



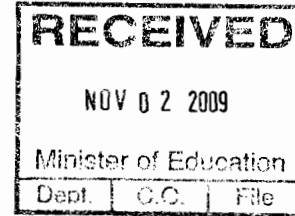
## Grande Prairie and District Catholic Schools

Serving the Regional Communities of Beaverlodge, Grande Prairie, Fairview, Sexsmith, & Spirit River  
9902 – 101 Street Grande Prairie, AB T8V 2P4 Phone (780) 532 – 3013  
Toll Free (800) 661-2568 Fax (780) 539 - 0516  
<http://www.gpcsd.ca> Email [cec@gpcsd.ca](mailto:cec@gpcsd.ca)

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October 26, 2009

Hon. Dave Hancock  
Minister of Education  
224 Legislature Building  
10800 - 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6



Dear Mr. Hancock,

Thank you for the email dated September 17, 2009, inviting opportunities for input regarding possible School Act changes. Our Board has extensively participated in discussions with ASBA and ACSTA surrounding which provisions should be retained, which provisions should be removed, and which provisions should be amended or added, should the School Act be opened up by the Legislature in the Spring 2010 session. We have also reviewed submissions by ACSTA, CASS, and PSBA.

We offer the following advice from a governance perspective:

- **The Importance of a Publically Funded Catholic Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.** We strongly support the submission developed and submitted by ACSTA that includes Key Messages, Preamble components, 13 Essential Provisions that need to be retained, 4 Provisions should be removed, and 15 Provisions to be amended or added. We know that a quality Catholic education is valued by students and parents, and a quality Catholic education is in strong demand in this province. Catholic schools are an integral part of the publically funded system, and we have provided and will continue to provide innovation, choice, diversity, accountability, and leadership. Recently we have introduced the following choices for parents and students in our Catholic School District: YMCA/ ACFA school-based child care programs (open to the general public), breakfast and hot lunch programs, Christian leadership sports programs, and diversified academic and trades offerings.
- **Faith Permeation.** The teachings of our Catholic Faith are permeated into the classroom everyday. When teachers and students talk about the importance of living out our faith this assists, promotes, and encourages people to understand their neighbours, their society, and become better community members. Students have annual opportunities to participate in youth rallies, youth ministry, service projects, and faith-based international trips.

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- **Governance Role for Boards.** We believe that the new School Act should specify a governance role, rather than an administrative role for school boards. The current Act emphasizes administrative duties of a Board and should be concerned more with the governance role. Boards provide a necessary governance and leadership role that is valued in our community and it needs to be more clearly defined.
- **Cooperation and Coordination with respect to “Wrap Around Services”.** The new Act should speak to encouraging cooperation and coordination among the various government departments that serve children. Particular attention must be paid to the manner in which “wrap around” services are funded and provided, as these services will meet health and welfare needs, in addition to education needs of students. However, individual Boards must still have the flexibility to provide services that are distinct and unique to their communities and not be required to participate in a “one program fits all” strategy. Some of our distinct local programs include School Community Team, Mental Health, Catholic Youth Ministry, and Catholic Family Services Liaison.
- **Expectations for Teachers and Principals.** With respect to expectations for teachers and principals, the new Act should retain the current expectations as outlined in Section 18(1). In addition the *Teaching Quality Standard* and the *Principal Quality Guideline* needs to be referenced within the Act. The Principal Quality Guide should also become a Standard.
- **Value of Local Autonomy.** Local autonomy needs to be valued and retained in meeting the unique needs of students. Governance by Separate/Catholic, Public, Francophone, Charter, and Private Authorities must remain intact. A quality education will be one that offers opportunity, fairness, citizenship, choice and diversity.
- **Supervision and Evaluation of Teachers.** The new Act should retain the underlying principles related to the supervision and evaluation of teachers.
- **Inclusive Education.** A new Act should embrace inclusive education. Inclusive education does not mean one education program for all; rather, it means a rich variety of offerings by different Boards that meets the needs of all constituents.
- **Role of the Student vs. Code of Conduct.** The new Act should replace the current provisions related to the student “Code of Conduct” with an expanded section that relates to the role of the student. This section could speak to the students’ role as a learner and as a citizen/ Catholic citizen to build a stronger Alberta. The Code of Conduct should also include the student’s rights and responsibilities.
- **Principles.** We applaud the Cabinet’s decision to include the following key principles: Opportunity, Fairness, Citizenship, Choice and Diversity. We feel that students benefit when they are provided with Public, Catholic Separate, Catholic Public, Francophone, Charter, and Private school options.
- **Expansion Process.** We encourage you to re-examine the Expansion process as a means to encourage cooperation. The expansion process allowed for

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reasonable and practical choice to be provided to electors through mutual agreement within the community. We do not believe that co-terminus boundaries are reasonable or practical means to provide choice to electors.

- **One Regional Transportation System.** We support changing the Act to allow for the establishment of an independent regional transportation system like the system developed in Ontario. If changes to the Act could be made to mandate this proactive change we believe that boundary concerns would virtually disappear. As part of this, we encourage you to implement reasonable one-way ride times for students.

We have attached ACSTA's document for your perusal. If we can be of any other assistance please feel free to contact me or our Superintendent, Karl Germann.

Warmest Regards,

Eldon Wyant  
Board Chair

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