

September Student Trustee Report

Sepideh Soltaninia

STUDENT TRUSTEE REPORT

At this time, Student Trustee S. Soltaninia made the following remarks.

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

As cliché as it sounds, I was truly stunned by how quickly time passed by this month. From the first week of school, it was easy to fall back into old habits and even easier to fall behind. However, being in the school environment and seeing first hand how the work of this Board translates into everyday activity, I became excited to truly start my work as student trustee.

This month, Jen and I began to take action on the ideas we had discussed during the summer months. First was the York Region wide newsletter “The Student Voice” which features an article from a specific organization or group’s struggles and successes in establishing an initiative. September’s article discusses a program at Newmarket High School that provides lunches for underprivileged children and those staying in shelters. It is a remarkable achievement that deserves Board-wide recognition.

Another initiative that Jen and I have been working hard on is the construction of the Student Trustee Booklet. This resource includes a letter from the both of us, lists our responsibilities as defined by the Board, explains “The Student Voice” newsletter, discusses the importance of political awareness, provides descriptions of the meetings we attend, outlines how the Board functions and the work of trustees. We hope that this booklet will help provide information to students about the position of student trustee. Furthermore, I anticipate that it will give students guidance about the areas that we can be of help to them.

Through these initiatives, Jen and I hope to increase awareness regarding the work of student trustees. From the countless questions I’ve been asked this month regarding the reason behind my picture in the school agenda planners, it is clear that few students are familiar with our position. However, the small number of emails that I have received gives me hope that there are students in the Region who are aware of the work that we do.

Although it is vital for both Jen and I to create a better understanding of our work, what we do is even more important. This month I was able to attend the Policy and By-Law Committee and Race Relations Advisory Committee meetings. Both of these committees have helped me obtain a greater understanding of how the Board functions. The Policy meeting allowed me to gain perspective on how policies are developed and reviewed and I look forward to working further with this committee. Policies are vital to creating Board-wide unity with regard to how schools function. Many policies also affect students directly and therefore I am delighted that my input as a student is highly welcomed.

The Race Relations Advisory Committee meeting was also very informative and helpful. As a student who immigrated to Canada, Board staff and programs have greatly helped me to adapt to Canadian culture. Thus, it was exceptionally interesting to sit among community representatives from all cultures and discuss multiculturalism within York Region's schools. As a student from a very diverse school and community, I look forward to offering input regarding race relations from a student's perspective.

September did not solely mean the beginning of our efforts as Student Trustees, but also the beginning of the school year for thousands of York Region students. Schools are complex environments where students are constantly faced with social and academic pressures. As students, both Jen and I feel the impact of all these factors and we are thankful that this Board is so welcoming of our input.

Thank you."