

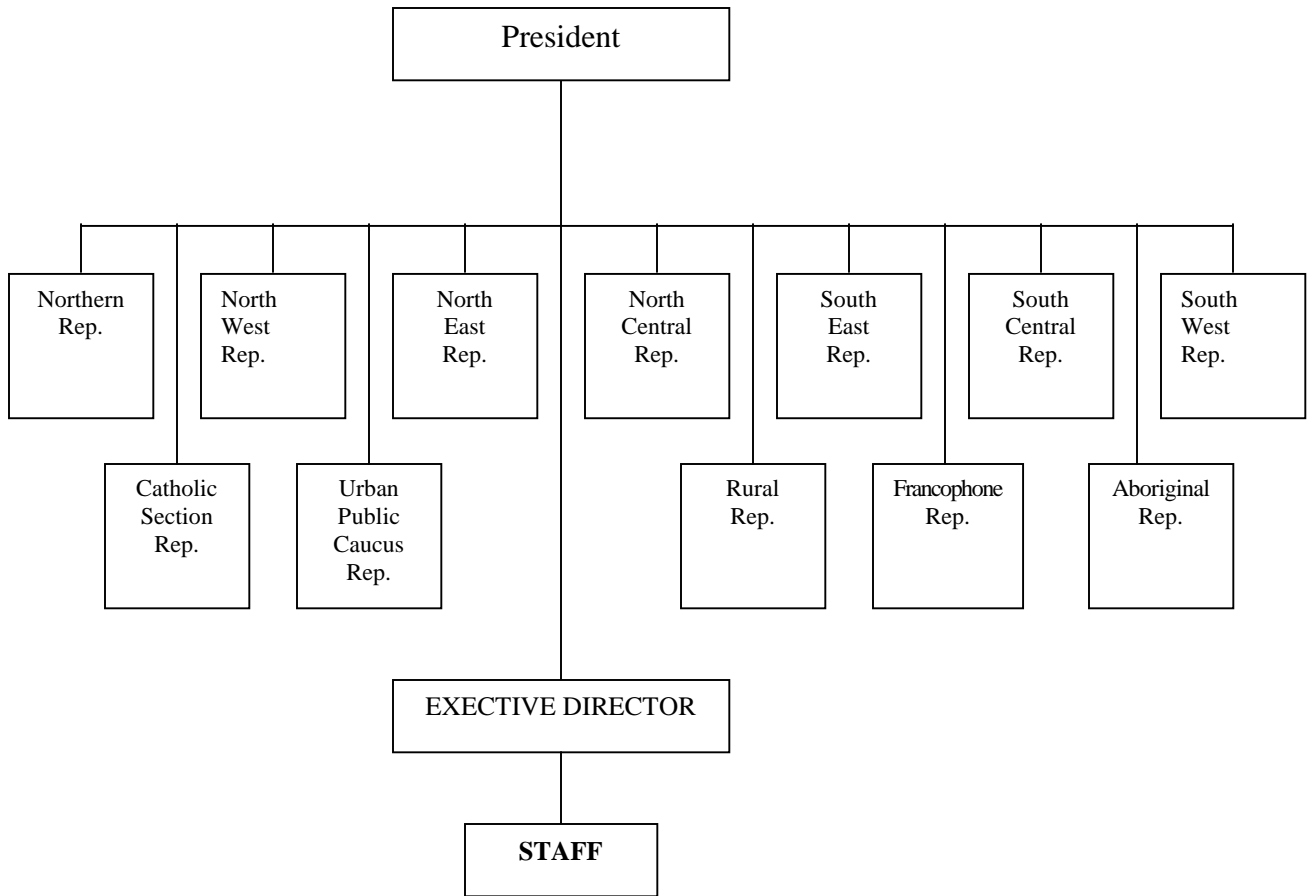


# Annual Report 2003

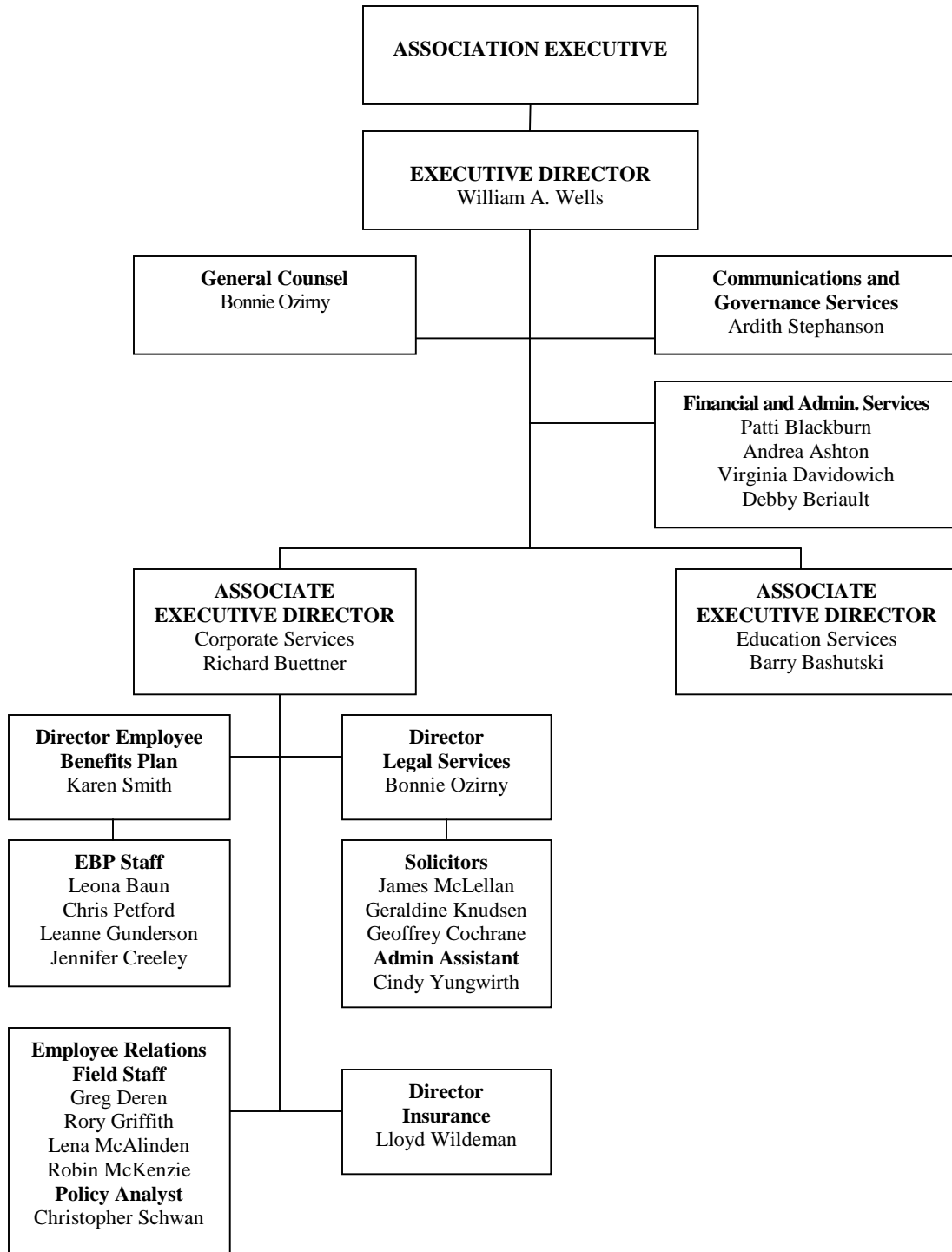
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# Governance Structure – effective following Convention 2003



# Association Staffing – effective September 1, 2003



## Association Initiatives

The Executive established its 2003 priorities throughout 2003 beginning in January. The priorities reflect new directions approved by the 2002 Convention, previous commitments carried forward into 2003 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.

2002 Convention. Following consideration of the report and its recommendations, the 2002 Convention directed the Association to consider the report and proceed with changes.

The Association Executive, using feedback from boards and some of the University recommendations, spent the first part of 2003 creating a new governance structure as well as a new member services delivery model.

At a special meeting of all boards of education on June 16, 2003, members approved the new governance structure with 97 per cent support. Members approved the new member services delivery model with 87 per cent support.

## Governance Structure

The new structure of the Association continues to be led by the President, elected by weighted ballot at Convention. There is no longer a Past President or a Vice-President. There is, however, a contingency plan in the event of a long-term absence by the President. As well, each Executive member is expected to play a role in assisting or “backing up” the President.

