

## Ministik Meeting, February 15, 2017 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Dennis Dykau: Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I would like to welcome you to the second public meeting for Ministik School and we are very pleased so many of you are here this evening. You may remember me from last week, but I'll repeat my name, it's Dennis Dykau, and I'm the Corporate Secretary for Elk Island Public Schools, and I will be facilitating this evenings program, the various presentations in the first part of the meeting, as well as the second half of the meeting as well.

I'm going to actually begin by speaking a bit about last Tuesday's meeting. Let's be very honest, that meeting was disappointing for all of us for various reasons, and I'm not here to make any sorts of excuses. You expected answers from us, and we were trying to find out your concerns so we could respond. We did receive some questions before the meeting which we were prepared to answer. And these are now posted on the website under what's called Document A. In addition to that document we posted answers to questions that were brought forward to that meeting. Answers to questions we received specifically, that were specifically requested to be posted. And answers that were raised this past week. You have told us in emails and letters that you wanted answers. And tonight we will provide you with presentations that address your concerns.

Unfortunately last week, I didn't outline the role of our Trustees at the meeting and I apologize and take full ownership of that omission. The Trustees' role is, they are here to listen and to hear your view points. They are not here to respond, as they need to be objective and look at this situation from many perspectives. Last week, all nine of our Trustees were in attendance and this week we have five of our Trustees who are present—and I do note—pardon me six Trustees are present and, and one of our Trustees I believe is on her way as well.

I would like to clarify that the Trustees do receive all of your letters and all of your comments. They have access to all of the information that you do on the website, which as you probably well know is updated on a regular basis—sometimes several times a day.

Tonight, the minutes of this meeting are being taken, just as they were last week. And they will be posted on the website when they are available. In addition, the presenters tonight will be using a PowerPoint, which will also be posted online, and it's my understanding that it might be available right now. I will apologize, as unfortunately a few of those slides contain a great deal of data, which you have requested, and they may be difficult to read. So if you have a handheld device with you, you may be able to follow along right now, or later on by viewing the information full screen at home.

The presentation will be very comprehensive, as you have asked for some very detailed information. We are being responsive to your concerns, and we do ask that you listen to the presenters and that you save your questions or comments for later this evening—when you

have that opportunity. The presentations will include information on: how we got here, staffing, educational issues, budget concerns, transportation, facilities and the next steps.

I will be closing the first session with some brief instructions for the second part and then we'll have a short break, followed by public comments, which will end at 8:30.

Finally, we all recognize that this is a very emotional time for you, as you are here because of your concerns for your children and for this school. We respect you and we respect that a great deal, as you are dealing with all of this. I know that many of you have spent countless hours on committees and in meetings preparing and providing information and questions for us. Your passion is very apparent and it is our sincere hope that tonight we can answer some of your concerns. Now before I provide a little bit more information about tonight it is my pleasure to call upon Pauline Gurnett. (audience applauds)

Pauline: Thank you, first of all, for those of you at the door that didn't sign in, don't forget to sign in so they have record that you were all here. It's wonderful how many people have showed up tonight again. I do want to thank you Trustees for coming out and making the effort to listen, we really appreciate that and the amount of you that are here that's fantastic. Estefania couldn't come tonight, our MLA, but she did bring two people who are representing her, so thank you as well. I believe that Bonnie Riddell is here. She did show up, thank you...just to listen to us. And the Elk Island admin, thank you all for coming to be able to present to us and to be able to answer our questions. I hope that it's productive for everybody. It is my request that you guys let them present without having our comments during their presentations. If we could just write them down, put them in your phone so you don't forget and address it when they are done—and that would be all for right now. (audience applauds)

Dennis: Thank you so much Pauline. Now I would like to call upon our first presenter Superintendent Liguori. (audience applauds)

Mark Liguori: So good evening parents, community members, Trustees and staff. Thank you very much for attending our second evening. We do appreciate it and we want to listen to your concerns. I would also like to again acknowledge and thank Pauline, Dianna and the committees for their tireless work that they have done on behalf of the Ministik community, as well as meeting with us. I would like to begin my presentation by simply stating this, for some, if not many, we will not be in agreement in what is being presented nor said this evening. What is important though, is that we accept the point of view from which it is given as well as the perspective. With this in mind, it provides the opening for my part of the presentation this evening.

All of you understand the technicalities behind why we are here this evening and for the past two nights. A notice of motion was served by a trustee on November 24, 2016. It's important to note that any trustee at any time may serve a notice of motion that they deem to have importance. On December 15, 2016, the Board received a preliminary report on Ministik School and, in addition, approved a motion to consider the closure of Ministik School.

Many people have felt or believe that the reason Ministik is being considered for closure is the condition of the portables or believe that the motion dealt solely with this issue. There has also been confusion with the message from the Division that we are undertaking this significant step due to budget concerns.

The motion that was put forth to the Board simply states “the information that we have received clearly shows that the modulators at Ministik School need to be replaced, and I see that our administration has put in a request to have them replaced. I feel, that as an elected body that has a fiduciary responsibility to spend tax payers’ money wisely. Replacing the modulators is not money well spent. We would be spending in excess of one million dollars to dispose of the old modulators and replace them. We could wait and have the request for these modular turned down by the province and then we wouldn’t be the ones responsible for the school closure. However, this is our responsibility and we should be making this decision.

If we don’t make the difficult decisions, the province could possibly say that they don’t need school boards, like they are discussing in other provinces. We need to show leadership in this area.” Finally, in the motion, “we have heard from various sources that Ministik has a great school. Ministik does not have a great school, what they do have is great people, great students, great teachers and staff, and great parents. These people are deserving of a great facility, not the one they have now.”

And for many of you, this may be the first time that you’ve heard the motion in its entirety. The motion speaks to the overarching theme of spending dollars wisely and looking at that from a Division perspective. This is congruent with what we have spoken about all along—that this is about a bigger picture.

We’ve also been asked about what other steps we are taking to resolving our financial picture. We have taken measured steps during the current year, as well as steps for the current and future school years. These have been in a variety of areas such as Facilities and Operations, Human Resources, as well as the day-to-day operations of the Division. We continue to look at our Division operations and will continue to make those adjustments as necessary—to align our spending with our revenues.

Over the past few months we have received and responded to many phone calls, emails and letters. With these responses being posted to the website, ultimately what will be provided to the Board will be a comprehensive package for them to consider in their decision-making process. What the Board is absolutely required to consider is outlined in the *closure of school regulation* as well as the boards own policy, *Policy 15*.

On the screen in front of me, and I won’t read these to you as you can find these in our documents, there are prescribed things that we may follow and we must follow. And, in addition to the full package of information, we will be answering the questions that are before you on the screen relative to the school closure regulation, and there’s letters A through G of

the questions we need to provide answers for as well as the Board's own policy, Policy 15 around school closure. And for this, the points on the board are all ones we are required to provide answers for.

Hopefully this evening we will be able to provide additional information for people to consider; as well as, as Dennis has indicated, there will be an opportunity for questions at the conclusion of our presentation. Thank you very much. (audience applauds)

Dennis: Thank you. At this time, I would like to turn this over to our Human Resources department, who will talk about staffing and staffing-related issues.

Lynn J.: Good evening, we did have one question on staffing so I'm going to quickly give you an idea of what our process is. During the staffing season every year, many of our staff move into different assignments. We have approximately 1,500 employees in Elk Island Public Schools. There are staff that want to change assignments or they want a different opportunity, they are retiring, or they are going on leaves of absence. Some of our staff are of course returning from leaves. We have a lot of movement during the staffing season.

When positions become available, staff have the opportunity to apply in positions of interest to them. Last year we advertised 220 competitions for teachers and 189 competitions for classified staff. So you can see that if someone wants a different assignment, there is lots of opportunity. Our job in Human Resources is to work with our employees to find assignments that meet their skills and abilities. Elk Island Public Schools honours all contracts for continuing contract and our permanent classified staff. Thank you. (audience applauds)

Dennis: Thank you Lynn. The answers to these questions, as most of you know, are in our respective documents that we do have posted. And in some cases, I do note that the staffing question was specific about Ministik staff and the Human Resources department has given you an overview of the staffing for the entire Division.

I'd like to now move on to educational concerns. And the educational concerns will be covered by the Supports for Students.

Eileen Z.: Good evening, my intention tonight is to address the educational concerns that have been raised by Ministik parents regarding academic achievements including provincial achievement results; class sizes; supports for students who are on instructional support plans; school culture as reported by students, teachers and parents; and how students are supported as they transition from one school to another.

