

PA days cut at elementary level

Apr 23. 1979

The number of professional activity days per school year proved to be a bone of contention at the regular meeting of the Cochrane-Iroquois Falls Board of Education meeting, Monday, April 23.

In consultation with principals, Superintendent of Schools, R.G. Michon, presented the trustees, on both the secondary and elementary panel, with a list of 12 days scheduled to be professional development days, subject to board approval.

A professional activity day is an umbrella term that covers a number of activities for teachers including professional development days.

A professional development day involves teachers in professional activities that will help them grow as teachers.

Michon explained that the Ministry of Education states that there shall be 197 school days in any given school year and a minimum of 185 shall be instructional days. The rest can be used as professional activity days.

However, this does not mean that these 12 days have to be used in that way, just that they can be.

In discussing the professional activity days for the secondary schools and schools for the trainable retarded children, Trustee Lawrence Cutten, said that the board was one of the few boards in the province that had that many days.

The 12 scheduled days were passed by the full board.

However, at the elementary level, the motion scheduling 12 professional activity days for the 1979-80 school year was not passed.

After a lengthy discussion regarding the need for 12 days, Cutten added an amendment to the motion, recommending that there be only 10 professional activity days in the upcoming school year. This motion was seconded by Clarke.

"We're using the maximum and minimum numbers of days and to me that seems wrong. Some days are necessary so that staff can update, but I can't go along with all these days."

The public sees them only as a holiday for the staff and as a day the kids are off school," said Cutten.

Michon replied that he agreed with the point Cutten was making. But he added that these days were not a holiday for staff and they were required to attend these days.

"We can either enhance or hinder the implementation and development of the curriculum. We don't have consultants in the board area, so we have to use our professional development days to implement our curriculum," said Michon.

"We need 12 days and we are honest in asking for the number of days needed," he added.

Norma Barnes, trustee for Matheson, said she was concerned that professional activity days were too much of a blanket thing. She added that she has attended one or two of these sessions.

"I feel ten is generous, too generous. I'd rather see two or three teachers getting together to discuss specifics," she said.

The amendment was passed by the board by a vote of four for, two against and one abstention.

The vote on which days should be allotted as professional activity days is to be held at the next meeting as Michon said he would have to consult the principals involved to see which days could be cut with the least amount of disruption to the planned curriculum discussions.

Director of Education, D.D.

Powell, was instructed at the meeting to phone the Ministry of Education office in North Bay to let them know the list of the board's professional activity days would be late. The Ministry has requested that all boards file this list with them by April 27.

The board's final list for the elementary panel will not come up for discussion and board approval until the next board meeting which is May 14 at Joseph F. Kennedy School in Matheson.

- May 2/79

Review decision asks BR-M

Black River-Matheson council feels Monteith Public School should be closed along with Shillington Public School at the end of the present term.

This they say would save tax money, and save students two school moves in two years.

In a letter sent to W. T. Phillips, chairman of the Cochrane-Iroquois Falls Board of Education, the council asked what the estimated costs of the necessary repairs to Monteith School would be.

The council also wondered "at the justification for all the Public School supporters of the Board's area, to pay these costs out of their tax dollars when the Board is seriously considering closure of the Monteith School."

Reeve of the township, Michel Therrien, said he didn't see the point of doing these repairs if the school was only going to be open for one more year. The council also asked if the board has

"established a long range forecast on the enrolment and projected enrolment, so as to utilize the larger schools to their fullest."

Therrien said the council was concerned over the closing of Monteith after another year, because for some students this would mean a second transfer of schools in two years.

The council has requested that the board reconsider its decision to keep Monteith Public School open for one more year and that it be closed at the end of the present term along with Shillington Public School.

"This action would save several students from two moves in two years and the taxpayers the expense of the repairs to the Monteith School," stated the council's letter.

Chairman of the Board of Education, W. T. Phillips, said he had no comment on the council's letter at this time.

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