The new structure also continues with the regional representation that is the key to two-way communication between all boards and the Executive. There are now seven Branches that mirror – with a few exceptions – the regions of the Department of Learning. Each Branch elects a representative to sit on the Executive. Those elections are held by weighted ballot at fall meetings in each Branch.

The creation over 50 years ago of a unified Association of all boards of education included a seat at the Executive table for the Catholic Section of the Association. The new governance structure continues that arrangement. The Executive will now formally include other diverse voices that allows the Association to truly speak for all boards of education in the province. The Urban Public Boards Caucus will appoint a representative, as will the Conseil Scolaire Fransaskois. Rural boards of education will elect a representative at Convention. The growing Aboriginal population is represented by an Aboriginal Executive member, elected at Convention.

The overwhelming membership support of these changes reflects the Executive’s belief that the new structure will lead the Association into the future, creating a unified Association that represents all boards and can advocate with one voice.

## Branch Operations

The continued work of the Branches ensures a strong Association, keeps each board of education informed and allows each board to provide feedback to Association initiatives. Branch Councils are the central method of doing that.

Branch Councils include the Branch Representative or Executive member, a representative from each board of education and a local board rep. Meetings are set provincially, there is time for discussion of Branch business, and in addition packages of information are provided from the Association to all boards. Association staff members attend meetings to support the work of Branch Councils.

## Member Services

The University study also identified areas for which boards will need increasing support in coming years. The University identified – and boards agreed - that human resources areas need increasing attention by boards of education in order to deliver appropriate programs for students.

As a result, the Executive recommended to boards that the areas of Legal Services and Employee Relations be increased at the provincial level, to the benefit of all boards of education. All boards benefit equally from a positive legal decision or local agreement. The enhanced services will be supported by a member services fee paid equally by all boards. The recommendations were supported by the membership and have been implemented over the last several months.

Staff changes, including some restructuring, have been made following several retirements. The end result is a new staffing structure that provides better service for boards of education. More details on each department, including staffing in each area, are provided later in this report.

An Associate Executive Director Corporate Services is a new position that includes provincial bargaining as well as responsibility for the four corporate services departments: Employee Relations, Legal Services, Employee Benefits and Insurance. This co-ordination will provide extensive human resources support to boards of education.

The Employee Relations department will now be staffed with four consultants to work in the field, providing human

resource support, including bargaining, for boards of education. A policy analyst supports the consultants and the Associate Executive Director.

The Legal Services Department includes a Director and the equivalent of two other full-time solicitors (one full-time and two half-time positions) as well as an Administrative Assistant for support.

The Employee Benefits Plan is run by a Director and four staff members.

The Insurance Plan is run by a Director. The former Director of Education and Research is now the Associate Executive Director Education Services. This Director runs the Research Centre, a program funded by boards that annually produces research reports of benefit to all boards. The Director also manages Trustee Education and Board Development services and provides policy development support.

The Trustee Education and Board Development program now includes an extensive curriculum to enable boards and board members to govern well. There are 18 modules in the program, which includes diverse topics such as policy governance, education finance and public speaking.

The Association welcomed a new Executive Director, William A. Wells, in the fall. The re-structuring of staff will enable the Executive Director to focus more on advocacy and support for the Executive in its advocacy efforts.

The Director of Communications will also be involved in advocacy as well as support for two-way communications between the boards and the Association,

providing public and media relations for the Association and advice to boards.

The Association also employs support staff in Financial and Administrative Services that work directly to support the Executive Director and other staff members, as well as the Executive, and to run the Association building and other day-to-day affairs. These staff members are Administrative Officer Patti Blackburn, Technical Assistant Andrea Ashton, Administrative Assistant Virginia Davidowich, and receptionist Debby Beriault.

### The “new” Association

Another dramatic change for the Association is the name change and new visual identity. As of the 2003 Convention, the Association will be known as the Saskatchewan School Boards Association. Two years ago, the Association placed an increased emphasis on communications. Feedback was gathered from all member boards and a Communications Strategy was prepared using that feedback.

One of the clearly stated goals of member boards was an enhanced public profile. The name change is a first step to making us better understood by the public and therefore enhancing our profile. The updated logo and new visual identity are also a result of feedback from members. At the conclusion of the development of the logo, members held an informal vote and 91 per cent supported the change of name and logo. The final step in the coming year will be seeking legislative amendments.

