

Prairie Land Regional Division #25: School Act Review Input

The School Act should articulate expectations and practices that are commensurate with the rights of children to receive a public education.

School Boards

The School Act must confirm and establish the importance and function of local school boards as the local education authorities that determine the outcomes for public education locally. School boards represent local values and beliefs through the Trusteeship and that determine educational programming and fiscal needs locally.

School boards must be recognized as local authorities with the same status and rights as Municipal Governments, including the right of local requisition. School boards must be granted all the commensurate powers of *Natural Persons* as a corporate whole.

School boards should be given all the powers to acquire, own or dispose of their properties and cannot have their interest property diminished or taken away, except by due process of law.

The School Act should empower local school boards with the exclusive right to determine their boundaries.

We support the Public School Boards' Association recommendation that public and separate school boards be required to share co-terminus boundaries.

The School Act should establish the role of school boards to govern their local school jurisdictions and to delegate authority for administration through local Board policy.

The School Act must enable rural education authorities to adopt processes for achieving representation at school board meetings through innovative technologies and alternate processes as approved by the local school board.

Trusteeship

The School Act must continue to enable local school boards to determine local representation.

Where separate school systems exist, individual members of the minority faith should be allowed to choose to be residents, ratepayers, and electors of the public school jurisdiction.

Schools and Programs

The School Act should establish Board authority for ensuring safe and caring schools that respect the diversity of individuals and responsibilities of learners. Processes for the suspension and expulsion of students should be determined within the School Act for school-age students.

The School Act should enable the Minister to develop the broad-based learner outcomes in grade-level programs of study, and leave the development and approval of specific learner outcomes, teaching methodologies, resources and assessments to local school boards.

Accountability for educational outcomes should be established in the new Act as a local responsibility as determined by school boards.

Kindergarten should remain a provincially-funded program of choice. The determination to offer fully funded half-day or full-day kindergarten programming should be a local decision.

The School Act must revisit special education and incorporate the feedback as gathered by the Setting the Direction consultative process.

The School Act should continue to enable the provision of Early Childhood Services to children who have special needs. The provision of these services should remain a responsibility shared with other Ministries.

The School Act should enable the school to function as the center of service delivery in cooperation with other government agencies as per local community values.

Funding

The School Act must establish that the primary role of the Provincial government is to provide adequate and equitable funding.

Educational funding must be allocated on a per program and per pupil basis.

Funding parameters must enable local autonomy in determining the educational needs of students and local educational goals and outcomes.

The new School Act should establish that public dollars will fund public education. Private education will be funded through private tuition. Nonetheless, the school act should continue to establish broad-based learning outcomes and standards for private education.

Transportation

Transportation must remain under the authority of the local school board as per equitable provincial principles that are adequately funded in accordance with local sparsity, distance, and time factors.

Transportation to schools of choice can be provided locally within the allotted transportation funding but will not detract from the primary responsibility of Boards to transport students to their local schools.

Employees

The School Act should establish that each school board will employ a superintendent as Chief Executive Officer and a secretary-treasurer as Chief Financial Officer.

The new Act should remove the requirement for the Minister's prior approval for the Board's appointment of a superintendent and remove the Minister from any role in hiring, directing, or discharging the superintendent or any other staff.

The School Act must recognize the exclusive right of Boards to be the bargaining agent with their employee groups and enshrine their right to choose to associate to bargain as one bargaining agent, in accordance with the recommendations contained in Patricia McKenzie's report.

The School Act should establish and reinforce appropriate professional codes of conduct and teaching quality standards as per the *Teaching Professions Act* and as per the Alberta Teachers Association *Code of Conduct* and should acknowledge the right of Boards to supervise, evaluate, and discipline personnel as per *Alberta Labour Standards and Regulations*.

Furthermore

Prairie Land Regional Division endorses the Public School Boards' Association submission on the School Act review.