

Research

R E P O R T

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Board Chair Compensation

by
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This report was commissioned by the Saskatchewan School Boards Association to describe the time expectations of a board chair of a larger school division, the compensation provided and the supports available to help him/her be successful in that position. The information presented is based on interviews with eight western Canadian and two Saskatchewan school board chairs.

Research Report #08-02

REPORT ON BOARD CHAIR COMPENSATION

The purpose of this study was to identify the time expectations of the board chair of a larger school division, the compensation provided and the supports available to help him/her be successful in that position.

Eight western Canadian school board chairs of large school divisions with a student enrolment of 15,000 to 45,000 students as well as two chairs of Saskatchewan school divisions which fell below that enrolment range were interviewed by telephone regarding this. The latter two were contacted to enable comparison of the four largest school divisions in Saskatchewan and to provide an additional comparison with a large rural school division chair.

The time that a large school division chair spent on fulfilling the responsibilities as trustee and chair was fairly consistent and tended to be 50 to 100% more than the estimated average time of the other board members. On average, board members were perceived to spend about 14 hours per week on board related business and board chairs indicated that they spent about 23 hours per week on such matters. Years of board member and board chair experience did not appear to be a contributing factor to time spent on board work. Chairs of the largest school divisions tended to require a greater time commitment. (Table 1)

Table 1: Enrolment/Experience/Time Comparison

	Victoria	Central Okanagan	Calgary R.C.	Edmonton R.C.	Winnipeg	Saskatoon Public	Saskatoon R.C.	Regina Public	Regina R.C.	S.E. Cornerstone
Enrolment	20,000	22,000	44,000	32,000	33,000	20,000	15,500	20,500	9,500	8,000
Trustee Experience	12	12	7	10	10	6	12	5	11	5
Chair Experience	1	6	1	4	2	2	9	2	4	5
Average Trustee Hrs/week	10-15	15-20	20+	15	10-20	10-15	8-10	15	8	15
Average Chair Hrs/week	20-30	30+	26+	30+	13-25	20-25	20+	25	10	20

Board chair activities requiring additional time commitment were consistently identified by all chairs. Although the terminology varies slightly, they included:

- agenda setting
- signing cheques and documents
- keeping current on board issues, policies, and priorities
- serving as spokesperson for the board and school division
- representing the board at meetings, functions and events (internal & external)
- attending committee meetings (ex officio member of all committees)
- public relations and media interviews and enquiries

- attending community activities and functions
- giving speeches
- political advocacy (Table 2)

Table 2: Chair Time Activities

	Victoria	Central Okanagan	Calgary R.C.	Edmonton R.C.	Winnipeg	Saskatoon Public	Saskatoon R.C.	Regina Public	Regina R.C.	S.E. Cornerstone
Agenda	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Signing docs.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Keep Current	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Spokesperson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Representation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meetings	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Functions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Committees	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
PR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Speeches	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Political Advocacy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

The range of financial compensation for board chair varied widely with the lowest in British Columbia, the highest in Alberta and Saskatchewan and Manitoba about the mean score of these amounts. (*Table 3 at end of document*).

The information obtained from the board chairs indicated:

- All school divisions, with the exception of Regina Catholic and South East Cornerstone, paid an annual indemnity. The latter paid on a per diem or per event basis.
- The board member remuneration ranged from \$11,000/year to \$30,000/year with an average of \$20,207.
- The board chair remuneration ranged from \$13,000/year to \$39,000/year with an average of \$24,725 – 22.36% higher than the average trustee remuneration.
- Most school boards established the rate of remuneration through board discussion. One Board took the mean rate of the province: another based it on a metro board comparison.
- Remuneration rates were established by board motion and most are subject to an annual review and adjustment. Two of the boards review the rates every 3 or 4 years.
- 50% of the sampled school boards connect the remuneration with teacher salaries and are automatically adjusted as teacher contracts are adjusted.
- 3 school boards provide for a cost of living adjustment for board member payments.
- The Alberta school boards provide a base remuneration as well as a per diem amount for certain events.

- All sampled school boards provide profession development funds for trustee education. Most of these provide a specific amount and have a carry over provision. Calgary Catholic School District provides \$1,000/year more than the other board members.
- The Alberta school divisions and South East Cornerstone School Division make provision for board members to participate in an employee group benefits package.
- All school divisions have a meal allowance: some are specified; others require receipts.
- Edmonton R. C. School Division also provides a car allowance of \$250/month.

The human resource support for board chairs was deemed to be satisfactory. All board chairs had access to administrative assistance with more support being available to larger school divisions. Most board chairs received most of their information from the Director or Superintendent and recognized and respected the protocol for contact with other school division employees but could make informal contact with other superintendents or supervisory staff to obtain specific information.

