

LAKEHEAD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

**MINUTES OF REGULAR BOARD MEETING**

Board Room/Microsoft Teams  
Jim McCuaig Education Centre

2026 FEB 24  
7:30 p.m.

**TRUSTEES PRESENT:**

Leah Vanderwey (Chair)  
Ellen Chambers  
Pat Johansen  
Donica LeBlanc  
Ron Oikonen

George Saarinen (virtual)  
Ryan Sitch  
Scottie Wemigwans (Indigenous Trustee)  
Eryn Genno (Indigenous Student Trustee)  
Breanna Bruce (Student Trustee)

**ABSENT WITH REGRETS:**

Trudy Tuchenhagen

**SENIOR ADMINISTRATION:**

Sherri-Lynne Pharand, Director of Education  
Heather Harris, Superintendent of Education: Child Care & Elementary Education  
Jane Lower, Superintendent of Education  
Patti-Jo Pesola-Brunton, Superintendent of Education: Math Lead  
Michelle Probizanski, Superintendent of Education  
Kirsti Alaksa, Superintendent of Business

**PUBLIC SESSION:**

1. **Call to Order**

Meeting called to order by Chair Vanderwey at 7:02 p.m.

2. **Disclosure of Conflict of Interest – None**

3. **Approval of Agenda**

Moved by Trustee Johansen

Seconded by Trustee LeBlanc

*“THAT the Agenda for Regular Board Meeting, February 24, 2026, be approved.”*

**CARRIED**

4. Resolve into Committee of the Whole – Closed Session

Moved by Trustee Sitch

Seconded by Trustee Wemigwans

*“THAT we resolve into Committee of the Whole – Closed Session with Trustee Vanderwey in the chair to consider the following:*

*- Confirmation of Committee of the Whole – Closed Session Minutes  
- Regular Board Meeting – September 23, 2025*

*- Property Matter (023-26)  
- Personnel Matters  
- Financial Matter*

*and that this meeting shall not be open to the public pursuant to Section 207 (2) of the Education Act as amended.”*

CARRIED

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – CLOSED SESSION (7:00 P.M.)

5. Committee of the Whole – Closed Session

PUBLIC SESSION – 7:30 P.M.

6. Report of the Committee of the Whole – Closed Session

Moved by Trustee Oikonen

Seconded by Trustee Johansen

*“THAT the Report of the Regular Board – Committee of the Whole – Closed Session be adopted with the following recommendations therein:*

*‘THAT Lakehead District School Board approve the Committee of the Whole – Closed Session Minutes of Regular Board Meeting, September 23, 2025.’”*

CARRIED

7. Amendment to Agenda

Moved by Trustee Chambers

Seconded by Trustee LeBlanc

*“THAT Lakehead District School Board approve the Amendment of the agenda for the Regular Board meeting, February 24, 2026, to include a presentation from the Northwestern Ontario Regional Science Fair as section 9.2.”*

CARRIED

8. Land Acknowledgement

Trustee LeBlanc read the Land Acknowledgement.

9. Consent Agenda

Moved by Trustee LeBlanc

Seconded by Trustee Sitch

*“THAT Lakehead District School Board approve the consent agenda, including items 8.1 and 8.2, as presented.”*

CARRIED

10. Delegations/ Presentations

10.1 Trustees Character Award – David Kunnas

Donica LeBlanc, Vice-Chair, presented David Kunnas, Core French Teacher, McKellar Park Public Schools, with the Trustees’ Character Award for his volunteering, promotion of teamwork, inclusion and embodiment of Lakehead Public Schools values belonging, empathy, integrity, and respect.

10.2 Northwestern Ontario Regional Science Fair

Leah Vanderwey, Chair, introduced Jason Pilot and Rebecca Cross, Co-Chairs of the Northwestern Ontario Regional Science Fair, who presented their delegation to the Board. They informed the Board that the upcoming science fair will be held on April 7, 2026 at Lakehead University, in the University Centre Building Main Dining Hall. All trustees’ questions were answered.

11. Reports

11.1 Director’s Reports

11.1.1 Belong – N/A

11.1.2 Succeed

11.1.2.1 Student Success (022-26)

Jane Lower, Superintendent of Education, introduced Roger Drcar, Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Recruiter/Specialist High Skills Major/School College Work Initiative/ Student Success Resource Teacher, and David Hakala, Student Success Resource Teacher, who presented the report. All trustees’ questions were addressed.

Director Pharand took a moment to express Lakehead District School Boards appreciation to Roger Drcar for the many years of exemplary work with Lakehead Public Schools and wish him well in his upcoming retirement.

11.1.3 Reconcile – N/A

11.1.4 Other

11.1.4.1 New Teacher Induction Program Report (021-26)

Patti-Jo Pesola-Brunton, Superintendent of Education, introduced Kali Bernst, Principal of Indigenous Education and Program, along with Kathleen Andrews, Student Success Lead, who presented the report. All trustees' questions were addressed.

11.2 Chairs Reports – N/A

11.3 Student/Indigenous Student Trustee Reports

11.3.1 Student Trustee February Report (Handout)

Breanna Bruce, Student Trustee, presented her February report to the Board. Items addressed in the report included:

- attending the Virtual Reach-Ahead class with Trustee Saarinen;
- meeting with Director Pharand, and Indigenous Student Trustee Genno about planning a meeting with some of the regions other student trustees; and
- a meeting with Student Trustee Mentor, Trustee Saarinen, and Indigenous Student Trustee Genno to discuss some future goals and concerns for student trustees in Ontario.

All trustees' questions were addressed.

11.3.2 Indigenous Student Trustee February Report (Handout)

Eryn Genno, Indigenous Student Trustee, presented her February report to the Board. Items addressed in the report included:

- reflecting on attending Kindergarten Night with Student Trustee Bruce;
- meeting with Director Pharand, and Indigenous Student Trustee Genno about planning a meeting with some of the regions other student trustees; and
- a meeting with Student Trustee Mentor, Trustee Saarinen, and Indigenous Student Trustee Genno to discuss some future goals and concerns for student trustees in Ontario.

All trustees' questions were addressed.

11.4 Reports of Standing Committees – N/A

11.5 Reports of External Board or Agency Representation

11.5.1 Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) Report

Trustee Sith updated members on the following items:

- OPSBA Board of Directors meeting – Saturday, February 28, 2026;
- no announcements from the Minister of Education on the future of school board trustees, parliament comes back into session on March 23, 2026;
- trustees should have received an email containing a letter from the Black Trustee Caucus to the Ministry on the weakening of anti-racism oversight which is creating equity issues within school boards in Ontario; and
- Special Board meeting on March 12, 2026, to determine the future of OPSBA.

All trustees' questions were addressed.

12. Reports of Special (Ad Hoc) Committees

12.1 Communications Committee Request for Approval of Correspondence (025-26)

Moved by Trustee Chambers

Seconded by Trustee Johansen

*"THAT Lakehead District School Board approve the request from the Communications Committee to send correspondence to the Minister of Education and the Ombudsman as outlined in Report No. 025-26."*

CARRIED

13. Special Orders – N/A

14. Unfinished Business/ General Orders – N/A

15. Notices of Motion – N/A

16. Announcements

16.1 Chair Vanderwey informed the Board that the following events were attended by trustees:

- February 20, 2026 – Director Pharand and Chair Vanderwey met with MPP Holland regarding Transportation and Special Education Supports and Services.
- February 23, 2026 – Trustee Information Session – The Role of the Trustees

