

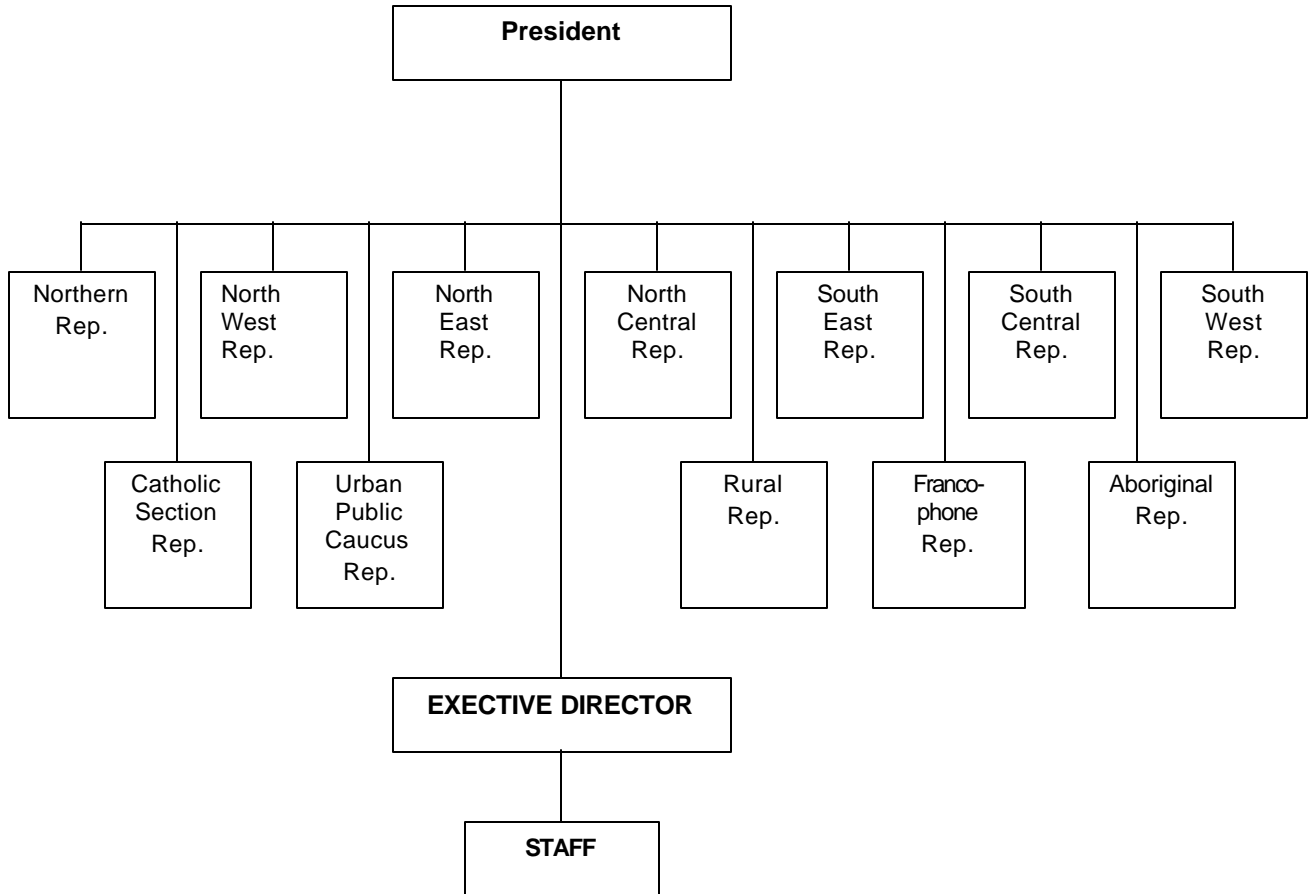


Annual Report 2004

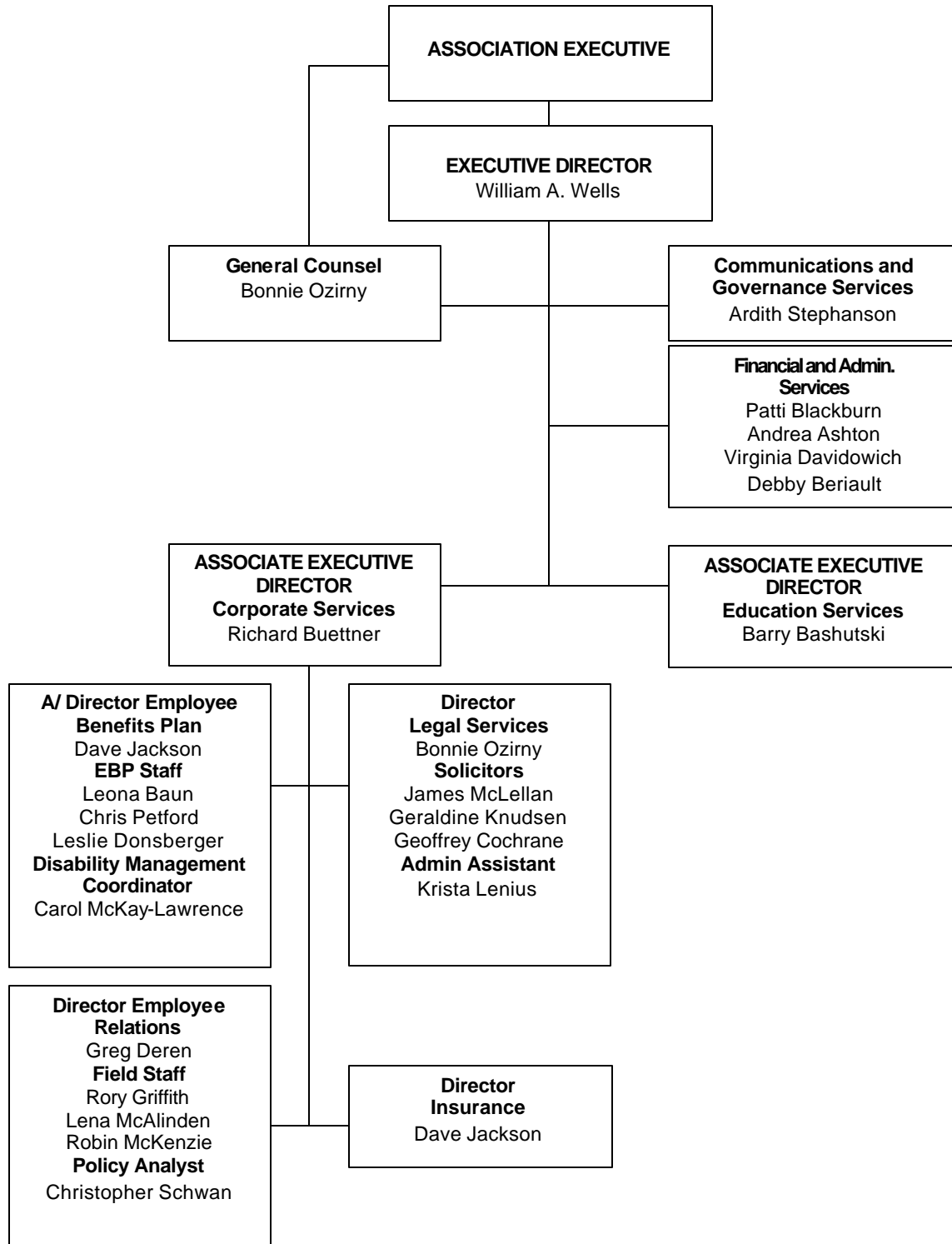
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Governance Structure



Association Staffing – effective September 1, 2004



Association Initiatives

The Executive established its 2004 priorities throughout 2004 beginning in January. The priorities reflect new directions approved by the 2003 Convention, previous commitments carried forward into 2004 and new strategic initiatives focused on the achievement of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association vision statement.