This chart might look familiar to you. It's the document that is produced by Alberta Education for each school and is part of each schools' three-year education plan—and I appreciate that it is very difficult to see as was mentioned earlier—this presentation is posted online and you will be able to see these much easier on your own device. This document is an accountability pillar overall summary and we have one for each school that is produced by Alberta Education. It's

based on surveys that students, teachers and parents complete each year and it also includes the results of provincial achievement tests and diploma exams that students write.

This one (refer to the PowerPoint) is Ministik's accountability pillar results and you can certainly see reflected in that chart what a wonderful school Ministik is in terms of the results the students achieve and that the quality of education is high, that we have excellent staff, and that parents feel very strongly that this is an excellent school. However, when you look at the data for neighboring schools, you see the same positive results. So I wanted to show you that neighboring schools have very similar looking charts—again you can look at them at your leisure. This is Fultonvale (refer to the PowerPoint), Ardrossan Elementary (refer to the PowerPoint) and Uncas (refer to the PowerPoint).

This is another chart that I know is really hard to see. It's a class size chart, it's a chart that every school jurisdiction is required to post as part of our annual educational results review. And again, class size is one of the things that has been mentioned in some of the emails that we received. This chart shows class size broken down from the 2014-2015 school year, 2015-2016, and the current 2016-2017 school year, and it's also divided into divisions—so K-3, 4-6, 7-9, and 10-12. I include this chart because I want people to be able to look at that and see from year-to-year the class size averages shift and change from school to school, and you will see generally that in Elk Island Public Schools class sizes are a reasonable size; you know that some years there are more students than others in particular grades—there may be 20 students in grade three, but there may be 28 in grade four, so that's going to obviously impact class size.

The other thing that you need to keep in mind is that in some cases, there are split classes and that is not always reflected in charts like this. Where you might have a grade two class that is on its own for part of the day, but perhaps they join the grade threes for part of the day. So again class size is one of the things that we do look at in terms of educational quality, but it does shift and move, and we keep our class sizes across the Division at a level that we feel is educationally sound.

We had some questions from parents who are concerned about students who have needs, perhaps they are on an educational/instructional support plan, or maybe there are students who are not coded or do not have a diagnosis, but have some needs that require a little bit of extra attention. Again, we want to make sure that you appreciate that in every school those students are well taken care of. In addition to support from perhaps educational assistance, we have teachers and administrators providing support—such as specialized learning materials, physical accommodations or equipment, and individualized or small group instruction.

Certainly when students transition from one school to another, we make sure that we work with our schools and with our staff and with parents to make sure that those supports are in place to ensure the best possible transition.

This chart is one that I again wanted to share, so that you could see that really again that when you look at neighbouring schools, you can see that Ministik is very similar to neighbouring

schools in terms of how many students might be identified as having special needs and the funding that the school receives is based on the needs that students have. So again that shifts from year to year and is very much an individualized conversation with each school around the needs that that schools have, and how that school is going to accommodate those students.

School culture is another aspect that's been raised. This chart, coming from each school, does a three-year education plan. You could go online and look at each schools' website and you will see this document posted for each school. And one of the things that they post, is a chart that shows questions from the accountability pillar surveys. That asks students, staff and parents to speak to their agreement in terms of: do they feel that their students are safe at school; are the students learning the importance of caring for others; learning respect; and are treated fairly in school. We look at our schools and we are very proud of the results that all of our schools have. And again you can see that Ministik certainly has some very strong results when you compare them to Elk Island and the province as whole. I would encourage you to also look at Fultonvale's results, Ardrossan Elementary and Uncas, again, to realize that all of our schools are schools that offer quality education and have positive school cultures.

Transition, I know that that's been something that's been raised by parents, and concerns about how would we support students who transition from one school to another. Certainly students' transition, they transition at the end of grade six; many students depending on the configuration of the schools that they attend, they transition from grade nine to grade ten, sometimes, depending again on the schools that they attend.

We provide multiple opportunities for students to get familiar with the schools that they are going to be attending. They have opportunities to meet staff in their new building and to sometimes, depending on the school, meet students who are currently attending and will continue to attend in that school. We do make sure that we're following up with any students that have particular concerns, who are particularly anxious perhaps, about making those transitions. And we make sure that we're having conversations with students and the parents to do what we can to make sure that we address those concerns. And I guess at the end, that we do feel that parents obviously play a key role in how those transitions go and we really want to make sure that we are working in partnership with teachers, with students, and with parents, to make sure that those students who transition from one school to another are well supported. That for most students, those transitions are positive and in a very short time they are feeling very comfortable at their new school. Thank you. (audience applauds)

Dennis: Thank you very much. I would now like to call upon Candace to talk about budgetary and financial concerns.

Candace C.: Good evening, I'm here to provide some information on our financial picture. We had some questions about accumulated surplus. So I'll start there and will take you through a few more slides. Our total accumulated surplus that came out August 31, 2016 was \$23.7 million, but that's made up of many different things. The first thing we have in accumulated surplus is what's called investment intangible capital assets and that's just a fancy wording that

we are required to use. Really what it is, is the netbook value of our Board funded capital assets and that of unsupported debt. Right now Alberta Ed provides us funding for buildings—but that's not included in that number. What this is, is capital assets that we have to buy with the funding we receive from the Province ourselves. If Alberta Ed. provides the money, that money doesn't have to go in that particular category. But this money is basically not available for operational expenditures. We have capital reserves as of August 31 of \$1.4 million which only can be used to purchase capital items, so again, it's not available for operational expenditures.

We have operating reserves of \$16.8 million and that's comprised of three things. We have reserves that are in schools and departments of \$5.6 million; schools and departments can carry forward up to two percent of their surplus from the prior year—that stays in the schools and departments year over year. Schools also carry forward one hundred percent of their school generated funds, so that also would not be accessible for anywhere else to be used. School generated funds are things like fundraising that you would do for projects, your lunchroom fees and things like that—so these stay in the schools. We have then, unallocated operating reserves of \$6.2 million – oops, sorry - ALLOCATED operating reserves of \$5 million, I'll talk about that first, then unallocated of \$6.2 million.

Allocated operating reserves, we have \$5 million, those are to fund specific one-time projects. We plan to spend the majority of those funds by August 2019—there are very specific projects that that money has been put aside for, and the board put that money aside in December of 2015. We have \$6.2 million of unallocated operating reserves. Those are to cover potential emergent issues, price fluctuations and to stabilize funding in future years where possible. The minimal threshold that we've set for that particular line item is two per cent of our operating expenditures, which is approximately four million dollars.

The 2016-2017 Division budget—in the budget year we have budgeted to access \$1.75 million from our unallocated operating reserves to cover our day-to-day expenses. Accessing reserves for ongoing operations is not a sustainable practice, because that money will eventually be depleted. Based on the 2016-2017 budget our unallocated operating reserve is estimated to come in at \$4.5 million dollars. That's very close to our four million dollar threshold.

Administration and the Board recognize that the unallocated reserve cannot be accessed in the 2017-2018 without going below that threshold, and to avoid this we have been having to examine expenditures and revenues.

Now we go to 17-18 budget—we're anticipating that the Province will announce a zero per cent increase to our funding rates and we are really hoping that it will be zero or higher—but we are hoping it's not negative right now, because of our current economic situation in the province. So what does zero per cent mean? This means that any increases in staff costs, which are part of the collective agreement that staff move up the grid, must be covered by the Division. So to balance the Division budget, many areas are being explored to align expenditures with our revenues.

One of the questions we received was, what would be some of the ongoing savings if Ministik School was closed? They have been in many of the reports, we looked at the plant operation and maintenance costs, the reduction of one principal, the school fixed rate allocation would be eliminated, transportation costs and insurance. That is a total of \$533,000.

We also got many questions about Ministik being a *small school* versus *small school by necessity*. So Ministik is a small school, but it does not meet the definition of a small school by necessity, because there are schools – Uncas and Fultonvale – which are less than 25 kilometers from Ministik that have the building capacity to accommodate Ministik students. Small school by necessity funding is a very complicated formula, I think I spent a day and a half with Alberta Ed. on the phone to understand it completely. It calculates an allocation—fixed and variable—component based on enrolment of small schools, this allocation is then multiplied by the ratio of number of small schools by necessity over the number of small schools. The calculations have been done, if Ministik was not included in this calculation for 15-16, small school by necessity funding would be reduced by \$22,000 and in 16-17 it would be by \$3,000.  
(audience applauds)

Dennis: Thank you very much. I'm now going to call upon Transportation.

