

BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

September 14, 2021

For Immediate Release

NGPS Trustee Anita Portsmouth resigns

Ms. Portsmouth expressed sincere appreciation for her fellow trustees, the Division, and her school community, announcing that she would be resigning in her position as Trustee representing Valleyview Rural, effective immediately.

The Board and Division sincerely thank Ms. Portsmouth for her contributions, her commitment and her advocacy for students over her term.

Locally Developed Courses

The Board approved the Division's use of the following Locally Developed Courses from the Alexis Band:

- *Nakoda/Nakoda Language*
- *Culture 12Y (2021) 15, 25 and 35*

Provincial and School Division Responsibilities Re: Health Mandate

Trustee Steinke expressed his frustration and disappointment in the provincial government for leaving the responsibilities of health measures to local school boards.

Motion 4486-21: That the Board, by way of letter, communicate to both the Premier and Education Minister that the Board of Trustees of Northern Gateway Public School Division fundamentally disagrees with school boards being given decision making opportunities to set local COVID 19 management practices that differ from provincial rules.

Motion carried.

Masking Presentations from Community Members

The Board heard presentations from seven different delegations of community members regarding the Division's decision to implement [common space masking in NGPS schools](#).

The presentations were in protest to the Division's decision to implement common space masking, citing concerns with mask use and policy. The complete recordings of the

morning session (parent presentations) and afternoon session (board and administration discussion and Motion) can be viewed on [NGTV's YouTube channel](#).

Masking Discussion

Following the delegate presentations, the Board discussed the feedback and information received. Trustees shared the views and concerns of their school communities.

NGPS Superintendent Kevin Bird spoke to the Division's decision:

"The decision comes in response to rising case numbers in our local communities and the Government of Alberta's announcement from September 4 regarding mandatory masking in all indoor public spaces. We want to keep students and staff in school as much as possible. With the Government's new measures, and rising case numbers, common space masking in areas of natural congestion, like hallways, is a balanced precautionary measure we can take to keep school communities healthy and keep schools open, with as little impact to teaching and learning as possible."

Another aspect to keeping students in school and schools open revolves around staffing, Bird added:

"We have far fewer staff than students and the impact on learning can be significant if staff are ill. Three staff ill and away in a small school can quickly transform into an online learning scenario for classes or the school. I stand behind the measures we've introduced, and I'm prepared to dial it back at any time that it should become appropriate."

Following the discussion, Trustee Steinke moved:

Motion 4487-21: That Northern Gateway Public Schools not require mask wearing in schools in alignment with provincial medical advice. Further the Board requires that schools honour those who choose to wear masks.

Motion defeated.

The Board empathizes with all of our students, staff and families who have concerns about safety measures and sincerely appreciates the engagement and efforts of parents who attended our meeting today. However, given the province's pandemic status, rising numbers in our local communities, rising numbers of school outbreaks province-wide, and the direction of NGPS Administration, common space masking in schools for all students and staff will continue at this time.



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Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled to be virtual, on **October 5, 2021**, commencing at **10:00 a.m.** Members of the public are invited to watch the Meeting live on our YouTube channel, [NGTV](#).

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