

DATE: September 7, 2021

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Board Chair Estabrooks

SUBJECT: Motion re Formation of a Committee for Division-wide Review of all Edmonton Public School Names

REFERENCE: [Trustees' Handbook – Section 5.2.2 – Notices of Motion](#)
[Motion re: New Board Policy for the Renaming of Schools](#)
[Motion re: Renaming of Dan Knott and Oliver Schools](#)
[EA.BP Infrastructure Planning Principles](#)
[EF. AR Naming of Schools](#)
[EFA.AR Public Recognition and Naming of Physical Spaces or Educational Programs](#)

ISSUE

Board Chair Estabrooks served notice of motion at the June 22, 2021, Board meeting.

BACKGROUND

Edmonton Public Schools is the second largest school division in Alberta. We serve more than 106,000 students, many of whom are Black, Indigenous or Students of Colour. The reality is that our school names do not reflect our Division's amazing diversity.

In 2017, the Board of Trustees passed a motion to research and create a policy setting out the conditions under which a school would be renamed and the process for doing so. The work on this was deferred to the Policy Committee, who, in conversation with the entire Board of Trustees, ultimately decided to not proceed with a renaming policy at that time.

Since then, calls from those we represent to rename specific schools in our Division have increased. There have been and continue to be significant and important societal shifts and wide-spread recognition that the names on many buildings, neighbourhoods, sports teams, mountains and universities are perpetuating racism and are no longer appropriate. In addition, our Board as well as our Administration have taken and will continue to take significant steps to become a more anti-racist school division. In September 2020, the Board of Trustees, after receiving a student-led petition, unanimously passed a motion to rename Dan Knott School. This motion also included renaming Oliver School.

While the motion to rename two schools in our Division was important, a more coordinated and comprehensive approach on renaming schools, one that works closely with community, is required.

A possible model for reviewing names may be the one being used by the [Toronto District School Board](#). The proposed motion includes forming a committee made up of students, parents, staff, community members, Trustees and individuals involved in anti-racism work. If this motion passes, the goal of the committee will be to make recommendations on how to conduct a Division-wide review of all EPSB school names as well as help inform a renaming policy for Edmonton Public Schools.

The renaming of schools is an important part of becoming a more anti-racist and equitable school division. Students must be able to see themselves reflected in the namesakes of our schools. And while considerable effort has been made in the past decade to name schools after Edmontonians who reflect our city's diversity, merely adding names to new schools is not sufficient. Rather, we must review the names of all of our schools to determine if they are consistent with the values of Edmonton Public Schools and in keeping with the recently passed [Anti-racism and Equity Board Policy](#), our commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation commission, our [Board policy on First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education](#) and our [Board statement on anti-Black racism and inclusion](#).

Naming a school after someone is the highest honour the Board of Trustees can bestow upon an individual. Let's ensure that the honour is still appropriate so that our students can walk through the doors of our schools feeling inspired, proud to be part of their school communities and feel a sense of belonging.

RELATED FACTS

- The Board began work on a renaming policy in 2017, but decided to discontinue the project.
- In September 2020, the Board of Trustees, after receiving a student-led petition, unanimously passed a motion to rename Dan Knott School. This motion also included renaming Oliver School.
- A more coordinated and comprehensive approach on renaming schools, one that works closely with community, is required.
- Creating a renaming policy is another step towards becoming a more anti-racist school division.

RECOMMENDATION

Given that:

- **Edmonton Public Schools has 212 schools and that school names are a chance to teach students about their community's history and leaders; and**
- **few schools are named after Indigenous, Black or People of Colour individuals; and**
- **some school names are named after people with a racist legacy; and**
- **EA.BP Infrastructure Planning Principles, of which naming of schools is mentioned, is up for review in 2022,**

Be it moved that:

A special committee made up of students, parents, staff, community members, two Trustees and individuals involved in anti-racism work be formed to propose a process for school renaming and a process for a Division-wide review of all Edmonton Public Schools.

OPTIONS

1. Approve the recommendation.
2. Provide feedback and request changes to the recommendation for approval.

NEXT STEPS

Pending approval of the recommendation, this motion should be forwarded to the Board of Trustees Policy Review Committee appointed on October 26, 2021, to oversee the selection of committee members and chart the path forward for amendments to the school naming policy and name review process. The committee's report will help inform the renaming policy for Edmonton Public Schools.

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