Lisa W.: Good evening, Student Transportation was asked to bring forward a routing plan—if Ministik were to close. We're going to talk a little bit about—as the board has not made a decision—the student transportation information and data used in this section and what I am going to talk about further is a proposed route scheme based as Fultonvale as the designated school. Fultonvale is being used in the proposal as it is the closest school, as well as it's the transition school for students from grades six to seven, and it's been the focus from the parent/community inquiries to date.

Just an overview, I'm going to talk a little bit about what happens right now. So Elk Island Public Schools Student Transportation transports over 9,000 students. We use 161 busses—and that's 597 bus routes and 42 schools is what we look at when we are transporting those. All of our busses are equipped with GPS which allows for accuracy, for pickup and drop off time, as well as routing timing. Our GPS, and this has been in the last five years that we have been able to acquire this accuracy, is about two minutes when we compared planned routing times to GPS accuracy. Now in the afternoon there's always a little bit of a difference because not all students may not be on a route; typically, the busses and students may get home a little earlier. What we use is routing software, with GPS data, we use it to be able to establish routes in the school Division. So we use a combination of both our routing software and GPS data.

What does it look like proposed bussing? 108 students currently bus to Ministik would be bussed to Fultonvale—and again this is based on current data. Arrival time to Fultonvale school would be at 7:50 a.m.; departure time from Fultonvale would be 3:00 p.m.; and that's a proposed departure time, understanding that those busses are not departing until about 3:07 p.m. currently—so we are looking at about seven minutes earlier. Students would be transported using shared bussing with Fultonvale, and this would be through the transfer site.



Fultonvale is a large transfer site. These busses that I am going to talk about, they are transporting students not only to Fultonvale and Ministik, but they are also transporting students once they hit that transfer to Ardrossan and to Sherwood Park schools as well. What we are going to use is two additional busses to reduce the ride times; we recognize that just using exactly the equipment that we had, the ride times were higher than we had hoped for and what we would like to see for students.

What are we looking at? Average riders per bus—we have been asked that question—so 33 is the average. Now minimum 15 students on a bus for some of the routes—and remember that's not per bus but per route, a bus can have six routes within a day—so it can do six different routes. The maximum, so I mentioned minimum number of 15 and maximum number of 48 students on those buses that will be transporting Ministik and Fultonvale students. Just talk a little bit about what we have for current morning busses—we have 18, and proposed there will be 20, and in the afternoon we will have current 12 and the proposed will be 14.

What do average ride times look like? Again this is comparing current and proposed. Current average ride times for Elk Island Public Schools students—and this is all rural Elk Island Public School students—you've got in the morning 27 minutes and in the afternoon 26 minutes. And if we take current versus proposed average for Ministik students—and this is only Ministik students factored in here—for the morning you've got average current ride time, 25 minutes and proposed is 25 minutes; so that does not change at all. In the afternoon we've got 31 minutes and a proposed will bring it down to 24, in the proposal.

We are going to talk about shortest and longest ride times. When we look at shortest and longest ride times we're going to compare current versus proposed. So in the morning currently, shortest ride time is five minutes for Ministik students and we're proposed is 12 minutes. In the afternoon shortest current is one minute, that's because that bus leaves and drops someone off less than one kilometer away from the school. I see some of the looks, and I've answered the question more than once, thinking that people think that it's a mistake—that's how close the student is to the school. In the afternoon we are proposing, shortest would be eight minutes.

If we look at longest, let's talk about longest current. So current we have 43 minutes for the longest in the morning—and the proposed would be 43 minutes; again that one stays the same for proposed. In the afternoon currently we have 65 minutes currently and then in the afternoon, proposed is going to be 46 minutes; so that certainly will come down.

I wanted to give you a little bit of a overview about what a route might look like, you know I see some faces out there nodding and shaking heads, asking how does that work? How can we make route work like that? So what you see here is, this is our software and it's just a draft route, and you can see that the bus is starting over on 202, you can see that that bus starts basically east on 202, and what we try to do when we route is we pocket—what that means is we want to pick an area so that we're just picking up in a concentrated area and that's east of 202. What it does after it finishes in Hastings Lake is, it comes out and it deadheads—we would

use—or it expresses straight to Fultonvale school, there aren't any stops. So if you are the last person here, yes, it takes you 16, or 18 or 20 minutes to drive there. Yeah, your ride time will be only 22 minutes because that's what we actually use. What that software does is, it uses factors such as speeds of roads; so it takes speeds of roads, it takes student and stop delay, so every stop—we haven't put the stops out there up on top. What happens is that at every stop, if the bus is stopping within this, it has a delay built in, so it doesn't think the bus is just driving the route. It actually will have a student delay—if there are five students it will be five seconds times five students, plus it will have a stop delay. Student Transportation is able to set that stop delay; sometimes it's on how fast a driver may drive that route and it may be on road conditions. It may be that that road is just a little bit tougher to go down and we need to slow down that bus a little bit.

We've got an afternoon example as well. In the afternoon the bus will leave Fultonvale and again, it travels straight down and starts right down here and you can see it pocketed, ends in Lakewood Acres. So that's a little bit of an overview of what that might look like.

Cost analysis—we have been some questions—there has been some questions asked with respect to information that has been provided throughout this process, and it's questions on costs that are existing, current, and proposed costs and revenue generated—when we talk about revenue generated, that's revenue that we receive from the government for students. It's based on a distance, so there's a calculation of a distance in there and then a cost savings. All those words in all those reports you have seen those and there have been different numbers—just to speak a little but about that is, and to give some clarity is—preliminary discussions involved a high-level estimate of the cost in December: what does it cost to transport the Ministik students? And then what we look at when we try to make sense of those numbers—and I understand the frustrations—is that it is hard to correlate those current estimates, because the scope of the variables have changed as discussions progress over time and ride routing. We try to refine that routing. Variables, they get updated, and the scale increases to reflect a more accurate comparison of current versus proposed costs and then we're able to determine the current estimated costs savings from that. So, lots going on and lots of changes happening; lots of refining of the routes and costing out the routes exactly. Our routes are paid not only on a daily basis, but there is also a component for kilometers built in. So those types of things change as well. And when we impact this schools busing, we're also impacting other schools busing. Lots of variables have changed in that time and routing has changed as well.

Cost change—current estimated cost savings related to student transportation, the bottom line at this point in time again: \$6,000. Current anticipated grant funding increase, and again I talked about that distance and why that would increase from where they currently are going to if they were to go to Fultonvale, and that's an additional \$45,000. Thank you very much.  
(audience applauds)

Dennis: Thank you Lisa. I would now like to call upon Facilities to give their presentation. Thank you.

Calvin W.: Thank you Dennis. Prior to jumping into the PowerPoint presentation, something that I want to say, that I have said in the other sessions last week and is very dear to my heart is, that I am very empathetic and I understand your concerns. As a parent of four children, I can completely understand—these four children of mine, they are dear to my heart and I would do anything for them, so I understand the concern, speaking as a parent. Now talking as the employee with the Facilities department, I've got numerous questions have been brought to our department and we have answered a lot of them. We have them on the website, there are many, many questions—I didn't want to go through them all tonight, because then you would just hear me talk and talk and talk. There are several that I did want to provide some clarification on and what those are is the deferred maintenance and what the definition is within the various school jurisdictions within Alberta, and actually how best maintenance practices can increase deferred maintenance.

When you're looking at differed maintenance, how we are looking at it within the school boards—to micro size it, so to speak—in your own home, you have a furnace with a lifecycle of 15 years, the second that furnace is still operational and hits 15 years and one day, it's deferred maintenance. So, a lot of the equipment within this facility is deferred maintenance—but it's been very well maintained and we've got 66 years out of it. The furnaces are well past their lifecycle, but they are still operating and doing very well. So the facility, I just wanted to clarify, has been well maintained—there has been a lot of maintenance that goes into the facility for preventative maintenance and addressing breakdowns demand maintenance. The pros to doing good maintenance is that it does free up a lot of infrastructure maintenance renewal funds to deal with other issues that exist within the other 34 facilities. Again, we're looking at a total of 108 million dollars' worth of deferred maintenance. We're getting on average about three million dollars a year to address these concerns, so you can see where the problem is with that. But again, it's been really well maintained in all our facilities and the equipment has gone well-beyond lifecycle. The cons to it, of course, is that we end up with a higher deferred maintenance.—at some point things are going to start breaking down and we need to fix them.

We do prioritize all of our items. Number one priority is health and safety. Then we look at major building component breakdown or the possibility of it breaking down. We look at programming-required accessibilities and energy management. And that's how we prioritize all of our projects with the amount of money we get to address those \$108 million. What I'd like to say is the Ministik facility is well maintained; again it's got deferred maintenance of approaching \$600,000. You are looking at \$108 million Division wide—so it has been maintained well.

