



Eastern Ontario and Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Units Chief Medical Officers of Health

Chief Medical Officers of Health for the Eastern Ontario and Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Units spoke to the Board of Trustees and provided an update. CDSBEO Director of Education Laurie Corrigan introduced Dr. Paul Roumeliotis and Dr. Linna Li, who lead the region's two health units.

"They're journey with us has been historic, and their wisdom has been most welcome, and I would like to thank them for the work they have undertaken through some of the most challenging years of our history," noted Director Corrigan.

Dr. Roumeliotis thanked the Board and expressed the commitment of the health units to support schools in an ongoing capacity. While the school year has been relatively unaffected by COVID, he noted that influenza and RSV were the primary causes for school absenteeism in the fall and winter months. Dr. Roumeliotis also explained that the health units are now working to have students caught up on routine vaccinations and also supporting student mental health.

"As you know we have had school nurses, 12 in our area which were assigned to the schools... Those 12 nurses have helped us a lot with supporting the schools, vaccinating, and catching up on the routine primary series vaccinations. These nurses have had an essential role in our ability to support schools, and we are advocating for their funding to continue, as it is set to expire in June."

Dr. Li also noted that the Leeds, Grenville & District Health Unit is currently focusing on supporting and expanding programs for the community and in schools around mental wellness, sleep, screen use, substance use, and substance use prevention around alcohol, tobacco, and vaping.

"I want to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Roumeliotis and Dr. Li for sharing an update with us this evening. We appreciate the time you've taken to keep us informed and we look forward to your ongoing partnership," concluded Chair Wilson.

Equity, Inclusion and Diversity at CDSBEO

Over the past seven years, CDSBEO has focused on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in a variety of ways to remove barriers, provide appropriate supports and resources, and support the ongoing process of acceptance and belonging, and system-wide staff professional development sessions took place over a period of four years. In August 2021, the Ontario government published "Building a Strong Foundation for Success," which provides continued ministry emphasis on removing barriers and addressing racism and inequity in schools.



Renée Rozon, Principal of Religious and Family Life Education, Equity and Inclusion, along with Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisor Danica Vidotto, and Superintendent of School Effectiveness Norma McDonald, presented details on the CDSBEO EDI initiatives to the Board of Trustees.

Beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisor Dr. Danica Vidotto, was onboarded to review policy, build capacity around EDI, and support the creation of an EDI Action Plan and Equity Advisory Committee. Dr. Vidotto identified five pillars to the work in her role including: building relationships with staff, supporting policy development and formal equity practices, addressing human rights processes, supporting capacity building, and utilizing research and data to develop equity practices.

"I am currently working in collaboration with every department to develop the Board's first Equity Action Plan which will provide specific actions, goals, and measuring and monitoring tools."

Principal Rozon noted that the Religious and Family Life Education and Equity and Inclusion Department works closely with the Indigenous Education, Curriculum, Special Education, and Communications departments to ensure there is proper faith content in all offerings.

"Examples of this work includes a committee for resources, the selection of guest speakers, and planning of important themes and events that take place throughout the school year."

Additionally, the Indigenous Education Department provides learning opportunities focused on truth, reconciliation, celebrating culture, and tradition to all students. Indigenous supports are also provided including tutoring, cultural support, academic guidance, and graduate coaching.

"For the next three years, the CDSBEO Indigenous Education Theme is "Stepping into Right Relationships." The theme's focus is on developing relationships, respect, and reciprocity with Indigenous peoples, their communities, and the natural environment," explained Superintendent McDonald.

Chair Wilson expressed her gratitude, "Thank you so much for your presentation this evening. To be able to see how this work will break down barriers and ensure that everyone belongs here is certainly a blessing. I look forward to hearing more about our progress next year."

Student Refugee Supports

In response to new refugee families arriving to the Board region, the CDSBEO has allocated resources and staff to facilitate welcoming registrations from newcomer families to schools in our Board. The City of Cornwall has been part of a two-year regional immigration pilot project for people looking to become permanent residents.



Superintendent of School Effectiveness Norma McDonald presented details on the newcomer families within CDSBEO schools to the Board of Trustees.

"The Ottawa-Cornwall and Kingston Archdioceses have been actively supporting refugee families since Pope Francis called on all Catholic parishes to make a commitment to sponsor refugee families in 2015. Parishes sign agreements with the Government of Canada to help support refugees when they come to Canada. As an example, St Peter's Parish in Cornwall has been engaged in refugee sponsorship since 2015," noted Superintendent McDonald.

A number of supports have been put in place in CDSBEO schools including the provision of immediate needs and learning needs through access to student support workers, mental health counsellors, English language learning supports, teaching and central consultant support. In total, the Board has welcomed 43 newly registered students at four schools.

"I would like to thank Superintendent McDonald for sharing information on these new student refugees who are coming into our schools. It is certainly a blessing for them, but it is also a blessing for our students and school communities who have an opportunity to learn from other children, from other countries," concluded Chair Wilson.