Table 4: Technology & Equipment Support

	Victoria	Central Okanagan	Calgary R.C.	Edmonton R.C.	Winnipeg	Saskatoon Public	Saskatoon R.C.	Regina Public	Regina R.C.	S.E. Cornerstone
Computer	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓
Monitor	x	-	-	-	-	-	x	-	x	✓
PDA (Blackberry)	✓	x	x	✓	x		x	x	✓	✓
Cell phone	✓	x	✓	x	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
Copier	x	x	✓	✓		x	x	x	x	x
Printer	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓
Scanner	x	x	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Fax	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	✓	x	✓
Shredder	x	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Filing Cabinet	x	x	x	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Office Supplies	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓
Internet Access \$	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	✓*	x
Cell/PDA charges	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	✓
LD Board bus. \$	✓	✓	✓	limited ✓	✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓*
Technician help	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓
Equip. Install	x	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Purchase/Keep	x	???	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	???	x
Telephone + \$	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	x	x	x

Equipment support for board members and board chairs varied from next to none to a complete home office compliment. (Table 4)

- Seven of ten board chairs received laptop computers.
- most school division chairs were provided with a cellular telephone or PDA (Blackberry).
- Board chairs of the largest sampled school divisions were provided with a “home office equipment compliment.”

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- Some of the communication equipment was available to board members on request.
 - 50% of the school board chairs received payment for internet connection charges on their PDA.
 - Four of the sampled board chairs indicated that they were able to purchase or keep their school division provided technology upon the conclusion of their term of office. Two of the boards have this as a new concept and have not made a decision about purchasing or keeping school board provided equipment to board members.

When board chairs were asked to identify frustrations that they experience in their positions and to indicate what they would like to see in a preferred state, they said that they had very few frustrations and were satisfied with the level of support they received. Some of the frustrations mentioned included:

- The lack of understanding of the role, function and responsibility of boards of education.
- Receiving advanced information on issues and events from the Ministry of Education or within the school division.
- Political meetings.
- Board dynamics regarding positions, personal issues and conflicts.
- The slow rate of change in education.
- Converging time commitments.
- Reaching board consensus.

Improvements identified by some of the board chairs were:

- Greater equity in shared responsibility of all board members.
- More access to administrative assistance and communications personnel.
- Additional technology support for those who have little provided to them.
- More compensation for the board chair in consideration of the disparity between time spent on board business and what other board members receive.

In general, the board chairs interviewed in this study indicated their pleasure in being a member of a school board and in being board chair. They were very positive about the work of their board and the impact they were having on their respective school divisions. They accepted their responsibility as board chair and reflected their commitment to that position.

BOARD CHAIR COMPARISON

Table 3: Remuneration

	Victoria	Central Okanagan	Calgary R.C.	Edmonton R.C.*	Winnipeg	Saskatoon Public	Saskatoon R.C.	Regina Public	Regina R.C.	S.E. Cornerstone
Chair	13,000	19,461	31,375	39,000	25,000	25,000	24,000	25,000	29,400*	20,900*
Vice-Chair	12,000	18,135	27,748	34,500	23,000	23,400	20,000	22,000	19,000*	16,000*
Trustee	11,000	17,261	24,805	30,000	20,000	22,000	20,000	22,000	19,000*	16,000*
Pay Formula	BC mean	Board Discussion	Committee	Metro Bd. comparison	Board Discussion	2003 Bd. motion	Board review	Committee	historical	Board Discussion
Annual motion	Yes	Yes	3 yrs.	Yes	4 yrs.	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Tied teacher \$	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
COLAdjustment	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Travel \$	No	\$0.50/km	\$0.45/km	\$0.44/km	No	\$0.39/km	Yes	\$0.38/km	\$0.43/km	\$0.49/km
Per diem	No	No	\$184/d* \$98/½d*	\$100/½d	No	No	No	no	\$175/event	\$200/event \$100/½d< *
Meetings, etc.	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Agenda setting	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Conferences/PD	Yes Limited	Yes	Yes**	\$5,000/yr	\$1,000/yr +*	\$1,300/yr +*	\$4,000/yr	\$2,000/yr	\$3,500/yr	Yes (no limit)
Group Benefits	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Meal Allowance	Yes	Yes	Yes	\$50/d	Yes Receipts	\$41/d	\$35/d	\$36/d	\$37.50/d	\$41/d
Car Allowance	No	No	No	\$250/m	No	No	No	No	No	No

*Edmonton R. C: Rate effective September 1, 2008

*The remuneration shown for Regina R. C. and S.E. Cornerstone school divisions show the actual amount received by the chairs of these school divisions and the average amount received by other board members during the past year.