

Public school board trustees sworn in at inaugural meeting

By Sam Odrowski

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The Rainy River District School Board held its inaugural meeting last Tuesday evening at the Education Centre here.

The trustees said their oaths before being sworn in, with Fort Frances trustees Raymond Roy and David Kircher later being acclaimed as board chair and vice-chair, respectively.

"Thank you to my fellow trustees for allowing me to serve as the chair of the Rainy River District School Board," Roy said during the meeting.

"It is both an honour and a privilege.

"The trust you have placed in me is very much appreciated and it gives me the confidence I will need to serve as chair," he added.

"With the support of my trustee colleagues, I will fully commit to serving the board, the students, the staff, and the constituents of the Rainy River District," Roy pledged.

Roy also welcomed Kircher into his role as vice-chair and new trustee Kathryn Pierroz as the board's Ontario Public School Board Association representative.

He also extended his best wishes to new trustees John Fuhrer, Jeff Lehman, and David Loewen, along with new First Nations' trustee Robin McGinnes.

As well, Roy thanked student trustee Katelyn Bruyere for continuing to provide the perspective of the student body in her role.

Director of Education Heather Campbell was lauded for her work, and Roy said he looks forward to working with her and the board's senior staff over the next four-year term.

"Your commitment and passion for education is contagious and your inspiring leadership motivates others," he remarked.

"I'd like to thank all of our staff who every day go above and beyond for our students," he added.

"Our classrooms and communities are better places because of your tireless commitment."

Jeff Lehman, who is representing Atikokan, said it's an honour to have been sworn in and he looks forward to filling the shoes of former trustee Mike Lewis.

"Here's an opportunity to continue the work that Mike Lewis did in terms of building bridges between Fort Frances and Atikokan," Lehman said.

He has a strong background in education and is eager to serve the public system.

"Having been an educator for close to 38 years, you don't put the brakes on very quickly so this is a good transition for me," Lehman explained.

Much has changed since he started teaching and as education continues to evolve, Lehman hopes to help teachers provide students with the type of education that will make a difference in their lives.

Moving forward, Lehman aims to stay on top of the duties assigned to him as trustee and infuse a sense of humour, as well as professionalism, into the role.

"If there's something I can



Kathryn Pierroz said her oath and pledged allegiance to the Queen before being sworn in as a trustee during the Rainy River District School Board's inaugural meeting at the Education Centre here last Tuesday night.

—Sam Odrowski photo

do to help our communities make better places for our kids to learn, that's what I want to do," he vowed.

Fuhrer, representing Emo, Chapple, and Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls, said it felt really good to be officially sworn in and that he's eager to serve the community.

He enjoyed the trustee training sessions they had received the previous week and said they went really well.

Fuhrer said he hopes to put more common sense into the board's policies during his term as trustee.

"I want to make things more understandable for people," he remarked. "That was part of the reason why I ran."

When making big decisions, Fuhrer also hopes to gather input from parents and provide their perspective.

"We should give more rights to the parents," he stressed. "They should have more of a say of what goes on."

Fuhrer is grateful to be on the board and looks forward to serving his constituents.

"I'd just like to thank all the people who put their trust in me to do this job for the next four years and if they have any concerns, please contact me so I can try to represent their views at the board level," he noted.

Loewen, representing Dawson, Lake of the Woods, Morley, and Rainy River, said the position feels very official and concrete since being sworn in.

"It feels very inclusive with the rest of the trustees," he remarked. "We're all one team and one body working together for the same cause, and we'll be striving for great education in this district."

Having just come off a four-year term as councillor in Morley, Loewen hopes to use his background in politics to help him in the governance aspects of serving as trustee.

He is most looking forward to providing quality education and academics to the public board's students while exploring new opportunities.

"I hope that we can help kids get excited about the fu-

ture and get really plugged into what is available to them," Loewen enthused.

Pierroz, representing La Vallee and Alberton, is excited about her position as trustee and looking forward to her next meeting.

"I'm really excited to represent my constituents," she enthused. "We have a great school in our area, as well as across the board in general."

Pierroz said public education is important to her because it is the foundation of future generations.

"A strong public education system, at the end of the day, is what upholds our entire community," she reasoned.

"When our schools are thriving and when our children are thriving, our communities can really grow."

As Pierroz and her fellow trustees get into the decision-making aspects of their position, she hopes to weigh out all the variables on major votes.

"Moving forward, it is about looking at every issue that's presented at the time and how that's going to affect the whole overall plan and strategic mission," she explained.

Roy, meanwhile, is eager to get working with his fellow trustees and continuing the work that was begun by the former board as they endeavour to provide quality education to students across the district.

"As always, it is our students who give us purpose," he said. "They are the reason we are here."

"Through our strategic plan, the Rainy River District School Board has a strong sense of direction and purpose that focuses on two critical areas: the culture of lifelong learning and a culture of caring," Roy continued.

"It will continue to be our responsibility as trustees to ensure that the vision expressed in this plan is realized throughout the board," he noted.

"As trustees, we must empower all students to believe in themselves, to achieve, and to dream."