The Association Vision encourages us:

- ✓ to be a high profile organization that provides a credible public voice for the education of children and youth;
- ✓ to speak with a unified public voice with a provincial focus to advocate and provide leadership on educational issues;
- ✓ to provide high quality support services for our members;
- ✓ to provide leadership and trustee development to enhance board effectiveness; and,
- ✓ to create effective relationships and cooperate with our educational partners in order to create an environment that better enables children to reach their maximum potential.

Key initiatives pursued by Association Executive and staff in 2004 focused on realization of the vision.

The primary focus during 2004 was increased advocacy as directed by members through the restructuring process. In May, the Minister of Learning announced that the government was mandating school board amalgamations, reducing the number of boards from 81 to no more than 40. The

changes resulting from this announcement, and the effects on all boards of the decisions made as part of it, will continue to be a primary focus of the Association in the coming year.

Advocacy and partnerships

In the first half of 2004, a good deal of effort was spent on advocacy and developing partnerships. The *Commission on Financing K-12 Education* was released and members wanted the Association involved in any implementation of the recommendations.

The Association began to build support for the report, which included recommendations to increase provincial sales tax and provide those resources to K-12 education.

Relationships were built with other local government associations (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association and Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce and Chambers in Regina and Saskatoon, the Real Estate Association and the Agricultural Producers of Saskatchewan. These partnerships highlighted the support for education and the need for additional provincial funding to support education.

The Association also increased its advocacy with Members of the Legislative Assembly. The Executive Director, President, Director of Communications and often another Executive members, met with MLAs throughout the year, particularly in the first half of 2004. Of the 30 government MLAs, the Association met with 21 of them, including the Premier, and met

with some of them more than once. Meetings are still being scheduled with seven MLAs and two declined to meet with the Association.

Of the 28 Opposition MLAs, the Association met with 13 of them – some more than once – and met twice with the Human Services Committee of the Opposition. A meeting was also held with Saskatchewan Liberal leader David Karwacki.

The Executive also invites the Minister of Learning and the Opposition Learning Critic to Executive meetings annually.

The Association also continued to do work this year with its traditional partners, such as the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents and the Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials. Those partnerships will be even more important in the coming year as the Association supports boards going through amalgamation, and decisions are made that will impact all boards.

Government's amalgamation initiative

The government's decision to reduce the number of boards of education to no more than 40 was announced in May. The Association and its members were disappointed with the manner of the announcement, which strayed from the traditional model in the education community of collaboration and working together. Boards came together in June at a Provincial Assembly to provide direction to the Association.

The government immediately established a Task Force to re-draw the boundaries, and renewed the Restructuring Coordinating Committee, a group of the education partners that is expected to work for the next year providing advice to boards. Many of the decisions and changes will affect all boards, not just those amalgamating.

The Association also sits on two other committees that are related to the amalgamation initiative – the Foundation Operating Grant External Reference Committee and the Education Property Tax Relief Working Group.

The Association will continue to advocate for adequate provincial funding, a key recommendation of the Commission on Financing K-12 Education that has so far not been addressed. Any restructuring of school divisions cannot be successful without financial support that will reduce the burden on property taxes.

As well, in 2004 the Association continued to respond to increasing demand for direct member services from boards of education. Details on those services are found in other areas of the annual report.

Aboriginal Education

The Association has sought to support the development of partnerships with First Nations and has profiled Saskatchewan partnerships nationally and through Association workshops. Initiatives were taken to ensure that Association member services were designed in a manner that supports partnerships.

The Association has strongly supported inclusion of Aboriginal history and worldview within the Core Curriculum and provides leadership within the Aboriginal Education Program Advisory Committee. The Association continues to seek ways to build relationships with provincial Aboriginal organizations.

The Association is also building a relationship with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, who met with the Executive in 2004.

In 2003, the position of Aboriginal Representative was added to the Association Executive, an important step in continuing to develop those relationships.

Canadian School Boards Association

The Association belongs to CSBA, the role of which is to promote K – 12 education in the national capital particularly when legislation, policies or the federal budget affects the interests of our students. The CSBA also supports provincial associations and school divisions through the delivery of services that support good governance.

