



## LETHBRIDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 51

BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
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October 28, 2009

Honourable Dave Hancock  
Minister of Education, Government House Leader  
Member of Executive Council  
Executive Branch  
224 Legislature Building  
10800 - 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Hancock:

On behalf of Lethbridge School District No. 51 and in response to your letter of September 17, 2009 I am pleased to provide the following submission for your consideration as Alberta Education prepares a replacement for the School Act.

I would like to thank you for the engaging process Alberta Education has used over the course of the last year, allowing all stakeholders in education to have an opportunity to provide input into what the classrooms in Alberta will look like in the year 2029.

Our Board is especially appreciative that the intent of the new legislation is to develop an "enabling, overarching framework for the broad governance structures of the education system." We view this as key to ensuring locally elected Boards have the flexibility to provide optimal learning opportunities for all students.

Our Board would look forward to an opportunity to provide feedback to the Draft legislation once it is developed.

Sincerely,

Gary Bartlett  
Chair, Board of Trustees

cc: Mr. Keray Henke, Deputy Minister  
Mr. David Anderson, Executive Director Alberta School Boards Association  
Mr. David King, Executive Director Public School Boards' Association of Alberta

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Gary Bartlett  
Jan Foster

Tyler Demers  
Keith Fowler  
Lea Switzer

Mich Forster  
Lola Major

**Lethbridge School District No. 51 Submission to the Minister of Education  
Changes to the School Act  
October 28, 2009**

**General Recommendations**

- Our Board believes that the new legislation should clearly state the central role that public education plays in the delivery of education to all children in the province.
- Our Board believes that the new legislation must acknowledge and affirm the role that locally elected Boards play in the governance of public education. Trustees must and should be accountable to the local electorate.
- Our Board believes that the new legislation must provide for School Boards to have access to funds through the local municipal tax base without having to go through a plebiscite process.
  - Other ways to provide locally elected Boards with increased autonomy in order to respond to issues and concerns of the community include:
    - Granting Natural Persons Powers to school boards
    - Enabling Boards to borrow funds for capital projects, including modernization of aging facilities
- Our Board believes that the new legislation should be more enabling and less restrictive than the current act. The legislation must provide for the ability of Boards to develop adaptive or alternate forms of education in order to meet the unique needs of students in the future.
- Our Board believes that the new legislation should ensure that all institutions that receive any level of public funding be obligated to allow all students access, as appropriate to all programs and schools.
- Our Board believes that the new legislation should ensure that all institutions that receive any level of public funding should be held to the same level of financial and educational accountability.
- Our Board believes that the new legislation should define public education as being inclusive both for children / students attending schools and for all adults in the electoral process of local governance. Every resident, ratepayer and elector should be free to choose to support, contribute and receive the benefits of a public education system.
- Our Board believes that the roles and responsibilities of School Councils as outlined in Section 22 of the current School Act are appropriate and should be maintained in new legislation.

- Our Board believes that the new legislation, in coordination of other legislation, should provide a framework for coordination of services to students by the various government departments (Education, Health, Children's Services, Justice)
- Our Board believes that the centralized provincial curriculum and program of studies have been strengths of education in Alberta, and should be retained. Notwithstanding the support of a strong provincial curriculum, our Board also believes that the legislation enables Boards to develop local curriculum that addresses the needs of students under its jurisdiction.
- Our Board believes the new legislation should define inclusive education as a wide range of offerings that meets the needs of all students.

### **Specific Recommendations**

- While not specifically related to the new legislation, our Board believes the provincial government should aggressively negotiate an agreement with the federal government so that School Boards would have GST exempt status similar to that which currently exists for municipal governments.
- Our Board believes the minimum age for students beginning kindergarten should be 4 years, 8 months, and that this age be standardized across the province. Subsequently the minimum age for students entering grade one should be 5 years, 8 months, standardized across the province. Even though current legislation enables students to begin kindergarten at age 4 years, 6 months (and grade one at 5 years, 6 months) a majority of jurisdictions have implemented local policy to the minimum ages recommended because there is substantial research available to show that the youngest students struggle academically and socially in a disproportional number when compared to the percent of total cohort they make up. In addition, in the year of initial implementation of the new minimum age guidelines, the cohort in the province would be smaller, resulting in an overall savings in education funding.
- Our Board believes that funded programs should be available for those children younger than kindergarten age who would benefit from early intervention.
- Our Board believes that funded, full day kindergarten programs should be available for students who would benefit from the additional time.
- Our Board believes that School Boards should have the autonomy to hire the Superintendent of Schools, within guidelines established in the new legislation, without requiring ratification by the Minister of Education.

- Our Board believes that School Boards should be required to have in place a Secretary-Treasurer (Chief Financial Officer) with appropriate financial background and who is bonded as outlined in Section 116 of the current School Act.
- Our Board believes the Teacher Quality Standard should be referenced in the new legislation. In addition, the Principal Quality Guidelines should become a Principal Quality Standard and referenced in the new legislation.
- Our Board believes that the new legislation should enable jurisdictions that wish to form a bargaining unit, with the ability to develop one collective agreement for all members, the opportunity to do so. However our Board strongly believes that jurisdictions that wish to retain local bargaining be allowed to do so.
- Our Board believes the new legislation should retain the right of Boards to charge tuition fees for non-funded students, and to bill other boards for additional costs for services provided to non-resident students.