

## **Joint Meeting Minutes of the Board of Directors, and PLC Committee;**

**Friday, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010 in Winnipeg at Canada Inns Fort Garry Hotel**

The meeting was called into order at 7:00 pm.

All 5 members of the Board: Mr. Kermani, Mr. Azizkhani, Mr. Kamrouz, Mr. Saleh-Azad, and Mr. Doustshenas and all Persian Language Committee members: Ms. Sadri, Ms. Shooshtari, and Ms. Zebarjadian were present at the meeting.

The current meeting's agenda was accepted by all present members.

A motion was made by Mr. Azizkhani to accept the current agenda; Seconded by Mr. Saleh-Azad; 8 Approved, 0 Opposed, and 0 Abstained; **Motion carried.**

Mr. Kermani started the meeting with welcoming the PLC committee members and thanking them to be present with a fairly short notice. He mentioned that the idea behind this meeting is to clarify some important issues by the Board as well as addressing issues, and concerns mentioned in the recent letter of PLC to the Board.

Before the discussion began, it was reminded by the Board's secretary, Mr. Kamrouz that the draft of the previous joint meeting's minutes was already sent to the PLC members to be reviewed in order to be approved and finalized by ICM and posted on the website. Moreover, any modifications/additions to be made are asked to be in writing or emailed to him in order to be considered in the final draft; verbal changes are not accepted.

PLC progress report given by Mr. Kamrouz was very brief regarding a few more students added to the existing classes, an addition of new teachers and assistant teachers which have made a big difference in settling down the recent difficulties as a result of volunteer shortages. He talked about the recent financial decisions made by the committee without informing the Board which was not intentional by him or the committee, and was mainly due to his miscommunication, poor liaison, and the Board's unclear policies about financial matters, such as petty cash mechanism, and budget preparation.

The next agenda item discussed was the letter from PLC to the Board, dated Nov.22<sup>nd</sup> 2010, which raised the concerns of the PLC Committee members on a number of issues including the following:

- 1- Financial framework of the PLC, including:
  - The amount of petty cash of \$50.00 per year – members of the PLC requested reconsideration of this amount as it is too low for the PLC given the nature of its activities and function.
  - Lack of guidelines set by the Board as to what kind of expenses must be approved by the Board prior to their implementation by PLC – Members of the PLC raised their concern that lack of such guidelines has made confusion for them as when they can proceed in situations which require quick financial decisions
- 2- The relationship between the PLC and the Board, including:
  - Members of the PLC expressed their concern about Board not being fully aware of PLC's function, activities and the expanding responsibilities given the growth of Persian Language Classes.
  - Lack of understanding the nature of the PLC and how different it is from the other ICM committees

- The Board members not being present and involved in PLC activities – The members of PLC asked the ICM Board members to be present and more involved and visible in PLC activities, especially in meetings with parents, if possible

3- Communication between the PLC and the Board, including:

- Members of PLC expressed concern about the weak communication between ICM Board and PLC. They asked for better communication plans to be put in place to avoid future misunderstandings. One suggestion was that
- ICM liaison to provide weekly updates to the Board, by email, following the classes every Saturday, and PLC members being copied on the email
- This email should only include decisions made by the PLC that are financial or may affect the Board or other ICM committees; not to include any functional activities of the PLC

After hearing the above concerns, the Board has come up with the following resolution regarding the financial matters:

- The concept and operating mechanism of petty cash was clarified as it was misunderstood and misinformed before. The limit of \$50.00 for petty cash fund will not change and is supposed to be used by the PLC during the school year for emergencies and unexpected occasions only, without Board's approval. This amount will be replenished either when the fund is depleted completely or by the end of the month, whichever comes first.
- PLC is required to provide an annual forecasted budget to the Board in advance, at least five months prior to commencement of classes for every school year. At this point of time, PLC should present its budget for the rest of the school year from January to June of 2011, by the end of December 2010. Due to changing circumstances, if the exact amounts cannot be determined in the annual budget, it could be estimated based on its previous years' operations. This budget has to be estimated taking a 25% hidden or unexpected costs, as well as 3 to 5% inflation rate into account.
- Up to now, whatever financial decisions have been made and implemented by PLC and the Board being aware of can be carried over. From now on, all discounts and promotions, such as transportation cost reimbursement for volunteers, tuition fee forgiveness for teachers, and so forth, which have a long term financial effect, no matter what their nature are, must be presented to and approved by the Board prior to their implementation.
- Generally speaking, in order for any committee to sustain and remain operational, it has to be monetarily self sufficient and financially independent. More specifically, for PLC, tuition fees collected must be so estimated and determined to meet all the financial expectations required for the PLC to remain in operation during the entire school year.