In 2004, rifts developed in CSBA when staff members were laid off and the head office was closed. Several provincial associations withdrew their membership in CSBA. The Saskatchewan School Boards Association has made efforts to repair those rifts and will continue to do so in the coming year.

Awards

The Association continues to promote the educational excellence that is happening throughout Saskatchewan.

The Association, in conjunction with The Document Company – Xerox, will present the sixth annual Premier's Board of Education Award for Innovation and Excellence in Education at Convention. The award recognizes educational innovations focused on student achievement that have been advanced or directed by boards of education.

The Association also presents two scholarships each year to graduating high school students who advance to post-secondary education in Saskatchewan. The Association has graduate student awards that it grants each year to educational leaders of the future.

For the second time at Convention in 2004, the Association will present the Award of Distinction to a school board member who has demonstrated outstanding service and made a significant contribution to enhance education. Life Memberships are presented to trustees based on service at the provincial and/or national level.

Communications and Governance Services

Director: Ardith Stephanson

In 2004, several more initiatives were undertaken from the Communications Strategy conducted for the Association in 2001. The area of communications continues to work with the Executive and Executive Director in the area of advocacy, which was significantly increased in 2004. As well, the Director of Communications works with the senior management team in strategic planning for the Association.

Our new name

The name of the Association was legally changed in the spring of 2004. The Association's Act was changed in the spring sitting of the Legislative Assembly, making official the change approved the year before by the membership.

Work was done in 2004 to re-design the website to reflect the new structure of the Association as well as the name change and new look. The "new" website was launched in the fall and continues to be enhanced.

A project was also undertaken to re-design the newsletter *The School Trustee* to reflect the changes at the Association. Discussions about the communications needs of the members have changed the project to the creation of a web-based newsletter. Printed communications can still be done, but the need for immediate and more frequent communications with members will be served in a web-based format. That work will be completed by the end of 2004.

Work has also begun on a communications planning tool for boards. The coming year of amalgamations will also involve significant communications development and activity.

Staff support

The increasing need for communications support for the Association and boards resulted in the re-assignment of a staff member in 2004 to support the Director of Communications.

Andrea Ashton, who has been with the Association for 20 years, has been moved into the role of Communications Officer. Andrea works on the website and provides other communications and technical support for the Association.

Advocacy

Association Communications includes advocacy in many areas, including government and the opposition, the media, business groups and the public.

Boards of education wanted increased advocacy from the Association, and some of the restructuring changes on staff in 2003 was intended to increase the Executive Director's advocacy role. The Director of Communications is also involved in the advocacy efforts. This includes building partnerships with other local government Associations, chambers of commerce, etc., meeting with Members of the Legislative Assembly, and media relations.

The Association also supports boards in their advocacy efforts and provides

direct member support for boards that request advice.

Other Initiatives

The Director of Communications was involved this year in the promotion of seminars, in assisting the President, Vice-President, Executive and member boards in advocacy efforts, in providing information for Branch Meetings and Branch Council Meetings and in preparing electronic communications - the website, news releases, memos to boards and *Talking Points*. There is a continued move to electronic communications instead of paper communications, in accordance with past Convention resolutions.

Members are encouraged to visit the website regularly (<http://www.saskschoolboards.ca>) as it is updated on a daily basis and provides a wealth of information for members. Board members and senior administrators can submit their e-mail address (to the Director at astephanson@saskschoolboards.ca) to get regular updates from the office and stay informed.

General Counsel

Bonnie Ozirny

The General Counsel is involved in all aspects of the Association's day-to-day operations, and provides legal advice to the Association Executive, the Executive Director, and all staff areas within the Association.

Advice to the Executive

The General Counsel is legal counsel to the Executive, and provides advice during Executive meetings and planning sessions. She also advises on the legal implications of Association policy and practice, provides analysis of legislation, current and proposed, and on policies and practices of other agencies.

Advice to the Executive Director and Association Staff Areas

The General Counsel participates in senior management meetings to provide counsel on legal implications of management decisions and provide legal advice on a wide range of issues that come to the management team. She reviews Association contracts, reviews proposed policies being developed in other work areas in the Association relating to the carrying out of their functions, and provides other advice as necessary.

