

Director out at YRDSB after damning report



By Brock Weir

J. Philip Parappally is out at the York Region District School Board following a damning report by the Ministry of Education looking into racism and discrimination within the YRDSB.

In an announcement Wednesday morning, the Board announced they would be seeking a new Director of Education, after nearly four years with Mr. Parappally at the helm.

'We wish to acknowledge Mr. Parappally's 17 years of service with our Board and wish him the very best on the next chapter of his life,' said Board Chair Lorelea Carruthers.

The Board added: 'In the interest of ensuring the education of students is not affected during this time, the YRDSB has already begun the search for an interim Director. The Board will be working directly with Ontario's Ministry of Education to determine the best candidate to fill the vacancy, and to allow work to continue with minimal disruption.'

In the meantime, Leslie Johnstone, Associate Director of Education, has been appointed Acting Director of Education.

'We look forward to getting back to serving parents and students with integrity and excellence in an environment that is frugal, transparent, and free of bias,' Carruthers said.

The announcement builds upon an apology Ms. Carruthers issued to students and parents within the YRDSB after the Minister's report which prescribed a number of key actions to get the board back on track when it comes to diversity, equity, and expenses of Board Trustees.

In a statement last week, Ms. Carruthers said the community was looking for actions, not words.

'But, I also believe that words are a part of what brought us to this moment,' she said. 'So, let me offer these words, which I say to you from my heart as a mom, as Board Chair, as a person: I am truly sorry that so many of you families, staff members, community partners and, in particular, our students were hurt so deeply. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I apologize.'

'As the elected chair of the Board, I take responsibility for what happened, and for what will happen next. [Last week] trustees met to discuss the report and directions from the Minister. I can say that all of the trustees every one of us are on the same page. We are united, working together on a clear path, and will begin taking action immediately.'

'It won't be action behind closed doors. There have been too many closed doors. At my first Board meeting as chair, I paraphrased Justice Louis Brandeis who said, 'Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants.' We now have that light shining on us. We are committed to moving forward in an open and transparent manner to restore public confidence in our Board and ensure we are providing our students with a safe, inclusive and welcoming learning environment.'