Other clarification I would like to look at is the 10-year contrast with the modular plans. These are two different programs that Alberta Education has in place. The ten-year plan is an internal document used by Facility Service and the Division to look at where we want to be in ten years and what our needs are. The ten-year plan we do put the modulars on it that we are asking at that time; every year we look at the ten year facilities, we review it—we renew it. From there, again it's an internal document that is utilized for internal planning proposes. The modular plan

we do annually; we take a look at all of our needs, we get them from staff, from school administrators, what the problems of the modular are, and we investigate and inspect them. Now every year we put a request into Alberta Education. What they look at is two reasons to provide modular: one, to reduce enrolment pressures, and two, to address health and safety issues. That's the case now with Ministik. This past fall we identified the mould issues within the modular; and even though those levels are well within the health Canada guidelines, we still made the request to replace those three units and we got approval to do so.

Then just talking about the facilities, when it comes to the modernization capacity and build out capacity at Fultonvale and then the Ministik current capacity or current enrolment—that's my mistake it's not capacity, it's enrolment—Fultonvale modernization capacity is 600 students, and we designed the facility for 700 students. That includes an additional four modulars. By design, what we did is we look at code, we make the parking adjustments for 700, water closets for 700 and the gymnasium is sized for 700 students—that is how it is designed. The Ministik enrolment right now is 127 students, and 408 in Fultonvale. So Fultonvale can handle 600 students—as is right now. So at this point of time right now we have 25 classrooms that are in this facility and we can handle the capacity coming in, if the decision was made for Ministik to close. That's all I've got, thank you. (audience applauds)

Mark: Thank you very much everyone for sitting patiently through the presentation. I just have a few brief words to conclude with. Then I will hand it over to Dennis to tell us the next steps. Next steps, as you can see on the slide are the list of the Board dates from now and the end of the year by which a decision needs to be made. Our commitment is to continue to update the Ministik link on our website and to respond the requests for information on a timely basis—with due considerations for the day-to-day operations that needs to be done to ensure that we provide all of our schools and students with high-quality teaching and learning environments. When the report is prepared it will be posted to the Division website.

Dennis: I would like to take this opportunity to thank our presenters and in a few minutes we'll move into a short break—I will give you a few guidelines here. I do wish to let you know that tomorrow, at the Board meeting, there will be three delegations to the Board for a total of one half-hour, and the various topics that will be covered by representatives from the Ministik parent community are the following: the importance of maintaining small rural schools, like Ministik and their important role in rural areas. The second delegation will be centered around the financial and budget considerations—surrounding a possible Ministik school closure. And the last delegation will bring forward concerns surrounding the school closure and working with Elk Island to resolve the health and safety concerns.

I look forward to these presentations to the Board tomorrow and if you wish to attend, the board meeting begins at 10:00—now our boardroom is nowhere near the size of this gymnasium, so I do give you forewarning on that. At this time though, I would like to call upon Pauline Gurnett once again as she speaks to you regarding the question and comment sections of the program. Pauline?

Pauline: Thank you, so we have one mic. for our questions and comments. If you could just come up here when you have something to say. If you can state your name and how you're connected to the school, with Fultonvale or a community member. If you can just limit when you are up here to one question, or one statement, so that lots of people are able to move through the microphone as well.

I've been told that if there are any outbursts, we will be getting a warning, and after that warning if it happens again they will close the meeting. So just so you know, I know being passionate doesn't mean an outburst but, Dennis, if you could clarify for everyone, so we are clear about an outburst.

Dennis: Thank you, Pauline. Rather obviously, as you are probably all Ministik parents or Ministik community members and you have come into the office, you've probably seen a little sign somewhere in the school talking about a respectful workplace environment. That's a respectful working and learning environment that Elk Island Public Schools maintains and it governs all students, all staff, all Trustees, all contactors, as well as all parents. An outburst would be something that I would consider to be disrespectful to anyone here or to our Trustees—and to be quite honest, disrespectful to people within the room. Clearly, we understand that emotions can run high, but I do know all of you can understand the difference of what's disrespectful and what is just emotional. Does that answer your question Pauline? Is there anything else you wanted to add?

Pauline: No.

Dennis: Then I would like to propose we have a break for about ten minutes—and also with regards to facilitating comments and questions, we'll begin right around the 7:30 mark. I'll have people meet me right over here to come to the microphone, and so if you are wanting to have your questions or comment, you can meet me here over on the side; we will bring your forward to the microphone. Thank you. 7:30 we will reconvene.

**[Break]**

Dennis: I will ask that everyone please, if you are remaining in the meeting, to please bring your conversations to a close. I do thank you.

We have five individuals at this point and time who have come forward with questions and just to review that, they are on the side. I do see other, what I have done is just noted their names and I will be continuing to do that. So I will be calling individuals forward and as Pauline has requested if you can introduce yourself: first and last name and your relationship to Ministik School—a parent, community member, whatever you choose or however you choose to identify yourself. We'll see if we can address the questions, if someone on the panel can answer them, and sometimes a question if it can't be answered it may become something that will be answered on the website if it is something very specific that we don't have right this moment—we will move ahead from there. I'm just waiting for people to settle in; I'll wait 'till that happens

and then begin with the first presenter, or the first person asking a question or providing a comment. Thank you very much. The first person coming forward then will be Dawn, and Dawn has a question with regards to boundaries.

Dawn: Hi, I am a parent of Emily, Caylee, and Leo here are Ministik, and I have a comment and a question. I've been looking at some out of school care—that, should Ministik close, and I've been quoted for \$400/month per child. In my case that is \$1,200 per month, which I certainly cannot afford, as an EA on an EA salary. I looked around at a couple of schools and the only school I could make work for my situation is Ardrossan Elementary. I received this email, and I quote, "As a resident of Elk Island Public Schools, you have the option of applying for a boundary exemption to any EIPS school that does not have a closed boundary. Boundary exemptions are granted based on available space and the application process runs from February 1 to April 7." Ardrossan Elementary is a closed boundary for 2017-2018 due to enrollment numbers. My question is, I can't afford out of school care, if my children were to move to Fultonvale, there is a good chance I would have to quit my job. My income would go down; my children would suffer, as well as my family. The only one school I have an option of going to is Ardrossan and now I'm being told via email that I can't do that. Is that correct? And is that fair, is my question.

Dennis: Thank you Dawn. Is there anyone from the panel that wishes to address that? I do know that we have in our documents the comment about childcare and no it is not the purview of Elk Island Public schools to provide childcare—and I do believe that that was indicated and I know you understand that and that's not a response you want to get. However, that is the situation.

Dawn: I'd like to point out too, I'm on Range Road 202, so I am the furthest east away and I'm not using the bus as childcare, but I can simply not make it in time for the bus. Ardrossan, I can, everywhere else I cannot do.

Dave A.: Good evening everyone. Yes indeed, Ardrossan Elementary is a closed boundary. We established open and closed boundaries for all of our schools in the system based on capacity and anticipated enrolment. Should Ministik School close, though, we would look at circumstances to accommodate parents if they were choosing to go a school other than the one that is being designated.

Dennis: Thank you. If I could ask Karla to come forward and introduce herself and provide us with her question.

Karla: I am Karla Hope. I am a parent of a child that goes here and one that is set to start here for Kindergarten, and this is something that I have kind of really been struggling with. It's more of a statement, but if somebody could respond to. In the December 2016 board meeting the board approved the motion to consider the closure of Ministik School. In that same meeting the board approved the motion to amend the superintendents' compensation package as agreed effective February 2, 2017. Which is a 3.7 per cent increase, which was confirmed by EIPS as of

Monday. In the EIPS budget, staff would be receiving a zero percent economic increase to their salaries. My point is that if you are stating we can be using surplus dollars to fund operational costs, the optics of you being the only staff member, basically the CEO of the organization, receiving a raise this year and trying to justify closing a school, because of finances, is one of the reasons our parents and community members have lost our trust in this process. I realize the increase does not come close to the amount that is required to keep a school running, but as the leader of this organization, why should parents or students—that you have our best interests at heart—not be upset, when immediately following the December 15 motion to look at closing Ministik, the next topic was your pay compensation; if someone could respond. (audience applauds)

Dennis: Thank you Karla. I can respond to that, as Corporate Secretary, on an annual basis the superintendent is evaluated, he is the only employee of the Board of Trustees. On an annual basis, the compensation of the superintendent is discussed with the Board of Trustees and that decision is made. At the same time, the motion that was to begin the process for the closure of Ministik School is not related to that particular activity.