Inservice and Workshops

The General Counsel participates in various Board Development initiatives, including the Board Chair Workshop and the School for Trustees, so that Board members understand the legal framework within which they must operate and basic legal concepts and processes that affect their decisions and actions.

Other Initiatives

In addition to performing the function of legal counsel to the Association, the General Counsel represents the

Association on various external committees.

In June, 2004, the Interim Report of the Committee to Review Article 7, medical leaves, of the Provincial Agreement for teachers was jointly presented by the participants on the Committee, (the Association, the STF and the government) to the executive and staff of the Association and STF and Department of Learning staff.

General Counsel is also serving on the Steering Committee for CAPSLE 2005 (Canadian Association for the Practical Study of Law in Education), when Regina will host the conference of educators, administrators and trustees from across Canada.

Education Services

**Associate Executive Director:
Barry Bashutski**

The Associate Executive Director Education Services is responsible for:

- trustee education and board development,
- board policy support,
- managing the Saskatchewan School Boards Association Research Centre,
- support for public engagement, and
- ensuring appropriate voice for boards of education in program changes.

Education Services are organized:

- To strengthen school boards' capacity to deliver appropriate programs.
- To strengthen school boards' capacity to implement policy and manage affairs effectively.

Trustee Education and Board Development

The Association supports trustee education and board development with modules delivered at provincial seminars and to individual board of education retreats. Eleven provincial board development seminars have been offered to date in 2004. In addition, the Association has facilitated 56 sessions for individual board of education retreats.

The Association keeps track of board participation in Association-supported board development. More than half of Saskatchewan boards of education made extensive use of Association board development services, and 35 boards of education engaged in at least one retreat day. Some boards had limited participation and 12 boards recorded no involvement with the Association program.

In 2004, board chairs were asked to provide feedback on the Association trustee education and board development program. Responses were received from 26 boards of education, and 92% indicated that the trustee education and board development program met expectations. Trustees reported a high level of satisfaction with achievement of the objectives listed. Boards that invested more time rated the Association program and value for improvement higher. Rated highest was the Handbook for School Board Trustees 2003-2006, Schools for New Trustees and the module handbooks provided at workshops.

Policy Support

The Association provided extensive policy development support in 2004 for six newly amalgamated boards. The framework for strategic board governance with separate operational policies as outlined in Research Report #02-09 is being put into operation. Additional fees were charged for these services.

Saskatchewan School Boards Association Research Centre

The Saskatchewan School Boards Association Research Centre is dedicated to ensuring leadership in educational research and development in order to facilitate informed decision

making by Saskatchewan school boards and the Association.

The Association Research Centre has been developing and distributing educational reports for Saskatchewan boards of education since 1968. Each member board of education contributes 6.5% of their annual Association fee to the Research and Development Fund. Each year, new projects are proposed by our Executive, boards of education, and Convention resolutions for the ongoing improvement of quality education in Saskatchewan.

The Association Executive identified several new areas to concentrate research and development in 2004, including the following major projects:

Board Development	To develop a resource handbook on communications and advocacy as a resource for school boards in Saskatchewan.
Accountability	To develop a framework for school board accountability.
Student Achievement	To establish the role of the Association as a principle advocate for student achievement in Saskatchewan. To develop a resource focused on use of time in school related to achievement.
School ^{Plus}	To advance the development of understandings and resources on School ^{Plus} .

A good deal of effort has been directed at exploring these issues and completing previously approved projects.

Support for Public Engagement

Module 15 regarding 'Public Engagement' was drafted and introduced to boards of education. Efforts continue to build understanding of the need for public engagement and on supporting strategies for effectively engaging the public.

Since the May restructuring announcement, a good deal of effort has been directed at advancing the interests of boards of education regarding the renewal of district boards of trustees and local school advisory committees.

