

Trustee Pamela Gough's Update August 11, 2015

Welcome to this special summer edition of my Ward 3 update! I hope you are enjoying the marvelous summer weather. Believe it or not, the start of school is only four weeks away on Tuesday September 8th!

I worked for many years in education programs of the Royal Ontario Museum, where children learn through their innate ability to observe their surroundings and theorize meaning, in both art and the sciences. What a lot of fun it was to watch "stealth learning" take place as kids effortlessly absorbed the context of lessons in cultural history or science through visual observation and making or handling things!

The summer is the perfect time to get kids out of the house and engaged in "stealth learning" as they interact with the wide world around them. Every lake is a living lab, every forest an example of an intricate ecosystem, every lake wave pattern a lesson in physics. In Toronto we have a wealth of places where kids can get out and learn through experiences. Many of these experiences can be had for free. Read on for more.

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1. Labour update

Public school teachers have been without a contract for almost a year. In the wake of new legislation in 2014, Ontario now for the first time has a two-tiered bargaining process, often called central and local bargaining. The main issues of salary, benefits and paid leaves are negotiated on a province-wide basis at the central table. Issues of a more minor matter, unique to each board, are negotiated locally. The central table is the major one.

Talks have not been moving along over the summer. All teachers in the English public boards in Ontario are in a legal strike position. On July 14, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) gave notice that province-wide strike action would begin on July 20. At the moment, this strike is limited to teachers not participating in extracurricular activities. At the elementary level, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) began a partial withdrawal of service as a form of strike action on May 11. Teachers carried out their teaching duties until the end of the school year but withdrew from administrative duties, such as preparing report card comments.

The second phase of the ETFO strike action began on June 1. Teachers did not participate in any grade-to-grade transition meetings, and withdrew from a number of activities related to attending meetings and booking field trips for the upcoming year.

With the new school year a few weeks away, central bargaining has ground to a halt despite the Premier's intervention on July 24. Although talks could resume at any time, sadly there is a distinct possibility that the new school year will begin without a settlement, meaning further actions may be taken on the part of the unions. For more information see www.opsba.org

2. New chair of TDSB board of trustees

Shaun Chen, the chair of the TDSB, has resigned his position as chair in order to run federally in his Scarborough riding. A new chair will be chosen soon. So far, the only candidate who has expressed interest is Trustee Robin Pilkey of Parkdale-High Park. In the meantime, vice-chair Sheila Cary-Meagher is the acting chair of the board.

3. Solar collectors being installed on school roofs

Some time ago, TDSB entered into a Feed-In Tariff (FIT) partnership with a private company which has resulted in a large number of much-needed roof replacements being done at no cost to the board in exchange for the use of school roofs for solar arrays. Norseman now has its solar panels in place, generating energy on its roof. Soon to follow are Lanor, Lakeshore Collegiate, ESA and Lambton-Kingsway. These solar panels will provide students with an exciting demonstration of the TDSB's commitment to sustainability on its campuses, as well as saving the public hundreds of thousands of dollars in roofing costs.

4. Report cards now out - free CNE passes available

Elementary teachers took part in a form of strike action in June that affected report cards. Marks were submitted non-electronically instead of in the usual electronic format. This required a tremendous amount of manual data inputting on the part of principals and senior administrative staff, and I'd like to express my sincere thanks to Superintendent Jane Phillips-Long and all the principals in Ward 3 and beyond who worked so hard getting the elementary report cards ready to be mailed out by mid-July this year.

Across the GTA, the TDSB led the way in its decision to put out marks-only report cards despite this year's major impediments, and the other boards, who were only going to do letters of placement, eventually followed - some boards just put their report cards out last week.

Usually each elementary child receives a free Kid's Pass to the CNE with the report card. Because of the unusual circumstances this year, many children did not receive their passes.

If your child (aged 5 to 13 years) did NOT receive a Kid's Pass to the CNE, please email community@theex.com and the CNE will email you a PDF version of the pass upon verifying some information. One pass will be issued per child, and the pass will admit the child for free. Children 4 and under get into the CNE for free and don't need a pass.

5. Summer outings: free fun and learning

The Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport is offering free passes for children, when accompanied by a paying adult, to major Ontario cultural and scientific attractions such as the ROM, the AGO, the McMichael Art Collection, Discovery Harbour, Royal Botanical Garden, and the Ontario Science Centre. You can get your pass online at www.ontariofunpass.com

The Toronto Public Library system also gives out free family passes to many educational venues such as the Aga Khan Museum, the Toronto Zoo, the Ontario Science Centre, the ROM, the AGO, and Black Creek Pioneer Village. Check out the Museum + Arts Pass information page on the library's website: www.torontopubliclibrary.ca

6. James S. Bell playing fields upgrades

Since becoming a Sports and Wellness Academy, James S. Bell Junior Middle School has embarked on an ambitious plan to upgrade its outdoor sports and playground facilities. The school community, along with principal John Curry and staff, designed a three-year, three phase improvement project that will see the old playground equipment upgraded, the cracked and heaving pavement redone, the soggy field graded and properly drained, and a new track and basketball court.

I am very pleased to announce that the TDSB is supporting this project with \$94,000 for the first phase and \$183,000 for the second and third phases. Last year, thanks to Councillor Mark Grimes, the City of Toronto committed to providing \$105,000 of Section 37 funds for the track. The new outdoor sports facilities at James S. Bell will be a valuable asset to the both the school and the surrounding Long Branch community on a year-round basis.

7. TDSB capital priority projects: business cases submitted

In mid-July, the TDSB submitted business cases to the Ministry of Education for all the capital priority projects it is requesting support for this year. As one of eight capital priority projects across the board, Norseman is on the list for a much-needed addition to alleviate its extreme overcrowding. You can download the business case [here](#).

For more education news, go to my [website](#) or follow me on Twitter @pamelagough! I welcome feedback.