Ms. Shoostari welcomed the idea of developing a budget for the PLC and clarified that the PLC financial officer must be in charge of setting up and initiating a budget meeting in the future. She mentioned that all the funds generated by the Persian Language Classes (i.e., tuition fees collected), and even donations to PLC are going directly to ICM's account, which is fine. We don't want to set up different accounts for different committees. However, she expressed concern about the use of its funds readily for purchasing equipments, or organizing activities and functions, which enhance the quality of the educational program offered by PLC.

Mr. Kermani responded that there is no question in anyone's mind about increasing PLC's quality of educational programs and serving students, but the plans have to be realistic and based on PLC's revenues which will have to be detailed in the upcoming budget.

Mr. Doustshenas added that if the budget is provided and approved by the Board, there will not be a question of where the money is going, whether PLC or ICM's account. Furthermore, having a budget in place and following it as planned there will not be any surprises anymore whether it is a long-term, short-term, or day to day decision taken by PLC. He said that if necessary, due to shortage of volunteers, we need to hike the tuition fees in order to meet all funding requirements to run the classes. In addition to being self sufficient, and financially independent, committee members have to think broader and contribute to ICM towards bigger goals, such as hiring people to teach instead of volunteers, or pay people to help in running PLC classes, or even helping ICM to provide a higher quality programs and events. The other point that needs to be clarified, he said, is that the ICM is the final authority which must be accepted by all committee members. Also, ICM or the Board of directors assumes final liability regarding any occurrences taking place inside committees. This point is raised as a result of a recent incident in one of the classes by one of the new assistance teachers at school. He said by not informing ICM of such incidents, PLC is not following the ICM guidelines and policies and it may have its unpleasant consequences, since it would eventually end up in ICM if it gets serious.

Ms. Zebarjadian was a little surprised about the discussions, since she believed that we have all agreed on the basic rules, ICM's authority and its liability and it's just a matter of discussing the new issues and finding reasonable solutions to the current financial issues.

Ms. Sadri emphasized the need and urgency of adding a privacy statement in the registration forms which was promised to be done by ICM long time ago. She also mentioned that in order to release any information about the students to the Board, PLC needs to get their parent's permission. Regarding the issue of raising ticket prices for the events or even tuition fees, ICM needs to somehow encourage people to come and join or be a member, not by punishing them. Besides, in case tuitions are going up, it needs to be justified for the parents. ICM, as a not-for-profit organization is not supposed to look at committees as a source of income or revenue.

Regarding the confidentiality of documents, Mr. Doustshenas said that ICM needs a comprehensive privacy policy in order to collect, keep, and destroy documents, as required, since any information leaking out will create liability issues for ICM.

Mr. Azizkhani noted that in his own personal opinion, PLC members will have a conflict of interest in approving financial matters such as setting up the tuition fees, since they are all parents and have direct benefit in this regard. He was implicitly in favour of the option of the Board being the final decision maker in approving the level of tuition fees, not PLC.

In response, Ms. Shoostari explained that the basis for determining students' tuition fee are the projected expenses per student and the amount of the money needed for the operation of classes (e.g. PLC paid \$450 rental fee to the Church of the Good Shepherd last year). The minimum amount of students' tuition fee was considered (over the last two academic years) to cover those expenses and the ones related to purchasing books, printing costs, prizes, extra-curriculum activities (e.g. students' performance at New Year or Yalda celebrations, etc.) That should be continued as part of the financial planning exercise from now on.

Mr. Kamrouz, as the ICM communication officer will have to look into the Googlegroup settings to find out why some Board members have difficulty receiving the PLC emails. He is also in charge of submitting PLC meeting minutes to the Board as soon as it's approved.

PLC meeting minutes, which have been prepared in Persian, must be translated to English as soon as possible and they have to be sent to ICM Board regularly.

The joint meeting was adjourned around 8:45 pm.