

MR. GALBRAITH: The Canada associations have made a significant change, and we're going to hear very briefly about that. We wanted you to hear from Anne-Marie Kee early so that you would know who she is and perhaps you could talk to her about those things while she's at the conference.

I'm going to ask Deryn Lavell from Bishop Strachan School in Canada to introduce Anne-Marie Kee.

MS. LAVELL: Thanks, Bruce. It's my absolute pleasure to introduce Anne-Marie Kee. Anne-Marie is our executive director of the Canadian Accredited Independent Schools, CAIS for short. It's a community of independent schools that collaborates in pursuit of exemplary leadership, training, research and innovation in independent education. From coast to coast, we are 93 outstanding schools, as Anne-Marie likes to say, in nine provinces, as well as three international schools, 27 of which offer boarding, and so approximately 46,000 students attend CAIS schools.

Previously Anne-Marie was executive director of CESI, which was the Canadian Educational Standards Institute, and just recently she has overseen the process of amalgamating CAIS and CESI into one outstanding organization. For those of you who engage in a change process -- and of course, who doesn't in our line of work -- you know what a critical thing it is to do an amalgamation or manage through change. Anne-Marie has done that with an incredible sense of dignity, tact, grace, and outstanding good humor.

And so I hope that you get to know Anne-Marie over the course of this conference as well as we do. We're very proud of her. So please join me in welcoming Anne-Marie Kee of CAIS.

MS. KEE: So a chaplain addressed his congregation with the following statement. "I have good news, bad news, and food for thought. I will begin with the bad news," he said. "There's a gaping hole in the roof of our church. The good news is that we have the money to fix it. The food for thought," and he looked them right in the eyes, "is that the money is in your pockets."

So I'm here on behalf of the Canadian association to bring you some good news, bad news, and food for thought about the merging of our two national associations, and I will also begin with the bad news. I'm not an expert on change, and merging our two national associations was not an easy process. As you know in your schools, change never is.

In our case, we had two boards with a total of about 35 board members; we had 93 schools spread across the country. Actually, we have two schools in Bermuda and one in Switzerland, so that's three countries, four time zones, and these 93 people aren't just any old people; they're heads of schools, heads of independent schools. So I have a new appreciation for Switzerland. There were times I wanted to go to Switzerland.

But the good news is that we did it, and over the course of two years, we brought together two cultures, two memberships and programs, under one umbrella we now call CAIS. Through that process, I'm really proud that the board established four guiding principles, and these drove the whole process. The first one was to be transparent. Secondly was to strategically focus on the future and potential. Third was to practice a best practice mentality on everything related to organizational development. And finally, to be inclusive.

So let me backtrack. As Deryn mentioned, Canada had two national organizations. CAIS did all the professional development, and they were about 82 schools; and CESI was the accreditation body. Keep in mind that in Canada, accreditation is absolutely voluntary. It's not tied to university entrance or legal requirements or funding or anything. People look at it as a voluntary process for school improvement.

Canada also has a number of regional associations, and our schools, like yours, are a member of many other associations, as well, like Round Square, or like this one, or TABS, NAIS, IB, IBSC, NBOA, PNAIS. You get the point. We call it the alphabet soup of associations. And there was lots of noise from our member schools about that. They were questioning two EDs, two offices, two websites, two assistants collecting two sets of fees.

When announcements went out, they often went out multiple times. And with two boards and two sets of meetings and committees, we were often competing for the same talent pool.

So while there was good support for both national organizations, there were a growing number of people questioning the amount of money and time invested in two associations. And it didn't feel like what was driving the two, the need for fewer people and schools and students and learning. It felt more like associations and organizations for the sake of structure. You know that our schools often work this way. We have advancement separate from admission separate from communications and business. They often have separate offices and assistants and sometimes even different letterhead and communications and branding styles. Many of them worked in silos, and our teachers are often also working in separate classrooms in silos. And in schools it also takes building a website or going through rebranding or accreditation or change to the facility to make people look at all these silos and say, "Could there be a better way of doing things? Could there be a better way of bringing people together?"

I see a lot of schools now focusing on building more collaborative environments, making your administration teams work more like a team. And certainly in the classrooms we're working at creating opportunities for students to collaborate more and more.

So the change process in schools is very similar to what our organization went through. At the time, a couple of years ago, CAIS was looking for a new executive director. Again. CESI had done fairly aggressive strategic planning, and they recognized they wanted to get more into research, and that was traditionally the territory of CAIS.

Meanwhile, CAIS had decided that all of its schools were going to become accredited. So as you can see, as the two boards were going through these silo processes, the boards were coming to similar conclusions. Each organization needed to do more to support their schools, and in providing more service, there was a growing understanding that there was a possibility of duplicating what other associations were already doing. And there wasn't openness to looking at the possibility of collaboration at the time.

Both boards came to a simple conclusion. If the two organizations did not collaborate, they might have to compete for membership. And if they began to compete, then schools would have to choose which associations they were going to belong to, and this didn't seem to be in the best interests of our schools.

The other contributing factor to our merge was the changing landscape for independent schools in Canada. And I know you have similar issues. In Canada we're seeing a declining birth rate. According to David Foot, the demographer, the increase to our population by 2020 by natural means will be zero. And like you, the economy is tough and tuitions are high, so many are asking if we're pricing ourselves out of the market. So schools are looking at value for association fees in a new way.

Secondly, the impact of technology is not yet understood or realized. Rapid advances, as you know, are forcing schools to reconsider teaching and learning and also reconsider the future business model of schools.

