

Halifax District PTA
Minutes of Meeting
March 22, 1999

Present:	John Sparling	Burton Ettinger
	Millie Leighton	J.W. MacLeod/F.T.Schools
	Ron Buhner	Burton Ettinger
	Debbie Hum	Grosvenor Wentworth/Clayton Park Jr High/ Halifax West
	Karen Robinson	Clayton Park Jr High/Rockingham
Elementary	Gerald Muise	Department of Education
	Ted Keddy	Department of Education
	Pam Gasparetto	Halifax West
	Bev McDonald	Ecole Beaufort / Fine Arts Parents
Assoc	Peter Crowell	Grosvenor Wentworth
	Pat Rhodenizer	Rockingham Elementary
	Craig Morrison	
	Dick Tilley	Tower Road Elementary
	Cheryl Kozey	Saint Agnes

Business:

Honours Courses - The new directives do not seem to agree with any written Goal Statements. We are requesting an explanation of the process and a rationale.

Letters have been written from the District PTA to the Chair of the Halifax Regional School Board and to the Minister of Education. Copies of these letters along with a copy of the Department of Education's Interim Policy Guideline have been faxed to Jr High PTA Presidents.

Ellen O'Connell called Cheryl to say that she understood our concerns and that she would be bring the matter to her party at their next meeting and report back to us. Dick spoke with Peter Deletes who expressed interest and support. Another call came from Gerry Fogarty who expressed himself as not very pleased with the situation.

Mike Crosbie, PTA President of Halifax West High School, has set up a meeting for March 31 in the A V Room of Halifax West High School between The PTA's of Halifax West and Clayton Park Jr High, Tom Ritch of the Department of Education and Stella Campbell, Chair of the Regional School Board.

At the last HRSB meeting, the board was persuaded to pass a motion in support of Honours Programs. Department of Education representatives say that this is a Ministerial decision. The N. S. Universities Association has vowed to take on the Province as well.

In response to a question about the International Baccalaureate Program, it was explained that QEH has applied for this program and that it will be another two years before it will be available to a select number of grade 11 and 12 students. Usually students are prepared for this program in grades 9 & 10 but this will not be the case at QEH. This program will be available to a maximum of 25 students across all grades. Implementation is a long drawn out process that takes about four years. It is an all inclusive program and requires full dedication on the part of the students. The present honours program allows students to enrich their study of one or more subjects depending only on interest and aptitude.

CASEL RESIGNS: John Sparling reported that CASEL resigned from the Product Evaluation Committee citing concerns with the process. It is suggested that The HDPTA write a letter to the school board expressing support for CASEL, concern over their resignation and calling for an investigation. John to draft the letter and submit it for approval.

Next Meeting: April 19th. School Board members representing the former city have been invited to attend. Suggested topics for discussion are the honours program and budget considerations, with focus on supplementary funding and projected deficits.

General Meeting

Presentation by Mr. Gerald Muise
Department of Education

Mr. Muise has had a long career in the field of Occupational Health and Safety. He started out working for the Department of Labour and spent a number of years travelling the province. Occupational Health and Safety covered all government installations and schools as well as labour and industry. He was made a Chief Inspector in 1985. He later worked with supply and services and then went to the Annapolis Valley to work with their School Board. In November 1998, Mr. Muise moved to the N S Department of Education and Culture.

Mr. Muise explained that the Province is very concerned with air quality in the schools and is providing every school board with testing equipment and attempting to establish acceptable base level standards that every school should meet.

The goal is to bring levels of undesirable components As Low As Reasonably Possible. There is nothing to compel the school board to carry out tests in the schools or to avail themselves of Mr. Muise's expertise. He will give advice when requested but his department does not have any money to offer or the power to legislate a clean-up. Parents with a concern are advised to go to their school's principal and ask him to take the problem to the School Board.

One positive change in the approach to air quality problems is the lessening of dependence on air quality testing to confirm that there are

problems with air quality. As Mr. Muise said, if people are feeling unwell in a building and you can see mould or the source of an unpleasant odour or are aware of poor air movement the intelligent approach is to remove the offending matter and not waste resources on tests.

As heartening as these developments may be, it is unfortunate that there are no legislated standards. Something to aim for.