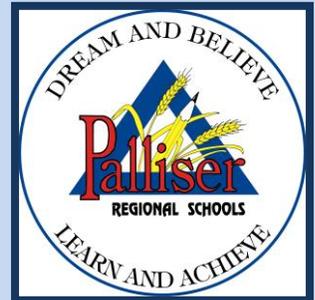


# From the Chair ...

## *Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting held Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2010*



- The board of trustees held its regular meeting at Arrowwood School, a small rural school serving children in the Siksika, Arrowwood, and Mossleigh area. Highlights included a number of presentations by students. Kayla Smith's Grade 1-2 students practised their public speaking with a dramatic presentation of Groundhog Day, and compelling arguments that sea lions are the best animals on earth and that bats get a bad rap. Heather Williams' Grade 3-4 students gave trustees copies of brochures they designed about their school. Shelley Davis Forman's Grade 5-6 students explained the process behind the creation of computer animated films about their family histories, and Grade 7-8 students led the trustees on a tour of the school.
- The board discussed the outcome of the arbitration hearing between the Alberta Teachers' Association and Alberta Education. That ruling, released last week, sided with the ATA and its claim that members should have received a 5.99 per cent pay increase this year, not 4.82 per cent. The difference of 1.16 per cent will be paid retroactively to the start of the school year. The dispute arose after Statistics Canada changed the formula it uses to determine the Alberta Average Weekly Earning Index, a measure Alberta Education and the ATA had agreed would be used to determine the annual pay increase. Although the ruling only applied to ATA and CUPE members, whose contract also uses the AAWE as a guide, Palliser's board voted unanimously to extend the 1.16 per cent pay increase to its non-union staff. The matter, trustees said, was one of fairness and equity to Palliser employees. The provincial budget released Tuesday did not include money to cover this increase to teachers, which provincially adds up to about \$23 million. In Palliser, the pay increase will cost approximately \$389,000 across the district for teachers; \$11,000 to CUPE members; and \$116,000 to non-union staff.
- Superintendent Kevin Gietz reported there is some discussion among Coaldale-area school councils of a desire for early dismissals on Fridays starting next year. The school council at Coalhurst Elementary has also expressed interest. The superintendent said he will be meeting with principals in the area after the February break to discuss Administrative Procedure 111, which outlines how to collect parent input in those communities to support any decision by the board to change the school calendar.
- Secretary-Treasurer Terry Kirkham told the board the ads for tenders for the Picture Butte High School modernization were published in the Lethbridge Herald Feb. 2 and Feb. 6 and contractors have been picking up packages on the construction project. A visit to the high school was held Feb. 8 at the school for any prospective bidders. The tendering process closes Feb. 24.
- Palliser District Principal Dan Ryder gave the board a report on reviews of Hutterian colony schools conducted between Oct. 22 and Dec. 3. Palliser regularly reviews its schools as a way to celebrate what schools are doing well and to identify areas of improvement. Administrators from other schools take part in the process. In the colony schools, students, parents, the teacher, learning assistants, the German teacher and colony minister were interviewed and surveyed for their thoughts about the

school and the quality of education. While the board received a broad overview of all the colony schools in a single report, colony-specific reports were also completed to be shared with the individual schools. There were 15 schools reviewed on colonies. A 16<sup>th</sup> colony school just opened earlier this school year. Some strengths identified in the review were the positive learning environment and the caring atmosphere at colony schools. In the months following the review, the principal and teachers will go over results, identify areas of concern and formulate strategies to address issues. The board receives a follow-up report later on the results. Associate Superintendent of Alternative Programs and Technology Dale Backlin, who worked with Ryder on the reviews, said he was grateful for the opportunity to visit many of the colonies within Palliser. He gained an appreciation of the differences between colonies, the respectful and engaging students he met and the distances Palliser staff travel to work at these schools. He thanked Dan Ryder for the effort involved in a school review of this scale.

- Master's Academy Principal Linda Dyck and Master's College Principal Derrick Mohamed provided the board a follow-up report to their school review conducted in spring 2009. Dyck, principal of the kindergarten through Grade 6 Academy, described the school review process as very affirming for herself and her teachers. She said when Master's was a private school, it was rare to have other educators visit the school to provide feedback on how the school was operating. The review process brought other Palliser administrators to Master's to meet with administration, teachers and students. The review process commended Master's Academy and College for their positive learning environment, individualized attention to student needs, and integration of technology. Recommendations at the elementary school level included improvements to facilities. Over the summer, the kindergarten to Grade 3 area was refurbished. At the high school level, the review recommended improving the transition for students entering the College at Grade 7. In response, Mohamed said he's started holding open-agenda meetings with parents of Grade 7 students. Master's CTS (Career and Technology Studies) programs focus on technology such as design and web animation. It does not offer shop class. Mohamed said he and Calgary Christian High School, another Palliser alternative program, have been having talks so students of one school can take CTS options at another, giving Calgary Christian students access to technology training at Master's, and Master's students access to the Calgary Christian shop classes. Chairman Don Zech thanked the Calgary administrators for their presentation.
- The Associate Superintendent of Learning Services Barbara Gammon reported approval has been granted under the Child Care Modular Initiative Grant for additional funding of \$66,000 to cover installation of three modulars near the CTS trailer at Vulcan County Central High School to house the day care now operating inside the school. Originally, the grant was approved for \$300,000 and special approval to proceed was required when the costs of installation came in higher than the originally approved amount. The installation is expected by Oct. 31, 2010.



Don Zech, Board Chair  
Palliser Regional Schools