One of the key aspects of the change and increased public understanding is the

desire to be called the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, and not use initials as in the past. While many in the education sector shorten their names to initials, and the Association was called the SSTA in the past, the goal is to enhance the public profile and direction has been to achieve that by calling ourselves the Saskatchewan School Boards Association.

### Commission on Financing K-12 Education

As part of the budget announcement in the spring of 2003, the government established a Commission on Financing K-12 Education. The commission’s report is expected by the end of the year.

The Association has been working for several years at examining fiscal disparity among school divisions. The Executive established a committee that developed a discussion paper in 2002, and then followed in 2003 with an examination of possible solutions.

The Association used that material and joined with the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents, and the Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials, to present a joint brief to the Commission. Key points in the presentation were the need to adequately fund education, the need to provide support for non-educational initiatives, and the need to continue to provide for board of education autonomy and local control of education.

The Association intends to be actively involved in any further work following the Commission’s report at the end of the year.

## Aboriginal Education

The Executive discussed and developed a vision for Aboriginal education to guide Association in the future. This vision is focused on strengthening Aboriginal student achievement, parent involvement and partnerships with other organizations.

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 and talks have been initiated to explore how employment opportunities within K-12 education for Aboriginal people can be enhanced.

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 organizations such as the FSIN Corporate Circle.

## Canadian School Boards Association

The Association belongs to the CSBA along with associations from every province. The role of the CSBA is to promote K – 12 education in the national capital particularly when legislation, policies or the federal budget effects the interests of our students. The CSBA also supports the provincial associations and school divisions through the

delivery of services that support good governance.

Specifically, CSBA has been instrumental in the development of the Board Learning Centre, ELLnet and CEPAN.

## 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 fifth 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 first time at Convention in 2003, 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**

As part of restructuring, a shift was made to make Association communications more strategic. The Director participates in senior management meetings to provide advice on decisions and communicate them. The Director also advises the Executive.

In 2003, significant work was done on several of the recommendations from the Communications Strategy conducted for the Association in 2001. The biggest project was the re-naming of the Association and development of a new visual identity.

### Name change and new visual identity

Preparation of the Communications Strategy included feedback from boards through a survey. The results of the survey stated that: *“A clearly identified priority for the SSTA membership is enhancing public profile.”* This was supported by a public opinion poll the same year that showed people do not know the Association or understand its work. The word “trustee” is not well understood and in fact does not truly reflect what we represent – all boards of education.

The provincial Executive supported the recommendation of the Director of Communications that a name change and new, updated visual image would be a first step to enhance the profile and increase understanding of the Association and its role.

In January 2003, the Executive passed a motion that the Director was to gauge member support for a name change to the Saskatchewan School Boards Association. If it was supported, the Director was to move ahead with the change, create a new visual identity for the Association, and publicly unveil the new image at the 2003 Convention.

Work began with January 2003 Branch Council meetings, when representatives were asked to take a feedback form to their boards gauging support for a change. Responses indicated support so work proceeded.

Initial work was done using the feedback from boards received in the Communications Survey, as well as feedback from a Communications Advisory Group (which was set up in 2002 as part of the Communications Strategy). An external consultant who had worked on the strategy was hired to continue work on the new identity.

The new look began by identifying what the Association means to boards. Concepts were taken from the survey and the Advisory Group (which consists of four trustees and a director of education) as well as the board survey.

Those ideas outlined that boards consider the Association to be:

- caring, professional, supportive;
- trustworthy, knowledgeable, helpful;
- influential, unified;
- a leader;
- approachable;
- accountable and accessible; and,
- a credible voice.

The consultant's designer took those concepts, created several options for a new identity, and presented the options to the Advisory Group. The Advisory Group discussed the various options for a new look, ideas for symbols, colours for the logo, etc.

The Advisory Group provided important direction in a number of areas:

- We should use the full name - Saskatchewan School Boards Association - and not the initials SSBA. We will be no further ahead with the public if we simply call ourselves SSBA;
- Emphasize the "School Boards" part of the name because that is the key part of our identity;
- Use a symbol with the words;
- Use fresh, strong colours, not stereotypical colours like Saskatchewan green or colours that are already identified with something else;
- The symbol should combine the tradition of the Association with a modern look;
- The symbol should incorporate the following words or ideas: action, motion, direction, vision, moving forward, supporting, representing, a voice.