Karla: I guess my concern is that through this whole process the word transparency has really been brought up, and the optics of it is really not transparent. (audience applauds)

Dennis: Thank you for your comment Karla. (audience applauds) And as I have replied, the superintendent salary along with mine and other members that are up here at the front of the room are posted on a yearly basis for the public to view.

Ok, next question. I am going to call upon DeeDee who has a question about transportation.

DeeDee: Ohh the mic. is off; I am pretty loud anyways, I don't really need it. My name is DeeDee Perrott, I am a parent of four children that currently attend Ministik School. I have had lots of concerns related to Transportation. As our family lives on the furthest east end of Strathcona County and so by our elementary kids being potentially forced to go to Fultonvale or some other school, that's moving my children to over 26 kilometers from our home for them to attend elementary.

I don't know that I have a really direct question, but a few comments again related to transparency. I have spent hours and hours looking at transportation, looking at current routes and looking at proposed routes, and we have seen through the process from the December 15<sup>th</sup> package where we were saving \$70,000 by closing Ministik to now we're saving \$6,000. Last week it was \$53,000—it changes day to day. My question is, really, how valid can any of that information be to use as a decision. It's all like rainbows and fairies and unicorns to think that our bus times are going to be dropping 20 minutes. (audience applauds) My question is, when Lisa said tonight that it is hard to correlate estimates, the variables are being updated all the time, what will our accurate comparison be in August? We have no clue what will happen if they close the school. The only thing that I think we can use as an accurate representation is what historical bus times have been from our area, and I speak passionately about this because

I'm on the edge of the county. Currently Fultonvale kids that are transferring from Fultonvale and going home to my area, are on the bus for an hour and a half. (audience applauds)  
I guess my comment is, with all those variables being what they are and being so dynamic and changing all the time, I think that we really need to seriously look at what is reliable regarding this, especially to when it comes to... We don't really understand, I don't think Mr. Ligurori (sic) clearly gave us an answer of why they are looking at closure—we talked about health and safety, oh, now it's budget, but when we talk about deficit, the deficit that's here right now, it's projected and I want to make sure that everyone understands it may not be around the school or reading everything. That's a projected deficit, it's already gone down. They don't know what the deficit is going to be. There could be no deficit by the end of the year.

Lastly, I just want to thank Estefania, I know that it was announced at the beginning that she wasn't going to make it but she is here. Thank you. (audience applauds)

Dennis: Thank you DeeDee. I must admit, in your passionate speech there, I do appreciate that. I am not absolutely the correct person to respond to a few of your questions. The one about transportation, I do know that transportation did address earlier that the variables are changing, and they are changing on a daily basis—and certainly there is not at this point in time even knowing if it was a proposed route, the number of students that would go on the bus. For example, if Ministik School were to close and then those figures as you pointed out, well, probably would change. A bus time would change in August would change as well, as there are additions or there are deletions from bus routing, and those things can't be pinned down until they are much closer to it. If I could ask, is there anybody that would like to add to that?

Lisa W.: Just as you mentioned DeeDee about historical data. You are correct, you are absolutely right, we do use historical data. Our GPS data is historical, we use it from the prior year, we use it currently. What do those route look like right now? What is that timing look like? What are those buses actually doing and how can they do those times? You are absolutely right in relying to historical data—so we are using this historical data.

(REPLY FROM DEEDEE INAUDIBLE) 1:16:34

Dennis: Comment is noted, thank you. I would like to call upon Brian, whose question, I believe is in regards to performance measures. Thank you.

Brian: Hello I am Brian Bleakley, I live out here just past Cooking Lake...pardon me, Hastings Lake. My three step children all went to Ministik School. Here's one of the comparisons that I've been looking at, Fultonvale's, and it is a summary of performance measures—these are numbers that are published, and it's for the grade six marks. Consistently Ministik has been, and in fact for 2016, 22.2 per cent higher in English, 24.1 per cent higher in Math, 12 per cent higher in Science, 11 per cent higher in Social Studies. On top of that, from 2012 to 2016 Fultonvale's marks have all dropped—these are all the PAT numbers that are posted.



The other one is when you look at the student engagement measures, in every single one of those categories Ministik blows away Fultonvale when you do those comparisons. When you deal with the percentage of teachers and parents satisfied with the parental involvement in decisions about their child's education, the overall mark here is 87. The overall mark at Fultonvale is 82. The parental mark, for Ministik, is 89.1. The parental mark, for Fultonvale, is 66.7. (audience applauds) My questions is, why do you want to send your kids to Fultonvale? (audience applauds)

Dennis: Thank you Brian, we have your comments noted. If there was a response required, I would bring it forward to the panel in front of us. Is there a response that you would like to give?

Eileen: My response would simply be that year-to-year those survey questions and numbers change, but I have to state that Fultonvale is a very good school and I know that many Ministik students do go on to Fultonvale—I don't want to dispute the numbers that you gave, but Fultonvale is a very fine school.

Brian: These numbers are your numbers, off your website. (COMMENT FROM BRIAN INAUDIBLE) 1:20:02

Mark: Again, as I started off this evening, I spoke about data—and it isn't about competing chunks of data—but I truly do believe that when something is misstated that we need to make sure that we correct it. For example, when we take a look at Alberta Education, this is the printout of the results from both schools—from Ministik and Fultonvale—and just so that we have the information correct. When we take a look at subject-by-subject: in English/Language Arts, students achieving at the acceptable level with Ministik is 100 per cent (which is seven students), at Fultonvale it is 95 per cent. At the standard of excellence it's 28 per cent at Ministik; it's 45 per cent at Fultonvale. In the area of Mathematics, the acceptable standard at Ministik is 100 per cent; at Fultonvale, it's 93.2 per cent. The standard of excellence 28.6 per cent at Ministik; 36.4 per cent at Fultonvale. In Science, 100 per cent of the students at Ministik score the acceptable standard; 93.2 per cent at Fultonvale. The standard of excellence in Science, 42.9 percent of the students at Ministik achieved that; 68.2 per cent achieved it at Fultonvale. In Social Studies Six, 85.7 per cent of the students at Ministik achieved the acceptable standard; 86.4 per cent at Fultonvale. 42.9 percent achieved the standard of excellence at Ministik and 54.5 per cent achieved that at Fultonvale. Thank you.

(INAUDIBLE COMMENT) 1:22:05

Dennis: The document that Superintendent Liguori is referring to, we will ensure it's posted right away, it is the accountability results. He is obviously referring to many Division schools there. So we'll get that posted as soon as possible. Alright, our next question will come from Andrea.

Andrea: Good evening everyone, my name is Andrea Marson. I'm a parent at Ministik of a grade one student and also a four-year-old turning five-year-old hoping to come here for kindergarten next year. Throughout this whole process I have really struggled with the lack of data and the changeability of the type of data that we've been given. I'm a numbers person, I want to look at the facts and I would hate for them to close our school, but if they could justify it to me, then I feel that I could respect that decision. That's my honest opinion—I think that what is missing here is a lot of people don't respect what is going on, unfortunately, because we feel a little deceived and left out of the data.

One of the things I want to know is regarding this 1.7-million-dollar overspending that the Board/Administration is saying we have to try to claw back; we can't overspend by another \$1.7 million next year—I agree—they shouldn't be using that money for day-to-day spending, but I want to know what alternatives have administration looked at. They haven't mentioned anything else other than wanting to close our school. Also, if they do decide and do close our school, even if they close our school, even if they manage to scrape the \$533,000 they think they are going to save by closing our school, that still leaves them \$1.167 million short if they continue to spend at the same rate. So I want to know what alternatives have you looked at or considered, how have you weighed those alternatives up, and how do you intend to save the additional money that you need to; because no one has mentioned that so far. (audience applauds)

Dennis: Thank you so much, Andrea. I do know that a question very similar to what you posed tonight just went on the website today—it was posed last week at one of the sessions. However, I'm not sure whether the response will be exactly what you are looking for, but it did address some of those general areas. So I'm actually going to put it forward to the panel if anybody is comfortable with answering that, has the information. If not, we will see if we can get that for you.

Andrea: None of that information is general, it is all very specific and I think that's the issue here. The answer needs to be specific, not general.

Dennis: Ok, looking for a specific information. Is there anybody prepared at this moment to talk about any of that? If not, we got the question noted and we can bring that forward as best as possible. Thank you.

Candace: So we have been looking—we have been looking at staffing, we have been looking at changes in our day-to-day operations. We have been looking at lots of our costs with Facilities and departments—we have been looking at many things. And even if the decision has been made, if it will be made, to close Ministik, we will still have to look for more of those operational efficiencies for sure. We know that this is one part that we are considering right now, but there are many other parts that we will have to consider.

