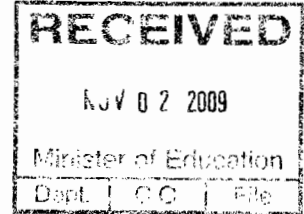




October 27, 2009

Hon. Dave Hancock  
Minister, Alberta Education  
224 Legislature Building  
10800 – 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6



Dear Hon. Hancock:

**Subject: School Act Submission**

On September 17, 2009, we received your email inviting submissions from School Boards and other stakeholder groups regarding input into new legislation for the *Province of Alberta School Act*. Our Board appreciates this opportunity and over the past month has discussed a number of potential recommendations to improve the *School Act* in areas that have affected the Board's operations. The following recommendations are respectfully submitted:

1	Provide Boards with Natural Person Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Boards can only take action on issues that are implicitly or expressly sanctioned by the <i>School Act</i>. This limits the powers of school boards and curtails the ability to respond to local needs and priorities. This would provide school boards with the autonomy to act and would give them the same decision-making authority as Municipalities enjoy.</li> </ul>
2	Age of Exit from School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change eligibility to 20 years of age as of September 1 from 19 years of age. Increasingly, many students require additional time to access high school programming.</li> <li>The minimum age for leaving school should be set at 17 years to provide for additional opportunities to access programming that will assist students beyond school.</li> </ul>
3	Independent Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current definition does not address increasing numbers of students who do not meet the current definition of independent student. Many of these students have parents living outside the province, and are classified as non-resident students and because they do not qualify as an independent student, funding is not available. The definition needs to be expanded to include students living independently, with minimal assistance.</li> </ul>
4	Define Guardian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The definition of guardian should be clarified within the Interpretations Section of the <i>School Act</i>. A parent is defined but guardian is not defined.</li> </ul>
5	Role of the Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Section 12 is good, but requires addition of "responsibility to respect self, others and other's property."</li> </ul>

**FAXED**  
(10/28/09)

6	Student Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boards require increased capacity to respond to students and their parent/guardian when the student does not attend school regularly.</li> <li>Boards require increased capacity to respond to students including consequences when the student does not follow the requirements set out by the Attendance Board.</li> </ul>
7	Dissolution of School Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarification is needed to define what would constitute the dissolution of a School Council. These groups provide a vital role in our schools and as such this requires clarification in the <i>School Act</i> or in Policy.</li> </ul>
8	Expulsion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boards need the flexibility to expel students who commit serious behaviors near or at the end of a school year. The current <i>School Act</i> is restrictive and does not provide for adequate consequences for severe behaviors.</li> <li>Clarification is required on suspension with recommendation for expulsion given that a principal can suspend for up to five days, but hearings must be scheduled within ten days. Days 6 – 10 are not suspension, yet the student is technically suspended from school. This requires clarification.</li> </ul>
9	School Day and Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a need for increased flexibility for Boards to define their school day and year. Alberta Education exam schedules restrict a Board's ability to be flexible within setting the school year.</li> </ul>
10	Contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An increasing number of retiring teachers work up to one-half time for two or more years immediately following retirement. These individuals provide valuable service; however, the probationary and continuous contracts do not meet the needs of School Boards.</li> </ul>
11	School Board Geographic Boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are many examples of Boards establishing schools outside of their geographic boundaries, or larger communities expanding into other jurisdiction's boundaries. A resolution process needs to be identified within the Act or Policies that provides for procedural fairness.</li> </ul>
12	Elimination of Funding for Private Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public schools deliver high quality education to all students. Private schools use an application process for accepting students. Public funds should not pay for private schooling.</li> </ul>
13	Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a need to align infrastructure to educational need. Working with two departments to accomplish projects is difficult. The new Act should provide for capital decisions made by the Department of Education.</li> </ul>

14	Clarification on Responsibility of Boards to Provide a Safe and Caring Learning Environment – Section 45(8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Section 45(8) is very encompassing and leaves Boards questioning where and when this section applies. For example, is hazing, that occurs off of the school campus, covered under this section of the <i>School Act</i>?</li> </ul>
15	Minister should not sign off on the Hiring Of The Superintendent. Guidelines for hiring are necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Minister should define the guidelines required for hiring Superintendents, including job qualifications. However, hiring is a Board responsibility and, providing that all requirements set out in the <i>School Act</i> are met, sign-off by the Minister should not be required.</li> </ul>
16	Video-Conference Participation in Meetings by Trustees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <i>Act</i> should explicitly state that trustees may attend School Board Meetings using video-conference if Board Policy permits the practice within their division.</li> </ul>

Our Board thanks you for the opportunity to participate in this important process. If your staff or committees require clarification for any of the above recommendations, please contact me.

Sincerely,

John Stitzenberger  
Chairman of the Board

kp

c: Mr. R. Campbell, MLA, West Yellowhead  
Mr. G. VanderBurg, MLA, Whitecourt-Ste. Anne  
Board of Trustees, Grande Yellowhead Public School Division #77