

Bill Suter, principal, Ministik School

- Good evening everyone, it is wonderful to see so many people here
- Set out 100 chairs and many more people are here from the community tonight
- This is the now the 4th meeting in the gym for people related to the possible closure of Ministik and the 5th meeting is next week, with a few more meetings to be held before this is dealt with here
- Acknowledged school council chair Pauline Gurnett – Pauline has worked tirelessly to labour on behalf of the school community, thank you Pauline
- Throughout our past meetings and the emails circulated I have been impressed of the Ministik community, for being very respectful, direct and honest
- Tonight is an opportunity to ask questions, ask clarity and even respectfully disagree. It's great to see how the community has stood up and how they have done their business – I am very proud to be part of it
- In the end the Board of Trustees will decide on the fate of Ministik School. Those people on both sides of the argument are to present people with the truth and the argument. Let this evening be for information and clarification so we can go forward and understand what the issues are, how both sides see these issues, look for common ground and figure out what we are going to do and find that common ground
- I'd like to take a moment to read the following from excerpt from an email I saw recently it says:
 - To the Elk Island Public School Board, I am the grandmother of a young man who attends Ministik school. I have had four sons who attended schools in two provinces in Canada and two in Europe and I have never experienced anything like the community that has both educated and embraced my grandson. [remaining content of the letter follows] (He has excelled in all areas of his personhood and I attribute a lot of that to the positive hours he spends at school. His teachers encourage him scholastically, socially and morally. Ministik offers a quality that we rarely find in our society, "belonging". An example of this was at the recent school dance in which students, families and staff could be found interacting on much more than a superficial basis. To close this school is a shameful commentary on how children and families are valued less than the financial bottom line. Our goals as educators should be to develop "whole" people not just to push students through the system. Trust me, by herding children together and neglecting their personhood you will continue to reap the disfunction you are sewing. I am pleading with you as one who is watching the decline, please save this safe haven.)
- With all of you here, I want to take advantage of the moment to praise the staff of Ministik School. I can speak on that for the whole evening but that is not why we are here – thank you staff and parents for making the past 4 years the most memorable and wonderful.
- Tonight you will have the opportunity to speak with a committee of representatives from EIPS and the important sessions and to educate you, the format for tonight and explain how that is going to work. But first I would like to call on Mr. Mark Liguori, superintendent EIPS to give us an overview of the situation and tell us how it started and how it will end.

Mark Liguori, superintendent, Elk Island Public Schools

- Good evening everyone and thank you very much. I know this is a difficult meeting

- I'd like to begin by acknowledging the parents and staff at Ministik school. As you well know as parents and members of the community...Ministik school is an amazing school 1 of 42 schools in EIPS.
- The reason that you are here is that you are passionate about the education your children have received or are receiving or in the future that you hope to receive. I think it is important to acknowledge everyone - the parents, the community members, everyone that has shown up this evening, to share your opinions, your beliefs and your guidance we all have...from Ministik school. It is important that...the board and administration has some difficult decisions to make as we head down this road.
- I would like to acknowledge the technology, the letters, the emails and phone calls, the meetings that get requested and that I have been looking to accommodate from those people because it is important that we hear what your opinions are, what you value in education and what your beliefs are about your children and the direction of EIPS
- I would also like to acknowledge publically Pauline and Diane, who have been relentless advocates who have met with me on a number of occasions to express not only their concerns but to also understand the process we are undergoing over the next few of months
- And so this leads us to "Why are we here" – the technical part of why we are here is the motion put forward by the board of trustees relative to the potential closure of Ministik school. I think most of you are well versed on why this motion was put forward...but really it is an opportunity for us to examine the viability of Ministik school and take a look at our board operations as well
- The reason that we've embarked...the Division faces a fiscal reality, and that reality increases every year. Over the past few years the revenue received by the board do not match expenditures and therefore over time our board has had to use surplus dollars to support day to day operations within our schools. The circumstance simply is not sustainable, the status quo will simply not suffice. It will not suffice because the day has come where we are now spending down below our threshold of dollars available to provide this entire division with unallocated dollars that are to be spent for that rainy day and that rainy day is here
- It's not news that we like to deliver, it's not news that we relish, but it is obviously news that I think everyone needs to understand
- Much has been focused on the condition of this school and how well it has well it has been maintained or not, but that really isn't it
- The board has continued to be fiscally responsible and taken many steps before this one in order to the financial picture that we have made and I applaud the board for its adulation.
- As I said, the reason that we're here is to talk about Ministik school, for parents and community members to have their questions asked and answered, and to that end for the next two nights - this evening and on the 15th we'll be able to have dialogue in four different sessions
- So what I will extend to you is I know some of you are mad, I know some of you view my words have been and would like to speak to me about that, and I understand that. What I will simply say is I would like everyone here to participate as fully as possible in the next meeting and for those who wish to speak just with me to do so in this area; I will remain in the gym as long as it takes this evening to answer any questions that anyone may have
- I would also like to acknowledge our trustees that are here this evening, and the trustees will remain in the gym and will also circulate throughout the sessions but for the most part we will remain in this gym.
- More than anything else I think that we need to have an open dialogue, no matter how pressure-filled or emotional it may take, as only with that will ...the board take that an be able to make the best decision possible, no stone should be left unturned and I think that the public