Andrea: Wouldn't you have to close the equivalent of three Ministik Schools to justify this? That's the only way I can see it. And meanwhile you guys are spending \$24,000 a year keeping

Colchester sitting there empty. So I have to question where these efficiencies will come from. (audience applauds)

Mark: Thank you, Andrea. As Candace has indicated there have been a number of items that we have looked at. The question is for many people, is specifically what are those items—the unfortunate piece of that is, is that many of these items are as contentious as the conversations that are happening today. By describing things that have been contemplated that may or may not be act upon, we may cause unnecessary turmoil within the Division, throughout the Division. So as Candace has said we continue to look at and we have, our day-to-day operations of the Division; as well as, there are many things that we have done already to decrease our costs.

Dennis: I do appreciate that some of you are not liking some of the answers you are getting, but I do not wish to shut down this meeting before 8:30 because of the time frame that we have. I think that it's very valuable and I would like to continue on—if I can just give you my first and only warning, which should have happened over there, earlier on. Let's keep the conversation going by asking questions, providing comments. Thank you.

I would now like to turn it over to Dianna, who has a question or comment (Request came for Spencer to go first). Actually in the line up here I do have a few other people before Spencer, so I would move into the next person and that would be Dianna. Thank you.

Dianna: Sad to say I'm the dance instructor here at Ministik, hobbling up. So just to let you know who I am, I have a longstanding relationship with Ministik School. I have been volunteering at this school for 31 years, my daughter attended for seven years and I've been the dance instructor here for 27 years. I can tell you that over all of these years I have seen a number of principals come and go, I've seen a lot of teachers come and go—what remains constant is the level of community involvement at this school, which is second to none. The welcoming environment and the way that they choose to bring in volunteers from the community to help out in the school is outstanding, and what it's resulted in is what you see here today and what you see in all the letters is a very strong community which is very committed. Volunteerism, the amount of volunteerism that's taught to these children goes above and beyond anything you would learn anywhere else. My deepest concern is that I'm afraid that what I see is a trend toward the closing small community schools. I understand that on paper the cost per square meter, the cost per child—of course costs in a small school are going to be higher—living in the country is a choice, but there are a lot of disadvantages that come with living in the country, despite the fact that we love it. Closing a community school that has over 100 years of history in this area, who contributes so much to this community—and please don't tell me that it's not your mandate—because I think with all the talk these days with volunteerism, and community caring and Community Talks, I can tell you that my answers to Community Talks particularly in regards to education would have been very different had I known that Ministik was going to be targeted for closure. I say that with all respect, that I think that the closing of small schools is, for one thing I can tell you that it's an easy target, and you can say that it's a hard decision to make—but I can tell you it is an easy target. I also run the

library Bookmobile service for the county. It would be very easy for our library to save money in times of trouble by hacking off the arm, the appendage that is the bookmobile that serves the rural people. It's a difficult thing to make all of the finances work. But it's too easy a decision to chop out things like small community schools or Bookmobile services to the rural area. So please reconsider this very strongly, because, in these days we are understanding how important it is to have community and every time you take a community school, a community hall, a community church away from the community especially way out in the rural area, you are unravelling society. Thank you. (audience applauds)

Dennis: Dianna, thank you so much for your thoughtful and reasoned response. You have sent a very strong message and certainly, I think you have embodied the passion of this group here today and summed up the sentiments of virtually everyone who is in the audience. Thank you. (audience applauds) If I could call upon Jim at this time please.

Jim: Hi, I would like to thank Mark for the little chuckle I got earlier when he mentioned that he'd heard that some people got the misinterpretation that the mould at the school was reason to shut it down. I don't think it would have been the three or four packages he sent out with all those pictures that might have caused that thought.

My granddaughter used to go to Uncas school, it's about ten, ten minutes from us, about eight kilometers. She'd get on the bus at about five after seven and get to school at ten to eight. So, if you think a 23-minute drive will be 24 minutes to occur, that might be a little out. There were a number of things that upset me because we couldn't seem to pin down the real reason for the school closing. We showed there was no reason for the mould because there was no issue with it and they'd already got the approval for the modulars. So when that was finally dropped as a reason, we were told finances. When finances were brought up that indicated Ministik was in the middle of the pack, Mark told us, well, those weren't really the numbers that we should be looking at. Wow, try to hit that target! We have been told by our MLA that there is no financial reason for closing Ministik. So as far as I'm concerned, maybe the true reason to close Ministik, is so it'll help pay for their raises. Thank you. (audience applauds)

Dennis: It's my understanding that a response will be coming. Thank you.

Estefania Cortes-Vargas, MLA for Strathcona-Sherwood Park: Hello everyone, thank you very much for being here and thank you to the panel members and to the Trustees. I do want to clarify a few things. My name is Estefania Cortes-Vargas and I'm the MLA for Strathcona-Sherwood Park. (audience applauds) So, the comment there was there's no financial reason, it's not so much that. The comment that I believe that you are referring to that I said is, as a partner in this relationship and as the voice to the provincial government in this position, what I would like to comprehend and understand is what the financial impact would be – like, what is that reasoning. I think you know it has been laid out in the slideshow as to what the impacts are, the overall savings being about 500K. But what it is, is just like we have a partnership and we work together on various levels. There's a few comments on there of not knowing where the government is going and absolutely that's true, because the budget doesn't come out until

later in March. But at the same time there has been no indication from our government that we would ever not fund growth enrolment. That is pretty clear as to a main mandate of our government. So I think (audience applauds) I just want to truly understand what the board is providing in information as to the overall cost that it would take to keep Ministik open. I've been going through all of the documents the same way as all of you and the many email I have received explain that and so have the Trustees and so have the board members they've worked very hard this; putting something like this together is not easy, and having this many from administration out to answer all of your questions is very difficult and I thank you for this. Because all of that takes a huge team in order to do that. But part of it and part of the communication here, is always going back to understanding what it is that is the basis of this decision. And so I can't even put a stance from a MLA perspective if I don't truly understand that position. What is overall costs in this scenario? If this is a discussion of scenario A, we close Ministik. Scenario B, we don't close Ministik. What does the other scenario look like? (audience applauds) Look, I honestly believe that you are all very rational humans and even if the best decision in this situation is to close down Ministik – if that is the best situation, I believe that being provided with that information is critical and I know that this the effort that we are going through right now. And I see that. And I see that effort and I don't want deteriorate, I want to make sure that it actually is allowing for that conversation. So the comments that I have made so far is that when I was presented with the main concepts that are fact on a provincial level, which were the portables. I expressed, as an MLA, to my minister the impact it has on the community. The minister makes that decision, that's not a decision that I get to make. But I get to communicate with the government, as a voice for this community, and to look at that overall impact. In the same way, whatever happens here and whatever information is presented, predicts how I can interact as a partner to this relationship. And so, all I have said so far, is I am a very interested partner. I'm reading all of the information. If there is an ask, it's not clear. If there isn't, then that's why we're here. But that's really the only thing I've said is that I'm just trying to understand this process. And much like everybody else this is where we're standing. This is the information were given. We understand there is fiscal restraints. There is 500K that's going to be saved in total. Transportation is, you know, you can nitpick transportation but it's hard to predict. Regardless, if you make the decision you can run various scenarios put in a school bus, all of that those will change. Those are numbers that will change inevitably even if there's predictability in a school. But the overall reasons that, that is something that we can discuss as a community and the overall impacts are felt by a community. Which is why it is important for me to also understand the position of the board, which is why I'm here to listen. It was said very much that I don't understand the financial implications or that there is no financial reason for this decision. Well, I'm not sure I can actually make that statement. Because, you can explain this to me and if I've misunderstood if that the financial reason if there's overall costs that aren't being addressed, that's something that I would hope we are able to clear up. I wanted to just clear up that that's not exactly what I said and that's not what I meant. And there's a complete respect that I have to the school board in having to make this decision, and this is their decision. The only thing that I am able to do in this situation is listen to the concerns, understand both perspectives, understand the parts that, anything that is brought forward by the board was that is then going to be interpreted by the minister of education. And as the voice of this community I would also be in contact with the things that

I've understood within these circumstances. And I believe that is a fair way to maneuver and I hope that you agree. (audience applauds)

Dennis: Thank you, Member Cortes-Vargas, and we will move on to our next question which is coming from Chuck Clubine.

