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Jules

January 24, 2012

I appreciate the confidence and support you have placed in me in serving you for another year as your Chair. I very much enjoy the privilege of working again with Bev and Bruce, our senior administrative team and you the board of trustees for Bruce-Grey Catholic.

Our strength and success as a school board stems from our willingness to work together as a highly-functioning team and from our positive relationships both individually and collectively with each other. We enjoy excellent relationships with our director and senior admin team, our principals, teachers, support staff and office staff.

We work together with solidarity in our school purpose and common ground to promote excellence in student achievement and well-being in our students' holistic development - physically, mentally, emotionally, socially and spiritually. (Mind-Body-Spirit). We are truly a school board who is constantly striving for excellence in all areas. The Japanese have a word "Kaizen" which stands for "constant and never-ending improvement" and I think this concept also applies to all of us. Our students are our reason for our existence as a school board and their growth must always be first and foremost in all our deliberations, discussions, and policy formation. Our meetings are always carried out in an atmosphere of mutual respect for each other which in turn generates trust in each other.

We are starting our 5th year of our Strategic Plan which has given us guidance and direction over the past 4 years based on the 4 pillars of the plan – Catholicity, Effective Learning Environments, Organizational Culture and Effective Communications. These 4 energetic, synergistic and creative groups continue to function as complementary teams and continue to grow and evolve within seamless boundaries.

Along with all other school boards in the province we are awaiting the government response to the 400 recommendations of the Drummond Report. This Ontario Review calls for deep cuts in the budgets of all public sectors including health and education for the next 5-7 years. The recent news releases have stated "Nothing and no one will be spared and the public should brace itself for bitter medicine" to meet the goal of a balanced budget for 2017-18. We will face these challenges together and will diligently strive to maintain our current level of delivery. However, this is a time of restraint and not the time to embark on costly ventures. It will be a time to refine and consolidate existing priorities and ensure the continuance of existing programs. It will also be a time to seek out new partnerships to reduce costs and mutually benefit our students.

We are buoyed by the success and positive response to our full day JK-SK programs which have been implemented at Holy Family School in Hanover,

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Saugeen First Nation
Randal Roote

Sacred School in Mildmay, Sacred Heart Teeswater and St. Basil's School in Owen Sound. We are optimistically hoping that despite financial restraints the government will consider Early Learning a priority. Consequently, we plan to implement and extend all-day JK/SK programs this year at St. Joseph's School in Port Elgin, St. Peter and St. Paul's School in Durham and Mother Teresa's School in Walkerton.

In August of 2012 all collective agreements will come up for review. We entrust our employee negotiations to Suzanne White, our Human Resources Assistant to the Director, and Cathy Colton, our Superintendent of Business to conduct negotiations under the direction of our Director, Bruce MacPherson. Cathy and Suzanne have successfully negotiated new contracts in the past and both possess exceptional public relations and interpersonal skills and are highly competent and respected in our board. We are confident that they will reach fair and equitable settlements with our staff.

Our year of fiscal restraint is a good time to discuss options for providing student excursions which provide excellent experiences for our students at more reasonable costs. Our Director, principals and school councils are presently exploring options in this regard since they are experiencing greater difficulties in fund-raising for grade 8 graduation trips.

We want this year to be a year of exploring leadership opportunities for our secondary school students and to consult and collaborate with them in regard to their perceptions of our Catholic schools and how we can better meet their needs. These are our future supporters of our Catholic schools and their viewpoints are respected and valued.

Together we are making a difference in Catholic education in Bruce Grey and the province of Ontario. By continuing to work together for the betterment of student achievement and well-being of all our students and to the realization of their fullest potential and with continued dedication and commitment to Catholic education we will most certainly meet any and all challenges the year 2012 and beyond may bring.

Thank you and may God bless all of you.

Norm Bethune