The consultant took those ideas back to the designer, who designed a look that represents those ideas. The Advisory Group supported the new logo.

The Director of Communications took the concept for the new logo out to Branch Meetings in April. This was an important step in building member support. The project was explained, the direction from the Advisory Group was outlined, and the new "look" was presented. Response was overwhelmingly positive in all Branches.

At a special meeting of all boards of education in June, boards held a vote on the name change and re-imaging. Board members passed the motion with 91 per cent support. The final step will be changing the name legally.

The name change has resulted in a change to the website, consistent with the desire to be called by the full name and not abbreviated to initials. The new website name is:  
[www.saskschoolboards.ca](http://www.saskschoolboards.ca)

## Advocacy

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

The Association also supports boards in their advocacy efforts and provides direct member support for boards that request advice. A public speaking inservice at the annual Convention is a popular one, and will be repeated this year to support board members with their communications activities.

## 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, in consulting with the membership at Branch Meetings in the spring, in organizing Convention and in preparing electronic communications - the website, news releases and *Talking Points*. The Director presented at the 2003 CSBA Congress.

## Association Publications

In recent years there has been an increased emphasis on electronic communications. Members are encouraged to visit the website regularly (<http://www.saskschoolboards.ca>) and to submit their e-mail address to: [astephanson@saskschoolboards.ca](mailto:astephanson@saskschoolboards.ca) to get regular updates from the office and stay informed.

*The School Trustee* newsletter is distributed on a monthly basis (except July and August) to all boards of education, conseil scolaire and district boards of trustees as part of boards' annual membership fee. The newsletter also goes to the education partners, to MLAs and to the media.

## 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, including the Municipal Employees' Pension Plan Commission and the Committee to Review Article 7 (medical leaves) of the Provincial Agreement for teachers. She is also serving on the Steering Committee for CAPSLE 2005 (Canadian Association for the Practical Study of Law in Education), when Regina will host educators, administrators and trustees from across Canada.

## Education Services

**Associate Executive Director:  
Barry Bashutski**

Education Services was established as a new area within the Association in 2003.

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.
- to strengthen school boards' ability to communicate accomplishments.

### Trustee Education and Board Development

The Association consolidated the education program for board members and boards of education in 2003. Key components of the program updated in 2003 include the Handbook for School Board Trustees 2003 – 2006, 18 trustee education modules and online resources. This program brings together more than a decade of research and practical application working directly with elected boards.

In 2003, time was dedicated to facilitating board retreats, director appraisal, system planning and local board seminars.

### Policy Support

In response to several school system amalgamations and increasing board focus on achieving results, the Association has developed supports to strengthen board capacity for strategic policy governance.

A handbook and workshop framework was developed and implemented with five school divisions in 2003.

### 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 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 support 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.

In 2003, the Association organized a significant research effort regarding education taxation and equity to inform

board submissions to the Commission on Financing K-12 Education.	#03-03	The Role of the Rural Principal in Working with At-Risk Students
The following Research Reports were also completed and distributed in 2003 and are now available online ( <a href="http://www.saskschoolboards.ca">www.saskschoolboards.ca</a> ):	#03-04	Local Government in Saskatchewan: Instructional Resources for Grade 4
#03-01 Boards of Education Strengthening the School Program	#03-05	Local Government in Saskatchewan: Instructional Resources for Grade 12
#03-02 Boys and School	#03-06	Fees Fundraising and Fairness

The Executive of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association identified several areas to concentrate new work in research and development in 2003, including:

