



Grande Prairie Public School District #2357
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Every Student Succeeds

October 27, 2009

The Honourable Dave Hancock, Q.C.
Minister of Education
323 Legislature Building
10800 – 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Hancock:

**Re: Grande Prairie Public School District #2357 Submission Concerning
Proposed Legislative Changes to the School Act**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the proposed legislative changes to the School Act.

The Grande Prairie Public School District Board of Trustees has welcomed the opportunity to participate in a number of the consultations that have been organized by your department, the Alberta School Boards' Association and the Public School Boards' Association. Based on what we have learned from the dialogue and discussions that have occurred at these consultations, our Board feels strongly that any proposed legislation must address the following fundamental guiding principles:

The Grande Prairie Public School Board believes that any legislative changes must:

- Envision and strengthen the role and importance of local governance by locally elected school boards.
- Give the local public, through their locally elected trustees, the capacity to address the local educational needs of the community and those goals established by the provincial government. We are very concerned that the legislative changes and the regulations that arise from these changes will create a shift towards centralized control of education at the Ministry and Department of Education level focused on compliance and control rather than outcomes and empowering the local community.
- Return the ability of local boards to generate revenues through taxation locally. The current legislation provides for this but the provisions are such that there is little or no hope of any board ever obtaining the public's approval to seek an additional tax levy.

- In order to ensure Locally elected Boards have the legislated authority to fully assume these responsibilities, provisions in the legislation must provide School Boards with Natural Person Powers.

Our Board looks forward to learning more about the proposed legislative changes. We hope these changes reflect what Albertans have said, the advice that has been provided to the Minister through the Inspiring Education Dialogue with Albertans Steering Committee and the work that has been done by the Inspiring Education Dialogue with Albertans Working Committee.

We are at a unique point in time in our province to chart a course for our education system and our students. Through the Inspiring Education Consultation process there has been a very strong and clear message and information provided as to what our students need from the Alberta Education system to prepare them for their future.

The question at the end of the day, knowing this information, do we as Albertans have the courage to act and the commitment to make some large fundamental changes in our education system with the political support to do so? All levels in our system, right from each individual classroom to the government Legislative Assembly, must be prepared for and supportive of the changes that need to be made to prepare our children for an exponentially changing world.

We applaud you in your efforts and are hopeful that you will deliver a progressive piece of legislation that will chart this course.

Yours truly,

Karen Prokopowich
Chairperson
Grande Prairie Public School District #2357 Board of Trustees

cc: Maureen Towns, Director of Legal Services