One example that I can share which is worth looking at is the eLearning Consortium in Ontario, where schools are sharing students and teachers and resources. My point is that schools are asking more and more questions and looking to their associations for research and asking us to make connections with people who are a little bit further down that continuum of change.

In Canada, we're also facing increasing competition in the number of private and independent schools, tutoring centers, and more sophisticated clubs and lessons for kids. And unlike the US, our public schools are doing well. In fact, some of them are doing really well, and they're setting themselves up to compete with our schools. They're investing public money now in curriculum development, so we're seeing a number of public schools turning to IB or AP. They're investing in facilities and they're offering homestay programs to increase

their diversity.

What is brand-new is that our public schools in Canada are getting into the realm of marketing themselves, and they're being very open about competing for students with our independent schools. So parents are looking at independent schools and they're staying, "Okay, look, tell me, what can you give me that I can't get at our local public school for free?"

So again, schools are looking to associations for more research. There's more of an appetite for some collaborative boarding and additional resources.

So this rapidly changing environment created some urgency for our associations to really understand what are the needs of schools and what could the possible role be to support schools? So three board members from each association began together by asking one simple question. If we were to start all over again, if we were to blow them up, would we have two national associations? And the simple answer was no.

So then, if we could ignore some of the histories, tradition, relationships, personalities of both, could we somehow keep the best of those associations and build something better? And the answer to that was yes.

So they asked, what is the best way to ensure a strong future for independent education in Canada, and what role would a national association play in a country where our education is provincially mandated? It was messy at times. We struggled with two main areas. The first was membership, because the members who are in one association and not the other felt that they had very good reasons for being in one and not the other, and they didn't like anyone else making that decision for them.

We had some regional issues. I don't know if you know Canada very well, but everybody hates Ontario, and Toronto is the center of the universe.

We had to come up with a new fee structure.

Perhaps the greatest challenge was coming up with a new name. We began as CESI and CAIS. For a while we were CAIS CESI, and then for one year we became SEA+L Canada, and my name badge actually says SEA+L Canada, but as of Tuesday we became CAIS, the Canadian Accredited Independent Schools.

Pat Bassett once said if you want to introduce a major change at your school, you first introduce a suggestion of changing the uniform, and then everyone will focus on that and you can drive through any change you want. So as an association, if you want to introduce change, first announce a name change, and then you can do whatever you want.

We eventually agreed on a vision and mission, and we are striving to be the voice of excellence in learning and leadership shaping the future of education. And I'm really proud that the word "independent" didn't end up in our vision statement, because, similar to the NAIS conference last week of private education with a public purpose, we really see that our independent schools should be indeed shaping education in the country. I believe at this point that all 92 schools, after all of those two years of conflict, have come together under one umbrella, so it is a good news story.

So as part of my closing remarks I just want to share a quick story. One of the best things that came out of this process is an even stronger community and an even greater openness for meaningful collaboration. For example, our boarding schools are now working together, and this means that together we're able to partner with an organization like TABS to work on "Why boarding?" and an organization in the government to work on "Why Canada?" And together, we can do what couldn't be done by an individual school.

Our collaboration will make all boarding schools stronger for kids, so I really believe in that kind of abundance

thinking.

I was recently speaking to one of my colleagues, a retired head, a bit of a character, and I said to him, "I'm really excited about this boarding project. I'm really excited about everyone coming together, and we really need to demonstrate and communicate value. The pressure is on, and we really need to deliver."

There is an exaggerated pause. He then said, "What do you mean, 'we,' Kemo Sabe?"

I didn't know exactly what the reference meant. I knew sort of what it meant, so I went to Google and as you probably know, the expression came from "The Lone Ranger" television show, and in the scene the Lone Ranger and his sidekick, Tonto, see an ambush over the horizon and the Lone Ranger remarks, "This doesn't look good. I don't think we will make it out of this alive."

And Tonto replies, "What do you mean, 'we,' Kemo Sabe?"

Kemo Sabe is translated as trusty scout or faithful friend, and together they seem to right almost any wrong within that 30-minute time frame of the show. The first radio episode of the show premiered in 1933, if you can believe it, and there were still reruns going on as late as last summer. So it's got to be one of the longest-running partnerships in history. The irony there is that the show is called "The Lone Ranger," but he's not alone.

My point is that it's a great metaphor for our Canadian association and, in fact, all collaborations. For schools, when times get tough, there can be a tendency to want to hunker down and go it alone and compete. I hear from heads that there's so much competition they aren't sure who to trust. And even if you are a school that's fortunate enough to not have enrollment issues, there are advancement pressures and keeping up with all the changes and learning and technology is overwhelming.

Being a head is a tough and lonely job, and it seems to be getting more and more complex. But I believe that strong associations have an important role to play. Obviously, you agree or you wouldn't be here. There's a huge need for meaningful community with those who truly understand the challenges and the joys of your positions. I love the wording used by your organization, and I'll quote here. "Of almost more value to members than the formal program is the opportunity to know other members and to talk freely with them in an association which has the unique feature of diversity and intimacy.

What a great word, "intimacy." Associations can have real influence on bettering schools and ultimately students. But associations like this one, being called to share values, come together to learn and think and share and support one another, are critical.

So in closing, I leave you with some food for thought. What is the bold long-term vision for your organization? What can you do together that you cannot do alone? And finally, what can you do together that's better working together as Kemo Sabes? Thank you.