Nutrition Guidelines for Schools	To update the 1993 resource document for schools in cooperation with Saskatchewan Public Health.
Student Achievement	To gather and communicate models of promising practice for boards to better use achievement data.
Guidelines for Home Based Education	To develop guidelines and tools for school system administrators managing home based education within provincial regulations.
Tools for Teacher Supervision	To develop resources for school administrators and senior administrators in reviewing and strengthening instruction.
Research Information	To develop summary statements on key research questions to better communicate key ideas to boards of education.
Advocacy Handbook	To develop a resource handbook on communications and advocacy as a resource for school boards in Saskatchewan.
Program Delivery in Small Schools	To communicate and advance alternative strategies for program delivery in small schools.
Aboriginal Education	To support the research and development components of the SSTA Aboriginal strategy.
Distance Education	To define key policy issues for boards of education regarding distance education to inform SSTA's work with the Technology Consortium.
Board Development	To develop and print a handbook for trustees as the focal point and pathway to the modules of the board development program.
Finance Equity	To develop a discussion paper with background information on the range of options to address the growing inequalities among school divisions in their ability to fund educational services.
Local Government Curriculum	To partner with SARM, SUMA, SAHO and Saskatchewan Education to develop a grade 4 and 12 curriculum resource to strengthen student understanding of the work of boards of education and local government.
HR Management	To identify directions for effective management of school system human resources.
Board History	To develop a written record of board of education and Association developments in Saskatchewan from 1980 – 2005.

A good deal of effort has been directed at exploring these issues and developing resources to support the work of boards of education. Project outcomes for each area include defining the issues, reviewing current best practice, identifying directions and guidelines for action, and organizing learning opportunities for trustees. Work on these priorities continues into the year 2004.

The year 2003 has provided many challenges for the Association and member boards. Efforts during 2003 have focused on responding to current challenges facing boards of education and to developing resources for proactively influencing tomorrow's agenda.

### Support for Public Engagement

The Association reviewed and renewed how District Boards of Trustees and Local School Advisory Committees will be supported.

The Association's efforts are being focused on communications, building board members' understanding of the need for public engagement and on supporting strategies for effectively engaging the public.

### Voice for boards of education in program changes

The interests of boards of education are represented by the Association on committees and special projects by Saskatchewan Learning and other organizations.

In 2003, the Associate Executive Director Education Services represented the

Association on the following committees of Saskatchewan Education:

- Curriculum and Instruction
- Evaluation and Monitoring
- Reference Committee on the Provision of System-Specific Information from Large Scale Assessments
- Interagency Committee on the Recruitment and Retention of School-Based Administrators
- Accreditation Review, and
- Education Equity.

In addition, a good deal of effort is dedicated to ensuring a voice for boards of education in working collaboratively with other education stakeholders in Saskatchewan including the following:

- College of Education, University of Saskatchewan Field Experience Committee,
- Saskatchewan Council of Educational Administrators (SCEA) Advisory Board, and
- Saskatchewan Professional Development Research Unit (SPDU) Advisory Board.

Work is also being done with the Canadian School Boards Association to advance the effective use of computers in schools and collaborative efforts to support board development.

The Association is participating in the following CSBA projects:

- Representing CSBA on the Industry Canada SchoolNet Advisory Board,
- Contributing modules to the new Board Learning Centre and ELLnet projects that offer online learning opportunities for trustees.

## Corporate Services

**Associate Executive Director:  
Richard Buettner**

In June 2003, boards of education approved a change in the way member services are provided. The areas of Employee Relations and Legal Services were enhanced with additional staff.

As well, four departments of the Association have been brought under the area of Corporate Services. This will better co-ordinate the work of Employee Relations, Legal Services, Employee Benefits and Insurance as the four departments deliver services and advice to boards.

Richard Buettner, currently the Director of Education with the Battlefords School Division, has been hired as the Associate Executive Director Corporate Services. Richard begins work on January 1, 2004. He joins the senior management team of the Association and will specifically be in charge of provincial bargaining and its related duties, specific policy areas, as well as the four departments in corporate services.

### ***Employee Relations***

In 2003, Employee Relations staff provided direct assistance and advised on a variety of human resource issues and concerns raised by members of the Association.

The year 2003 saw significant change for this department. Director Dwight Welisch retired in the spring after 23 years with the Association. Consultant Bill Wells was appointed the Executive Director after the retirement of Craig Melvin. That left the Department

somewhat in a state of flux. Decisions made by all boards in June of 2003 have resulted in new staff being hired in the Department.

### **Provincial Bargaining**

Dwight Welisch and Association Executive members Lance Bean, Rose Olson and Charmaine Styles were the Association's Provincial Bargaining representatives. The committee was involved in various contract administration issues and committees arising from the current agreement.

### **Local Bargaining - Teachers**

During the past 12 months, Employee Relations staff assisted a number of boards to conduct local negotiations with teachers. A significant increase in Boards of Conciliation occurred this year.