members of this school community should have the right to ask questions of us and equally have the right to receive the appropriate answers (but for some of them we will need some time to answer, because some of the answers may be complex)

- You are not here to hear me speak this evening, you have lots of questions, you may want to ask me those, as I indicated, I will be remaining here

Dennis Dykau, corporate secretary, Elk Island Public Schools

- I would also like to begin by thanking everyone for coming out this evening. It is really great to see such a great turnout, I am Dennis Dykau, corporate secretary for eips and I would like to take a few moments to explain the process for the evening
- When you came in you receive a handout with 4 colour paper – pick up as exit gym if you don't
- These figures provide information for the 4 sessions based upon the various comments and letters and feedback we have received
- These sessions are transportation, infrastructure, education and a general session
- Room numbers and times are provided and the corresponding figures outside of each room where the session is being held, we would ask as much as possible if you could follow the order to ensure that we do not have overcrowding in any one session at one time and that everyone has the opportunity to be part of each conversation to ask questions and hear responses on a variety of topics. Each 25 min session will be hosted by a facilitator from eips and will also be attended by various eips personnel who work in that particular area in addition we will have a recorder at each session to capture questions and responses and answers from eips personnel
- Our commitment will be to post the minutes from each various sessions tomorrow or the next day on our division website
- During the sessions the minutes will be projected on the Smart board in classrooms and asked facilitator/recorder to check with you to confirm the information is captured correct
- The sessions will open with questions/comments from you then follow with responses or explanations, to facilitate an orderly collection of comments and to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to participate, your facilitator may prompt individuals to put up their hands and be recognized before statements can be made or comments.
- As well, please understand that in some cases we may need to get back to you with response to your question, for example, you may have a very specific question or comment regarding a budget item or something with a specific date or facts and figures, and that information will need to be checked. To ensure you get your answers we will be creating a list of questions based on the Ministik...and our commitment to you is to post these on the division website along with the answers by early next week (Monday) on the website, so all questions and answers will be on the website.
- Topics:
 - Transportation – bus routes and ride times
 - Infrastructure – building health and safety
 - Education – areas related to students and student support
 - General – budget, staffing, demographics and other topics, etc.
- If you have any questions of a personal nature 1:1 in the gym and someone will assist you there
- We will also have a transportation staff member here in the gym to provide specific bus routes information for your child (do not ask this in the transportation session as this information is personal and private, come to the gym and the transportation person will help with specific

information and not share publically as it relates to information in your file and personal information)

- Sessions 25 min in length and we do ask that you stay as much as possible within the time for the sessions as much as possible so everyone has same opportunity. We do recognize that some of you may have specific concerns or interested in one area only, you might choose to remain behind while the rest of the group moves to the next session. But please understand if you remain behind, to allow everyone has opportunity to be heard – others new to session will have the chance to first make their comments then those that stayed back will be able to ask their questions. Please don't drop in part way through as respect for those in attendance.
- I'd like to end with comments about next Wed. session – presently the same format, but with responses and comments from tonight & additional comments you might like to make as well. Unable to make it, visit the eips website, updating essentially daily.
- Understand that we will make adjustments in the schedule to facilitate the process and to adjust for your needs as well
- Thank you very much for coming and Dennis also staying behind in gym as well for questions.

Comment from individual on closure of meeting

I'd like to mention that topics don't look very good. I feel like we are breaking up a very meaningful group over here. This is a little condescending to have gingerbread men in unique colours here, we're not children. I just want to speak to that, I just feel that it is manipulative.

Response: Thank you for your comment, and we will think that we'll take that forward into next week's meeting, I think for tonight, the plan is in place and we need to continue with that plan, but we will certainly will consider that going forward and think about that for next week's format and thank you for your comment.