An invitation was also shared to gather information about the deployment of board-provided technology to access remote learning.
  - COVID-19 rapid antigen testing kits are also being sent home with all students for the winter break.
- All NNDSB students will have their kit sent home between Friday, Dec. 17 and Tuesday, Dec. 21, along with information about the testing program and instructions for using the kits. Students are not required to participate in order to return to the classroom after the winter break, although the testing is recommended by both the Ministry and our local health unit.
- The COVID-19 school and childcare screening tool has been updated to include a question regarding household members who tested positive on a rapid antigen test.
- When an individual tests positive on a rapid antigen test, any household members who are not fully vaccinated are also required to stay home while the individual seeks a confirmatory PCR test at a local testing centre.

- All Ontario schools are required to do an on-site confirmation of daily screening for the first two weeks after the winter break.
- Teachers will confirm with students each day during attendance that they have completed their screening before coming to school.
- To Chair Aspin's earlier point, NNDSB received a letter on behalf of all union partners requesting similar at-home testing supplies for staff.
- The ability for employees to conduct regular testing to control the spread of the virus is an important method to maintain safe schools.
- Union partners recognized how regular testing has been identified as a valuable tool by health experts to control the spread of the Covid virus.
- The senior team prioritized this request and began investigating possibilities.
- As a compromise, the board developed a plan to reimburse employees for a voluntary single rapid antigen test performed at a participating Shoppers Drug Mart in the 48-hour window prior to returning to work on January 5, 2022.
- This effort is complemented by the expansion of the government's enhanced testing strategy that was announced on Friday that makes take-home rapid tests available at select LCBO stores.
- NNDSB was encouraged to have heard back from union partners that this additional level of support will be comforting to many employees as the pandemic continues to cause high stress for everyone. OSSTF District 4 President responded with an acknowledgment for the positive solution under the circumstances, despite it not being ideal.

The floor was opened for questions, with the following rose:

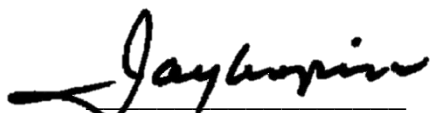
- Comment from Trustee Steer to note appreciation for the communication that has been shared with staff, families and students about plans moving into the break. It is noted that this is an example of the Board's strategic commitment to excellence in communication.
- Comment from Vice-Chair Cochrane to note the students and staff are the most important part of NNDSB. It is so encouraging that the board and the unions were able to work together and bring about this positive update.

Closing comments from Chair Aspin to note this represents clear evidence of how seriously the Board and senior administration takes the health and safety of staff and students. Trustees were thanked for their time to participate in the special meeting and receive these important updates.

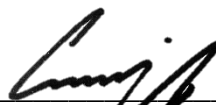
#### **4.0 Motion to Adjourn**

*Motion: 21-12-02, D. Breault / C. Gagne*

That we do now adjourn at 3:19 pm. – **Carried.**



Jay Aspin  
Chair



Craig Myles  
Director of Education

**RESOLUTION SUMMARY**

<b>21-12-01</b> J. Cochrane A. Bottomley	That the agenda for the Special Board meeting of December 20, 2021 be approved as presented. - <b>Carried.</b>
<b>21-12-02</b> D. Breault C. Gagne	That we do now adjourn at 3:19 pm. – <b>Carried.</b>