

**THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
CENTRAL OKANAGAN
SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 23**

CHAIRPERSON'S ANNUAL REPORT – December 9, 2015

Each year, the Chairperson of the Board of Education provides an Annual Report to the District, and to the larger community, on the events of the previous calendar year.

It is not an easy task to summarize an entire year in one brief report, and throughout the school year the Superintendent of Schools provides reports and updates on a regular basis, so this Chairperson's Report will just touch on some of the major accomplishments and challenges we have experienced in 2015.

With approximately 22,000 students and 3,000 staff members associated with our 43 schools, the Central Okanagan School District is a large and complex organization. We are the largest single employer within the Okanagan, with an annual budget of over \$220 million. As the 5th largest school district in the province, we are also one of the very few districts which is not experiencing significant declines in student enrolment.

As always, one of the major challenges we face is related to our budget. As all BC school districts have acknowledged, our provincial grants have not kept up with inflation. This is not a new problem, but it was compounded by an announcement by government that BC school districts must find \$29 million in our 2015/16 budget and a further \$25 million in the 2016/17 school year. The Central Okanagan School District's portion for this school year was \$1.1 million. This meant that the Board considered some options to increase revenue, such as increasing our intake of international students, and providing more services to other school districts, and made budget reductions throughout the system. The Finance and Legal Committee will soon begin considering next year's budget and once again there will be difficult recommendations coming to the Board.

The replacement of Rutland Middle and Glenmore Elementary, the building of new middle schools in Okanagan Mission and Lake Country, and the building of a Secondary School in the Glenmore area, remain on the Board's top five capital priorities. The timing and the order of these projects being approved is out of the Board's hands – the Ministry of Education makes those decisions, but we continue to promote the need for such capital projects.

In 2015, public consultation meetings and/or surveys were undertaken regarding French Immersion on the Westside, Grade Configuration in Rutland, and Lake Country Catchment Areas. The outcomes of those consultations are that the entire French Immersion Program is being reviewed, with a large Task Force looking at all options; Rutland schools are now configured with Elementary: K – Grade 5; Middle: Grades 6 – 8; and Secondary: Grades 9 – 12; and a decision on the Lake Country Catchment Areas is expected in January.

The Grand Opening of Mar Jok Elementary took place in February. It is worth noting that our newest school, Mar Jok, won a Tommie Gold Award for "Best Outside of the Box" design, while our oldest building still in use, Central, won a Heritage BC Award, for the refurbishing of all the windows and for doing so in keeping with the Heritage value of the building.

In June, the Superintendent reported that our Six Year Graduation Rate for the previous year had risen to 88.3%, with the Aboriginal Graduation Rate rising to 72.9%. While we celebrated these increases, we continue to ask ourselves why close to 10% of our students did not graduate and we will not be satisfied until our Aboriginal students graduate at the same rate as all students and that rate increases. We are still awaiting the latest graduation numbers from the Ministry, and hope that they continue to increase, but we need to consider how our students reach graduation and what we, as a district, can do to meet the needs of each student so that they can be successful.

As always, there is much to celebrate in our school district. While the Board often recognises outstanding staff members and students at our public meetings, we know that there are countless unsung heroes throughout the district - teachers, support staff and administrators who go the extra mile for the students in their care, and the students themselves who strive to be the best they can be, sometimes against great odds.

None of the things we celebrate could have been accomplished without our teachers, support staff, administrators and senior staff, as well parents and community members. Many of our employees work behind the scenes, keeping our 43 school sites in good working order; keeping our financial books straight; looking after payroll; and driving our school buses. Many of our staff members volunteer as well. Some coach our students, and give extra time to support them in a variety of different activities.

The Board appreciates the input received from our partner groups. The participation on committees and attendance at Board Meetings by representatives of the Central Okanagan Teachers' Association, the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3523, the Central Okanagan Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association, the District Student Council, and the Central Okanagan Parent Advisory Council is vital in helping the Board understand and hear everyone's point of view before making a decision. Thanks to all our partners for their work in supporting public education and the students we all serve.

The Government introduced changes to the School Act on July 1st 2015. One of the most significant changes was the elimination of School Planning Councils. The Board was proud of the process in our school district and valued the input from the SPCs at each school. As Parent Advisory Councils revert to their original role of advising on any matter, we need to discuss with COPAC how we can move forward and not lose sight of the vital role that parents need to play in helping set the goals for their schools.

We also appreciate the community partnerships that have grown over the years. Community members volunteer their services, provide funds for projects at schools, and generally show a great deal of support to our schools and our students.

I also wish to thank our senior staff and all employees for the exceptional work they do on behalf of our students each and every day. I should particularly mention the three staff members I have worked with most closely: the Superintendent, Secretary-Treasurer, and Assistant Superintendent, and their Executive Assistants, Mona Essler, Barb Bertram and Michelle DesRochers. Their support and advice is greatly appreciated.

Also, thank you to my fellow trustees for your commitment to the governance and oversight of our School District. You should be proud of your efforts on behalf of the students, parents, staff and community members of the Central Okanagan.

On behalf of the Board, we wish our retiring Superintendent, Hugh Gloster, all the best as he takes a new path in his journey of life. The Board has been extremely well-served by the leadership, compassion and thoughtfulness that Hugh has shown, not only during his 6 years as Superintendent of Schools/CEO, but during all of his 35 years in the school district.

In 2016, we look forward to working alongside our new Superintendent/CEO, Kevin Kaardal, as we strive to make a great school district even greater.

Respectfully submitted
Moyra Baxter
Chairperson, Board of Education
Central Okanagan
School District No. 23