

School board appoints Interim Director

By Brock Weir

Kathi Wallace has been named Interim Director of Education for the York Region District School Board.

Ms. Wallace, who comes to the position previously serving as Director of Education for the Simcoe Country District School Board, succeeds J. Philip Parappally, who parted ways with the York Region District School Board (YRDSB) after the Ministry of Education issued a damning report on systemic racism and entitlement within the YRDSB, along with recommendations on how to rectify the situation.

Ms. Wallace's appointment came into effect this Wednesday, May 17.

"We welcome the announcement of Kathi Wallace as Interim Director of Education," said Lorelea Carruthers, Chair of the York Region District School Board, in a statement. "Ms. Wallace is an experienced, knowledgeable and respected leader in education. Her fresh perspective will help us operate successfully as a Board to ensure the best interests of our students, schools and communities are being met as we undergo the changes ahead."

Added Ms. Wallace: "I look forward to working with the Board of Trustees, senior team and other staff members, as well as students, families and community partners in York Region. My priority is student achievement and well-being, including building inclusive learning and working environments; implementing the Minister's directives; and continuing the positive work to which the Board remains committed."

In that same statement, the Board said they are in the process of developing a recruitment policy for a permanent Director of Education.

Ms. Wallace began her career as an elementary school teacher in 1977. From that beginning in a Grade 2 classroom, she has served as a vice principal, principal, and superintendent. She served as Director of Education for the Simcoe County District School Board from 2009 until her retirement last year.

The appointment comes at a time of renewal for the YRDSB.

Just days before the announcement of Ms. Wallace's appointment, the Board reiterated they are continuing to meet the recommendations as set out by Minister of Education Mitzie Hunter to make the YRDSB a more equitable environment.

Thus far, the Board says they have completed a report on support and recovery strategies for students and staff who have been impacted by equity issues, a report on putting a process in place to address human rights complaints, creating a senior administration position responsible for equity, as well as an office of Integrity Commissioner.

Other milestones reached include a plan for equity training for the Board, governance training for senior administration and the director, and a plan to "rebuild trust with communities in the Board."

"Trustees and staff are united in fostering a school board that is welcoming, inclusive and open," said Ms. Carruthers. "YRDSB trustees and staff will continue to work overtime on building an educational system that is second to none. We intend to continue to do what students, parents and stakeholders expect of us. That means transforming public education here in York Region. That is the commitment I have made on behalf of trustees and staff" and it is a commitment we intend to keep."