### **Local Bargaining - Support Staff**

During the past 12 months, Employee Relations staff assisted a number of boards in concluding agreements with their support staff.

The largest single activity over the past 12 months has been the CUPE strike in the Wadena School Division. It has continued for 100 days as of Friday November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2003 and involved a union local consisting of teacher aides, library aides, school secretaries and caretakers.

### **Other Initiatives**

In addition to an increasing demand for direct services in negotiations and contract administration, the range of

human resource services being requested is also increasing:

- Assistance with writing job descriptions has seen the greatest increase in requests for assistance.
- Mediation and conciliation are other components of Employee Relations services and activities.
- The Employee Relations department also supports the Association's board development efforts at seminars for trustees and seminars for administrators.
- Direct board inservice is provided any time to assist boards in bargaining, including pre-bargaining meetings to help them understand the process.
- Appearances before the Labour Relations Boards on behalf of boards.
- Daily contact with board members and administrators, providing assistance with grievances and staffing issues as well as human resource advice and problem-solving are perennial duties in the role of Employee Relations.
- Assisting boards with human resource issues of non-unionized staff.

### Changes in Personnel

Following the retirement of Dwight Welisch, the move of Bill Wells to the Executive Director's position, and the significant decisions made by boards in June, the Employee Relations Department is welcoming new staff.

Christopher Schwan was hired on Sept. 1 as an Employee Relations Policy

Analyst. He has begun preparations for the new consultants.

Four Employee Relations Consultants have been hired. They have each been assigned to specific boards of education to assist them with a full range of human resource services.

Greg Deren, Lena McAlinden and Rory Griffith will begin work at Convention on Nov. 24. Robin McKenzie begins work on Jan. 1, 2004.

### *Legal Services*

**Director: Bonnie Ozirny**

The in-house Legal Services team provides direct legal support to Boards of Education, and has developed the necessary knowledge of the education sector so that the legal advice provided is specific to the environment in which Boards function.

Legal Services staff is comprised of two full-time lawyers and two half-time lawyers. The full-time lawyers are Bonnie Ozirny, who was promoted to Director, and James R. McLellan, who joined the Association in October. The half-time lawyers are Geraldine Knudsen, who assumed full-time responsibilities for part of 2003, and Geoffrey Cochrane, who will join the Association on a half-time basis at Convention. In September, the Department welcomed Cindy Yungwirth, an Administrative Assistant (Legal Services).

The team was presented with a major challenge this past year when we lost our beloved colleague and mentor, LaVonne Black, Director of Legal Services.



Demand for legal services continues to increase as Boards face a broader scope and greater number of legal issues. By conducting workshops and developing guides for administrators on legal issues that arise regularly, we are able to assist Boards to better address these challenges and build capacity within Board administration.

A major component of the daily work of Legal Services is the calls from administrators with urgent questions. We endeavour to provide immediate advice on those matters and prompt advice on emerging situations that administrators are faced with.

Our legal team provides a broad range of legal services, which includes the following major areas:

- *Education Law:* This is a growing area of the law. Legal Services advises on issues including student discipline and student rights, relationships with parents, board powers and obligations, school property and liability of boards and their staff in providing educational services.
- *Labour Law:* Together with the Employee Relations staff, we provide advice on the administration and interpretation of collective bargaining agreements, and represent Boards in arbitrations and conciliation arising in relation to support staff and LINC agreements. We continue to represent Boards in applications before the Labour Relations Board. We also assist in the development of language for collective agreements.
- *Employment Law, including Human Resources:* We advise on a variety of employment issues, including employee discipline, management of medical

absences, performance issues, employment contracts, and termination of employees. This area continues to demand a major component of our time. We represent Boards before various adjudicators and tribunals on matters relating to labour standards, occupational health and safety, boards of revision and boards of reference for teachers. We are increasingly seeing complaints against Boards to the Human Rights Commission but, in most cases, complaints are ultimately dismissed. We have also represented Boards in an increased number of appeals of decisions of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency relating to EI and CPP, where CCRA is finding an employment relationship between Boards and individuals who are independent contractors, when no such relationship exists.

