

From: [Chantelle Desrosiers](#)
To: [Lise Bradshaw](#)
Subject: Fwd: Trustees, Guard Your Credibility
Date: Monday, October 2, 2023 9:37:46 PM

For correspondence.

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From: Laurie Bowen
Sent: Monday, October 2, 2023 7:08:11 PM
To: Lee-Ann Tiede <Lee-Ann.Tiede@sd23.bc.ca>; Julia Fraser <Julia.Fraser@sd23.bc.ca>; Wayne Broughton <Wayne.Broughton@sd23.bc.ca>; Chantelle Desrosiers <Chantelle.Desrosiers@sd23.bc.ca>; Amy Geistlinger <Amy.Geistlinger@sd23.bc.ca>; Valene Johnson <Valene.Johnson@sd23.bc.ca>; Lisa Guderyan <Lisa.Guderyan@sd23.bc.ca>
Subject: Trustees, Guard Your Credibility

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Dear Trustees,

At Wednesday's School Board meeting, some comments were made about the 1 Million March 4 Children, giving the impression that it was responsible for helping to precipitate a tragic event, by saying the tragic event was "probably connected to this (the march)". There was no explanation of what this tragic event was nor any evidence provided to support the linkage to the march. In light of this, it seems a weighty thing to lay at the foot of the march in the absence of any opportunity for a response. It goes against the very principles of the Magna Carta on which our democratic society was founded in that one of the key principles emanating from the Magna Carta is that if you lay an allegation against someone or a group of people, there is a duty to lay out the whole case and to allow the accused to have their say in response. This is natural justice.

In my mind, it does not really matter who made the comments as all of us are guilty at one time or another of transgressing this foundational principle – we don't like someone or some group, or we are feeling emotionally charged about something and we say things we cannot or do not back up with evidence or make accusations in the midst of situations that do not allow for the opportunity to back them up with evidence. In those cases, the accusations are left hanging whether or not they are proven true. This not only damages the reputation of those who may, in the end, be proven innocent, but it also erodes the credibility of the accuser in the eyes of their audience whether or not their hearers are consciously aware of it or not. It is bad enough when this kind of situation happens around the water cooler but much worse when it happens in a public forum by public servants who, as the Trustee Handbook says, "demonstrate a deep commitment to ... integrity, trust, and service to the community."

As trustees, your position is an extremely important one. You not only oversee and make decisions for a multi-million dollar enterprise but you serve as role models for those you lead. What you model in the areas of critical thinking, use of words, fair play, honesty, openness, and good government will set the tone for those you lead, especially the young leaders in the room.

Especially important is the practice of self-governance. In a public meeting, it is highly unlikely that your fellow trustees will call you out on a professional misdemeanor, especially if they are of

the caliber that seeks to honour one another. With limited opportunities for public input and feedback come limited opportunities for the public to hold trustees accountable. As such, self-governance becomes one of the highest forms of accountability.

During a number of school board meetings this past year, students have talked about the importance of recording their words and the impact that has. I bring this situation up not to accuse but to use it as an opportunity to remind all trustees about the power of words, to guard your words, to make them count, and to make them worthy of being recorded.

I wish each and every one of you the very best this next school year. You have a daunting and unenviable task therefore I pray for you regularly.

Blessings,

Laurie Bowen