Chuck: Thanks Estefania, I appreciate that. Thank you Trustees, thank you very much for spending your evenings with us—last week and this week. This has been a much more respectful meeting and that's good. The question I have, stems off of what Estefania said. I am going to be as blunt as I put it—it is not an attack—it's an observation and observation lends to frustration because there's got to be a better way. In conversation with a concerned parent last week, the parent asked Mark Liguorio (sic) specifically and distinctly, to which I witnessed. "You are stating that the savings will come from having less teachers and increasing class sizes in Elk Island Public." And you said Mark Liguorio (sic), "absolutely." So Mark, if you stand by those words—and I hope you do because you have stood by every other word you have said so far—please confirm that you indeed answer this question with that answer and I will get why to the significance of that. And if you don't, if you are going to say that you didn't say that, then please let us know exactly where we are coming up with that shortfall. Ironically we have a principal retiring, what if, what if we didn't. What if, that's \$120,000? So Bill says to me "Chuck, I'm not retiring, I've got another five in me."—I have been praying for that. He doesn't, but the relevant fact is, that it's not the right decision to cut salaries and make larger classrooms in Elk Island Public let alone rural communities—that is my biggest concern with this. When it went to health, then to budget, not enough money guys, not enough money to shut down a school. That's my fundamentals. (audience applauds)

Dennis: Thank you for your comments. I'll turn it over to superintendent Liguori, thank you.

Mark: And again Chuck, quite frankly, I don't remember the conversation, but I'm not going to say I don't remember those words because then we get into a disagreement. What I would indicate though is that, when the Board looked at all of the options available, we have looked at everything possible to achieve cost savings. I believe the question, and if it wasn't—and again I'm not here to argue with anyone—if it was around staffing, have we looked at staffing, would class size be a consideration, would staffing be a consideration? We—being the Board and myself—have exhausted every possibility looking at what would be considered and so if the question is, have we considered that, have we looked at those things, absolutely we have Chuck, but we have looked at many other things. Statement taken in isolation.

(INAUDIBLE COMMENT) 1:39:58

Dennis: Did you want to come back up to the mic.?

Chuck: I'd love to.

Dennis: Well, here you go.

Chuck: Then my secondary question, and thank you—I'm fine with that. You know, what if the principal wasn't retiring?

Dennis: Ok earlier this evening Chuck, Human Resources, I'm going to suggest alluded to that type of situation, if a principal wasn't retiring and if Ministik school were to close. Then it is very likely that that principal would go to another school—because we do have retirements on an ongoing basis and that's the same with teachers; teachers are retiring, teachers choose to go to certain schools or apply to go to certain schools. So I'm going to give you this answer based on the fact that I was in HR for many many years. So I'm quite familiar with the fact that people do move and they make choices to move as well, and it's easy to facilitate that; and any given year you might be moving between 50-60 staff including administrators.

Chuck: When the motion was made to health and safety, was the knowledge of the principal retiring, a factor in that decision, and if it was, I would have looked for the motion to say we are looking at closing Ministik for health and safety and budgetary reasons because we are going to save a principal. Let's just (INAUDIBLE COMMENT) be transparent.

Dennis: And I do know that earlier this evening the motion the way it was worded was put up in front of you and I have no knowledge specifically myself about the retirement or anything of anyone at that time. And I can speak to it, even if unknown, that individual could be accommodated. Thank you. I'm going to move on. Then Sam.

Sam: Hi my name is Sam Hofmeyer, you probably know me from my emails. I'm a parent of this school. I'm actually going to...I've got five different questions I had written down for tonight that were...and I'm not actually going to do any of them.

Some observations. I'm going too quickly and feel free to correct me if I'm wrong about what happens after this. At some point in the future, Mark and his staff are going to assemble a motion to put forward to the Board—and I think we all know what that motion is going to entail. And then it's then up to the Board to vote on that, the Board of Trustees sitting over there against the wall, their vote, yes or no, is a majority vote and that will determine the fate of the school. Is that relatively accurate? (Dennis: correct) So this all boils down—for brass tacks to—it doesn't matter about transportation, it doesn't matter about any of the things that have been talked about tonight, it doesn't really matter about budget. What it matters about is the Board's faith in Mark and his staff to assemble accurate and concise information. And I think what we have demonstrated over the past, I haven't, know how long it's been since, November or when the initial motion was passed, is that there are so many variables and so many unknowns, that to close a school such as Ministik, which has really good attention and has good results and all of that. For what appear to be fairly negligible savings especially when we look in the light that the fact that we don't know what other options, and Mark has tried to make it look like that was to avoid confusion—I had a little outburst saying that I think it would actually provide a lot of clarity for us—do people agree if we knew what was going on? (audience applauds) That, we would be able to resolve a lot of these issues with just some more open

lines of communication and that's that fiduciary responsibility—the word that keeps coming back up again—to be truthful and honest, and clear and that's not making judgments for us or keep things from us because you might think we might get the wrong impression. Put it all out there and make it easy for us to find. Don't refer us to sections in your bylaws and stuff like that—if we ask for a link or a document just give it to us. It can't be that difficult, we have been told that documents don't exist...I was told that there was no transcript of what trustee Stadnick had put forward. Yet Mark had it up on the board for us now during his initial presentation. We have been told that there is maintenance stuff that is too hard to find, and yet we find it right on the website. That is my statement, the Board needs to have one hundred per cent, one hundred per cent faith in what Mark presents to you, to be able to vote on his proposal. You need to know exactly what he has said and that it is accurate and concise and there is no other conflicting issues. We know what happened in 2002 and don't let it happen again. Thank you. (audience applauds)

Dennis: Thank you Sam. I appreciate your passionate comments and I do need to correct something that I just said to you. The Board makes the motions; we don't make the motions. The administration (INAUDIBLE COMMENT). The Board will vote on a motion, that's correct. Thank you—that's just for clarity. I would now like to call upon Heather to come forward.

Heather: My name is Heather and I have a daughter in grade one and a son who will be attending Ministik in 2018—going into kindergarten. Parents of Ministik School have been told that the Wye school replacement project is not on EIPS' radar, at this time. However, it is my understanding that the Wye school replacement project is the number one priority on the amended EIPS three-year capital plan. You have a cost estimate and a site readiness checklist on your website. EIPS also stated in a recommendation report from April 2016, that the purpose of proposing the Heritage Hills site instead of the Ridge site for several reasons, one being that Fultonvale has the capacity to accommodate the rural students from Wye school and population growth. This was before the motion to close Ministik School was made. How do you know, in certainty that Fultonvale has the ability to accommodate both Ministik students, the rural Wye school students, when all of your future predictions and data have shared for Fultonvale have not included these students? It looks good on paper, the data you have presented for Fultonvale's future enrolment and capacity, but they don't include our students and the Wye rural students. We just want to know, what do the future enrolment predictions look like for Fultonvale with their students, our students and the Wye school students?

Dennis: Thank you, I am going to try to answer a bit of that question before we turn it over to the panel. I do know that Heather, in the document, and I believe it was just posted today, a very similar type of question. The Wye school students—if that school happens—and at this point and time it's not a guarantee specifically, they would be slated to go to the new site. It is not, again this is a decision that is down the road and I can't speak to it immediately right now, but those students would be slated to go to their site—would be what we'd be looking at. I'm going to actually turn it over though to, just a moment, I'm going to turn it over to the panel to see if they would like to respond to that question, if there is anyone. Ok, we have someone responding to that.



Calvin: Hi, when it comes to the Wye school replacement, it is on our three-year capital plan, and it is our number one priority—just to confirm that. However, we have not had any approval from Alberta Education or Alberta Infrastructure to move forward on that. But it is on our plans and at this point in time the plan is to take a replacement school, to get rid of the old school, put a new school there and the students will be transferred to that school, when it is built. However, that will be looked at a little closer, if we ever get to the point that it is approved. Does that make sense?

(INAUDIBLE COMMENT) 1:53:32

Dennis: If you would like to come back, Heather.

Heather: I guess my point being, there's conflicting comments. You are saying, if you could provide a document that says all those students are going to Heritage Hills, then great, but the document that we have found from April states that the rural Wye students could be going to Fultonvale. So that's added enrolment to Fultonvale.

Dave A.: Just to clarify around the establishment of boundaries. Establishment of boundaries for a school take place after the school is approved. So right now Wye replacement school is on Alberta Infrastructure's sunshine list. We have no funding, no commitment for that. We had to select a site before we put an application in for it. To give you a concrete example, we are building a school in Davidson Creek in Sherwood Park, that school was approved a little over a year ago. We are working on boundaries right now—we have another meeting tomorrow with the public. That questions has been asked frequently, you must know where the students are going to go to the replacement school, and the question is, boundaries are not looked at until well after the school has been approved. The statement that Fultonvale has capacity, that's not inaccurate but that doesn't mean we would send students there. Again the intention overall with the Wye replacement school, is that Wye students would go to the Wye replacement school. I'm qualifying that by saying we haven't done the boundary work on that school because it has not yet been approved.

