

October 26, 2006 Board Meeting

Student Trustee Report

At this time, Student Trustee K. Hart made the following remarks

“Good evening, Mr. Chair, Mr. Director, Trustees, Staff, Ladies and Gentlemen.

As our term gets well under way, Jeff and I have been able to partake in more of what will become our customary activities over the next year. One of our most valuable assets in terms of interactive student discussions is the York Region Presidents’ Council. On September 27th, we were able to attend the first YRPC meeting of the school year.

York Region Presidents’ Council is a student-run committee of secondary school representatives from all across York Region. They meet bi-weekly to discuss student issues, and to help connect Student Councils. The main focus of each meeting is a ‘sharing’ time where each school is allowed to address the assembly about what events are taking place at their school, what problems they have run into, and what solutions they have come up with to solve those problems. Student Trustees also share, in a section called the ‘Student Trustee Update’. This section outlines our activities over the past two weeks, Board issues and the outlook for York Region education over the next few years. Jeff and I gave the first update this month, and were quite frankly overwhelmed by the interest students showed in the issues we brought up. What was meant as a quick five-minute update turned into a half-hour forum of thoughts, opinions, ideas and first-hand experiences. We are extremely thrilled about this year’s YRPC members and their desires not only to maintain their respective student populations, but to effect change and always strive to be that much better.

The culmination of all these discussions is a wealth of information about schools and student involvement. I am delighted to say that YRPC has put this valuable information to good use. This year they will be editing and re-publishing a Student Council Manual, to be distributed among Secondary School Student Governments. It acts as a reference, with sections on diverse topics from ‘How to Write a Constitution’ to ‘How to Find a DJ for Your School Dance’.

YRPC presents this manual with the hopes of helping the incoming Student Councils to be as effective as possible and to benefit from the wisdom of past Student Councils. This project represents how past Student Councils have utilized their unity in YRPC to help future generations. However, in addition to developing and furthering student leadership in York Region, YRPC also plans to expand this unity to other causes.

One of YRPC’s goals this year is to create an inter-school awareness campaign. This campaign will be to support a cause agreed upon by YRPC’s General Assembly, and will be a joint mission to both raise awareness and raise money for a charity that supports our cause. While we are still in the preliminary stages of such a campaign, YRPC members seem to be most interested in helping the current situation in Darfur.

Darfur is a region in Sudan, where a militia group called 'Janjaweed' has formed, and is systematically attacking certain ethnic groups. The number of deaths has been estimated at 300,000 since the beginning of the conflict, with millions of others being displaced.

Many YRPC members feel that this is a horrible genocide and an extremely worthwhile cause to pursue. At our most recent meeting, we discussed several organizations whose goal is curbing the conflict in Darfur, whom we could support. YRPC also looked at different methods of fundraising, and more importantly, ways to raise knowledge and awareness of these events among students. This would be a joint project, organized by the YRPC and instituted by each Student Council within their own school. They are aware of the potential that could be reached when dozens of schools, and thousands of students, unite for a single cause.

However, the ability of such an organization to exist is not lost on myself or Jeff. Finally I would like to thank the Board for encouraging such student-led groups to exist. Although it is important to prepare and inspire learners for life in our changing world community, I say with confidence that you are also preparing learners to change our world community, and change it for the better. The members of the York Region Presidents' Council are dedicated student leaders, and I look forward to updating the Board on their initiatives in the near future.

Thank you."