

Coleen Taylor

Good evening, everyone. I am most pleased to introduce to you Coleen Taylor, who is truly a pioneer in the charter school movement in Alberta.

New Horizons School was the first Alberta charter school to be awarded a charter and, together with several others, was the first to open its doors in the fall of 1995. Coleen Taylor was the key individual in dreaming the dream of a charter school for gifted children in Strathcona County and for bringing that dream to reality. She prepared and submitted the application for the New Horizons charter, having worked closely with the Ministry of Education as regulations were being developed. She established and chaired the first Board, and with those first Board members, searched for and found a suitable location for the school. She personally paid the \$15,000 needed to secure the school site. Then, together with her husband, Ross, she spearheaded and supervised the renovations and furnishings that were needed to prepare the facility for suitability as a school. She made presentations to the Elk Island Board of Trustees -- the Elk Island Board held the first charter -- and she applied for and obtained charitable status for the school. Finally, she recruited students and the principal who, together with a volunteer superintendent, hired staff.

As a result of her efforts, not only on her own but also working closely with others, New Horizons School opened successfully, with 79 students, in the fall of 1995. Now, 23 years later and enrolling more than 350 students, the school continues to provide a unique, much-needed, and highly-valued choice for parents and students in Sherwood Park, Strathcona County, and the greater Edmonton region.

In addition to being the founder of New Horizons School, Coleen was instrumental in the establishment of the Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools. (Yes, the very association that is meeting here today!) In 1996, she prepared a set of draft by-laws and, with the unanimous support of representatives from the other charter schools, went on to form the Association, which she then chaired for the next five years.

In short, Coleen Taylor was a pioneer, both as a visionary and as a "doer," in the successful establishment of Alberta's first charter school and of the Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools. New Horizons Charter School and The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools owe their existence, in large measure, to Coleen Taylor. Without her, neither charter schools nor The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools would have developed as successfully as they did, nor would they be as successful as they are today.

Congratulations, Coleen, on receiving this most-deserved recognition for your outstanding work in support of charter schools in Alberta!

Don Falk, Superintendent
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