Voice for boards of education in program changes

The interests of boards of education are represented by the Association on several committees with Saskatchewan Learning and other organizations. In 2004, the Association was active on the following program committees:

- School^{PLUS}
- Interagency Committee on Large Scale Assessments
- Accreditation Review Committee
- Education Equity Forum
- College of Education, University of Saskatchewan Field Experience Committee

Corporate Services

**Associate Executive Director:
Richard Buettner**

Since June 2003 when boards of education approved a change in the way member services are provided, the areas of Employee Relations and Legal Services have been enhanced. As well, the four departments of the Association have been brought under the area of Corporate Services. This better coordinates the work of Employee Relations, Legal Services, Employee Benefits and Insurance as the departments deliver services and advice to boards.

Provincial Bargaining – Teachers’ Collective Agreement

Association Executive members Debbie Widdifield, Roy Challis, and Connie Bailey and staff member Richard Buettner are the Association’s Provincial Bargaining representatives.

The Committee has been actively involved in the negotiating process. Regular reports are provided to the Executive in addition to confidential bargaining updates that have been sent to each Board Chairperson over the past months.

Employee Relations

Director: Greg Deren

The Employee Relations department provides direct assistance and advice on a variety of human resource issues.

Services from the Employee Relations department to boards include:

- representing Boards of Education at collective bargaining tables,
- developing Board proposals and providing all manner of support in contract negotiations for either support staff or LINC agreements,
- representing Boards of Education before the Labour Relations Board – for example in the case of amendments to Certification Orders pursuant to *The Trade Union Act* when school divisions are restructuring/amalgamating,
- interpreting collective agreements,
- supporting Boards through the grievance process including representing Boards in arbitration hearings, and,
- assisting Boards and their staffs with all manner of employment issues. This includes questions about the rights and obligations of employees not represented by unions.

During 2004 to date, staff members have represented Boards of Education at 18 support staff bargaining tables, of which eight have resulted in successful agreements. In many cases, these negotiation assignments involved special challenges, relating for example to

amalgamations or newly certified union locals.

Substantial support has been given to Boards with respect to another four support staff negotiations, and with respect to 10 LINC agreements. As well, assistance in concert with Legal Services was provided to boards of education in preparation for or at Labour Relations Board hearings, and in labour arbitrations.

As well, a full range of direct services to Boards continues to be provided on a daily basis. During the academic year, between 21 and 27 member Boards of Education have received direct services from the Employee Relations Department each month, with the number of contacts with member Boards averaging about 95 monthly. Questions raised typically included such matters as employee discipline or performance management, the application of collective agreements to staffing or layoffs, payroll and hours of work concerns, and responses to union grievances.

Employee Relations staff has also worked toward developing the ability of trustees and administrators to better understand and respond to human resource management questions. Considerable work was done early in 2004 on developing and delivering a presentation on the federal Employment Insurance Compassionate Care Leave provisions. The staff is currently working on modules for both trustees and administrators on key current issues, as well as more general questions around the kind of employment environments that Boards of Education will be providing.

With expanded resources, the department is also willing and able to offer consultation and support in human resource management areas that go beyond the common notion of employee relations. Consultants welcome queries in such areas as human resource planning, staff recruitment and selection, and organizational design and development.

The department has been busy promoting the services that it is able to offer to Boards of Education, and this continues most recently concerning collective agreements that expire December 31, 2004.

This last year has also been a very intense time for the Employee Relations Department in terms of its internal development. It has more than doubled in size, and people in the department have all been on staff for only a year. Energy has gone into developing working relationships within the department as well as with staff in other areas of the Association, gaining more in-depth understanding of support staff collective agreements and LINC agreements, and addressing the department's communications and accountability processes. Greg Deren was appointed Director of Employee Relations on June 1, 2004.

Legal Services

Director: Bonnie Ozirny

The in-house Legal Services team provides direct legal support to boards. Legal issues relating to management of absences, long-term medical leaves, and discipline and performance of staff continue to be a major focus, with an emphasis not only on dealing with the

specific cases but also on assisting administrators in gaining the knowledge and skills necessary to deal with those issues on a day-to-day basis.

In 2004, we have seen an increase in activity in the following areas: issues relating to the functioning of those Boards who are moving from a hands-on approach to being policy governance boards; privacy issues; issues arising out of the management role of principals; and requests for assistance in drafting policy.