Dennis: I would like to move on in the time frame here, Andrea.

(INAUDIBLE COMMENT)

Dennis: But 30 seconds takes away from the next person. To answer his question.

Andrea: I just wanted to mention that the reason we're knowing this is because we're looking at the Board's own documentation. It comes from an Elk Island Public Schools recommendation report in April where it stated that's where the students from Wye would go, is to Fultonvale.

Dennis: Thank you very much, Andrea. (audience applauds) I would like to call upon Spencer.

Spencer: Hi, my name is Spencer, I'm a former student here, a community member and hopefully next year a parent of a child that goes here. Regards to the savings that are projected, I would like the Board to really pay attention. You are talking about \$533,000 worth of savings. As a professionally designated accountant and a management consultant for government and public sector clients, I find it very alarming that you are calling an allocation a saving—that is not a savings. That is simply, you are not going to give this money to this school, it doesn't save money across; your numbers will be the same. I don't know how you would consider that a cost? Your numbers also don't take in any offset costs. There will be increased costs by moving on 100 plus kids to Fultonvale. It will increase utilities, increase wear and tear and there will be increased administration. Don't let them believe that there won't be eventually increased administration—we're increasing 25-30 per cent more student enrollment at that school. Utilities, wear and tear, will go up—there's also transition costs. All of these things will lead into—at best—a cost neutral situation. If not, end up costing the district money overall. So yes, Ministik doesn't cost you money, you don't save anything; you close a good school, and important school and it makes no difference to your finances. You will be sitting here one year, hearing Chicken Little stories that we are running out of money while you actually have money in the bank. That is not good education for our students. Thank you. (audience applauds)

Dennis: Thank you, Spencer. I'm going to turn it over to – Ken, I believe, was actually next. Ken, if you could come forward please. We are getting close to our 8:30 mark, so I'm hopeful that we can finish off the last few people here.

Ken: I got to say thanks everyone, you have all kept it together. This is good. \$1.7 million. I run a small company, I had to save that and more last year to save it. We are going to say forced attrition was part of it; most of us call it layoffs. We had to renegotiate contracts, we had to renegotiate our phones, we had to renegotiate utilities—we had to do a lot of work. My budget is nowhere near where yours is—when you are saying you have found everything you can do, you aren't even looking.

The second part is, you guys are talking about two year, ten year-plus plans. These schools are infrastructure to the system. There should be a 50 year plan, a 100 year plan—there is a lot of land here, land is one of the hardest things to obtain now. The County is quickly marching in this direction—this is the farthest reaching school. If anything we should be putting these modular in as a temporary Band-Aid to the school. Yup, it is old. Then the next phase of this plan for this school should be make it a K-9 school in this area. Bring it up, build this school and give yourself an option to get further out in this County—the County is not stopping. When my dad was a kid, Sherwood Park wasn't even close to Highway 21. Population isn't decreasing. Keep the school, put it back together, find the money and allow the population to get out here. We need it. (audience applauds)

Dennis: Thank you Ken. I would like to call on Karen at this time please.

Karen: I'm Karen Allen, I am a parent of a student here and I own a veterinary clinic in the community that is quite involved with this school. I do appreciate all of you coming here—I

know we have all long days already. I didn't organize this with Spencer, but sort of further to what he said; I've reviewed all the literature for consolidating schools, consolidation districts, closing small rural schools. That is sort of what we do—we are taught to review the literature and practice evidence-based medicine—it's sort of the safest thing for us to do. I mean we can't project what is going to happen in the future. We don't know what the bus routes are going to be, we don't know what the expenses are going to be, but we can certainly look back at four decades of research on school consolidations and they have not been able to conclusively show any fiscal savings in any of the studies. Experts in economics, educational policy and education all conclude that it's not the right thing to do. In fact, the sort of more-forward thinkers in educational policies now—sorry I'm not a public speaker—they are really coming out and saying, you know it is a mistake to close small schools, large schools are not the answer. (audience applauds) I guess my question is, based on four decades of research by some extremely qualified people, why do we think we're going to save money doing something really no one else has been able to do? In fact, some of the districts have experienced an increase of expenses as Spencer suggested. I would also like to close my comments with is—we have a lot of intellect, a lot of passion in this group and everybody is worried about our children's education and I think it is not a good use of our time to be at odds with all of these groups when we have a bigger issue to resolve in our educational system in our province. And how we need to streamline it and find efficiencies—we should be spending our time doing that, because the research shows that this is not going to work long term. Thank you. (audience applauds)

Dennis: Thank you very much, Karen. I appreciate your well thought out remarks. Now I am going to beg for the forgiveness of all of you and ask – the last two speakers, that we do hear them yet, and if you are willing to, we will go over the 8:30 mark by a few minutes. Hopefully not past 8:35, which was the scheduled time. (audience applauds) If I could ask Anita to come forward.

Anita: Hi, I am Anita. I have lived in this community—Hastings Lake actually community for 36 years. My oldest son started here at Ministik in 1980 and I have seen a ton of things happen in this school. Bus routes, they were picked up at 7:20 got here to school just before 9, so I know all about long bus rides and all that thing. My comment is about the designated school boundaries and I'm thinking that maybe they should be revamped—I can see when I look on that map, Fultonvale is huge area; Ardrossan is a huge area; Uncas and Wye school are very small, and Ministik actually has a very large area. Bussing kids from our area up to Uncas is out of the question. There are two roads that go from 14 up to Uncas and one is a back-track. It's 210 to Vail road or Ardrossan road 222—we have lakes everywhere in the way. I'm thinking that Ministik should be added to and some of the strain taken off of Fultonvale. Fultonvale can take some of the Ardrossan kids, the Wye kids, and it sounds like, just from what I heard tonight is there are closed for taking kids in. And I just wanted to ask about one thing that they didn't mention on the ride times for the busses—all these kids are going to be on the bus an hour earlier than what they are right now; your ride time might be shorter, but they are on an hour earlier—7:30 in the morning. (audience applauds)

Dennis: Thank you. We are going to close with Dave.

Dave: My name is Dave Franscoli, I have been part of this community since 1999. I was part of the 2002 proposal to close Ministik—thank God we were successful. Just using some rough numbers, let's say 15 kids graduate a year. In 15 years, that's 225 kids that have moved on. I can tell you those are amazing, amazing, individuals that have moved on. (audience applauds) That is one thing that this school does. It creates positive self-confident, self-assured, non-bullying individuals—and there is no price that can be put on that. (audience applauds)

So today I had a little time, or made a little time, that's how important this is—Googled a few things, went back into my wife, who passed away—she was interval in saving this school and we had a few files that I found. And that was hard because we were renovating and we have everything packed away. Anyways, I looked and it's the same figures and the same blah blah blah and bus riding, it's all about saving money. It all comes down, no doubt it's saving money. Alberta has a school budget of \$7.9 billion, not million, billion. We see Elk Island whatever the numbers were. Of that, and Mark this goes back to you have looked everywhere to save costs, everywhere, and we have come down to Ministik, that is looking everywhere. \$7.9 billion of that 75 per cent goes to what they call compensation. That's salaries, pensions, staff. In my business we call that overheads, we call that indirects. If I ran my business with 75 per cent indirects, I wouldn't be in business very long. So Mark and the board, and the Trustees, I suggest you go back and look at the whole picture.

I'm going to quote, I'm going to quote this by closing—I was going to ask everyone to guess, but I am not going to do that—from our esteemed Premier, I didn't vote for her, but that is politics. "Our plan focuses on reducing class sizes."—Your plan does not—"Our schools are at the heart of the communities, they matter to every family in our province, we will deliver real relief for families and protect the principles of public education by focusing on the right priorities. Our plan will help all students reach their full potential."—this plan does not meet that objective. (audience applauds)

Dennis: Thank you for your comments. Certainly, as you're looking at the provincial plan, you do have Member Cortes-Vargas here, you can certainly discuss that here with her directly—I would encourage you to do so.

As well, we have come to the close of our evening. I would like to say thank you—you have been an amazing group of people. I really appreciate the questions, the comments; we have had a very attention group of Trustees here this evening to hear the passion that you have brought forward in each of your responses. At this point in time, I just wanted to remind you then, updates of course on the Division website, all the time, questions, comments coming in—we try to respond to you in a timely manner. Tomorrow, three delegations will be presenting to the Board of Trustees and we will keep you posted. And if you have questions, please let us know. Thank you and have a good evening. (audience applauds)