

Funds earmarked for school merger

By **Nicholas Donaldson**

Staff writer

ndonaldson@fortfrances.com

Funding for the consolidation of Atikokan High School and the North Star Community School into one K-12 school is starting to come together.

During its regular monthly meeting held last Tuesday (Dec. 5), the Rainy River District School Board approved three resolutions from the Finance Committee to have certain funding reserves allocated to the consolidation fund.

These included the School Condition Index and School Renewal (\$2,058,479), Unrestricted Accumulated Surplus (\$3,500,000), Internally Restricted Education Leader and Mine Centre Reserve

(\$498,704), and Restricted Reserves (\$1,200,291).

This comes to a total of \$7,257,474, pending Ministry of Education approval.

A draft of the Finance Committee minutes from its Nov. 28 meeting notes the committee received a report on the status of the Atikokan consolidation business plan proposal to determine next steps.

"It was agreed that the Atikokan High School site continues to be the only viable option that will have the most benefit to the students and community of Atikokan," the minutes read.

A meeting with the board-assigned capital analyst confirmed the proposal would be more attractive if the funding gap between the two options was reduced.

This led to the decision to draw from board reserves to fund the gap following a review of its accumulated surplus.

The recommended resolutions also included board approval to proceed with the Atikokan consolidation, which passed.

The resolution to consolidate Atikokan High School and the North Star Community School into a new K-12 school, on the high school site, was passed during a special board meeting held Sept. 13 at Atikokan High School.

Also at last Tuesday's meeting, trustees;

- held elections that saw Dianne McCormack nominated and acclaimed as chair, Michael Lewis nominated and acclaimed as vice-chair, and Don

McBride nominated and acclaimed as the Ontario Public School Board Association rep;

- recognized Mine Centre School's "You're the Chef" program for its monthly recognition of excellence;

- received a presentation on supports and programming for students with special education needs from Special Education Administrator Char Bliss;

- heard reports from student trustee Lemuel Carradice and board chair Dianne McCormack; and

- received the Director's Update from Director of Education Heather Campbell, as well as the personnel report from Kevin Knutsen, the executive officer of Employee and Labour Relations.