A major component of the daily work continues to be calls from administrators with urgent questions. Many of the telephone contacts involve matters of an urgent or emergent nature. Over 90 per cent of member boards have accessed direct legal services in the first nine months of 2004. Lawyers are currently involved in several grievance arbitrations (CUPE), and Labour Relations Board matters.

In 2004, Legal Services returned to being fully staffed, after a year of operating short-staffed. Krista Lenius began work in the position of Administrative Legal Assistant in April.

Meeting the demand for services continues to be a challenge. Financial resources earlier approved by the Executive for additional Legal Services for the fall will be evaluated at the end of the calendar year.

Insurance Plan

Director: Dave Jackson

The General Insurance Plan provides property and liability insurance for all member school boards. The Plan also

includes self-funded loss pools for buildings and contents, general liability, sexual molestation and abuse, and air quality claims.

Some of the other value added services that the General Insurance program offers include insurance marketing, consultation and policy interpretation, claims management and advocacy, loss prevention, risk management, transportation safety and group tendering.

There has been significant effort made this year to develop strategic partnerships that will assist the Association and member boards in avoiding and mitigating liability claims.

The Association Executive recently approved the endorsement of a joint program with Saskatchewan Safety Counsel and Workers' Compensation Board called "Safe Saskatchewan" that promotes safety in work, life, and play. Promotional material will be developed throughout 2005.

Work is continuing with our insurance broker, Marsh Canada, to develop and assess loss prevention programs for member boards. A number of internal changes have been implemented to streamline the administration of this program and provide information to boards in a more efficient and effective manner.

The creation of an exclusive web page to store information related to insurance and risk management is currently in the developmental stage and will hopefully be available to member school boards in 2005.

In January 2004, Lloyd Wildeman retired from the Association after 17 years of service. Lloyd was instrumental in the development of the general insurance program and the relationships that he built across the province are numerous. Dave Jackson was appointed Director of Insurance on January 1, 2004.

Employee Benefits Plan **Acting Director: Dave Jackson**

The Employee Benefits Department is responsible for the administration and management of the group benefits plan for the Association. This benefit plan includes a variety of tailored benefit options from which member boards can choose. The benefits that are available to member boards include; Health, Dental, Vision, Life Insurance, Dependent Life Insurance, Optional Life Insurance, Accidental Death and Dismemberment, Voluntary Accidental Death and Dismemberment, Short Term Disability, Long Term Disability, and Employee Family Assistance Program coverage.

Some of the core services that are offered by the Employee Benefits Department include: insurance marketing, consultation and policy interpretation, claims management and advocacy, loss prevention and risk management. The Employee Benefits seminar for school division secretary-treasurers and payroll staff was held in Melfort on March 25. Employee Relations staff and Insurance staff assisted with the presentations. Written evaluations of the seminar included very positive comments and suggestions for consideration in planning subsequent seminars.

This year has focused on efficiency gains and value added services to member boards. A complete review of the administrative practices, services available, and quality of plan design was initiated and is ongoing.

Dave Jackson was appointed Acting Director of the Employee Benefits Plan on April 1, 2004. The recruitment of a third Benefit Administrative Assistant was completed with the selection of Leslie Donsberger who began working with the department on April 19. Another addition to the department took place on September 1 with the hiring of Carol McKay-Lawrence as our Disability Management Coordinator. Carol will assist member boards in the planning, development, and training of safety issues and wellness concepts. She is available to facilitate and develop programs related to absence management, early intervention, return to work, WCB advocacy, and other programs related to absence and disability management.

The rate renewal process this year involved an intensive review of the insurance carriers, the benefit plan design, and the costs related to providing these benefits to our members. The rate renewal process involves the intensive assistance of our broker, AON, who negotiates with our carriers (Maritime Life, The Co-operators and Warren Shepell) the rates for the upcoming school year. A positive outcome was achieved with an overall 0% increase in the cost of benefits. The relationships, products, and costs of these products will be evaluated in the next year to ensure that our membership is receiving the best benefit coverage at the lowest cost.