- *Policy Development:* We assist in preparing new policies and review existing Board administrative and operational policies, and advise on the administration of those policies.
- *Contracts*

pro-active. The provision of in-service for administrators, whether sponsored by the Association or by other education partners, continues to be a priority for Legal Services. We also provide in-service as specifically requested by Boards for their staff. Legal Services staff also make presentations at the Principal's Short Course at the University of Saskatchewan.

- *Work with other Agencies:* Association lawyers work with representatives of the STF, LEADS, SASBO, CUPE, SEIU, Saskatchewan Learning and other government departments on a broad range of education issues on a regular basis.

### ***Insurance Plan***

**Director: Lloyd Wildeman**

Now in its seventeenth year of operation, the Saskatchewan School Boards Association Property Insurance Plan's success depends entirely on continued board membership. The Plan offers self-funded loss pool insurance for buildings and contents, tied to policies for general liability as well as boiler and machinery. Additional essential insurance coverage for Sexual Molestation and Abuse Liability is provided by a self-funded pool. There is also an Air Quality Liability Pool.

Coverages are also available through the Association's insurance brokers (Marsh Canada Ltd.) for trustee accident, board of education errors and omissions, student accident, school bus liability, umbrella liability, crime, construction insurance and miscellaneous event coverage.

The insurance plan provides direct advice and services to the Association

and boards of education and also serves as a representative for boards in many initiatives. The strength of the program comes from the large number of boards participating; together we have the market clout that individually boards might lack.

### **Services to Boards**

Like many of the Association's member services departments, the insurance department's day-to-day activities involve direct contact with boards of education or their administrators. The Director offers insurance policy interpretation and advice. Boards need to know if school activities, for instance, are covered, or what safety precautions or legal precautions need to be considered.

The department also administers insurance claims. After receiving a report of an "incident," the department appoints an insurance adjusting firm and then helps boards take action to prevent further damage. The Director administers payment for rebuilding and replacement of lost assets covered by insurance claims. He also manages an account for insurance pool funds and prepares budgets and pre-audit statements.

In the area of loss prevention, the Director arranges safety inspections for boards, conducts seminars such as playground safety seminars and issues safety letters.

The department researches and analyzes claims trends and insurance market trends, determines insurance renewal criteria and administers renewal and premium collection.

## Property Insurance

It is expected that as a continued reaction to world events, insurance premium rates will increase moderately over the next several years. Association Insurance Plans will continue to work to hold increases to as low a level as possible.

## Board Development

The Insurance Director co-ordinated a seminar on computer and Internet security that brought together administrators and trustees to study safeguarding computer and Internet security and access.

## General Liability Insurance

As approved by the 2000 Association Convention, the self-funded general liability pool was put into place for the year 2001, 2002 and 2003. Due to the same international pressures acting upon property insurance, and the frequency of injury claims in Saskatchewan schools, the costs are expected to rise for general liability premiums.

Student travel outside of Canada should be chosen carefully with regard to trip and destination safety. Insurance restrictions were imposed on out-of-Canada travel in 2002 by insurers. In Canada safety risks such as SARS have had an impact on travel in 2003. Please check with the Association regarding insurance updates and additional safety measures when planning travel.

## Air Quality Liability Pool

As approved by the 2002 Convention, the self-funded Air Quality Liability Pool was put in place in 2003.

## School Bus Safety

The Director also works on school bus regulations and safety. He co-ordinates information for boards on vehicle safety and operation issues, and lobbies regulators for changes requested by boards.

A major change late in 2003 was announced by SGI when it changed school bus operating regulations that have been requested by boards of education through the Association. School bus operating regulations are an area for which boards and the Association seek improvement for student safety, by acting upon Association Convention resolutions and board recommendations.

The first change means that bus drivers are now required to notify their employer when they have their licence suspended, when they receive a listed conviction, or when the driver receives a medical notice that they have a condition that could be detrimental to safe bus operation.

The Association and boards had raised the concern for several years that bus drivers may have their licence suspended, have a serious conviction, or receive a serious medical report and continue to drive children without notifying their employer.

Boards may also contact SGI and request the driver licence status on all their bus drivers.

Another change is that strobe lights will be mandatory on all rural school buses effective September, 2004. This safety equipment was requested in a Convention resolution in 2000.

### Group Tendering

The Insurance Department also runs a group tendering program that affords boards a benefit in joining together to improve market clout that individually boards might lack. The program includes hotel rates, fleet tires, school bus cellular telephones and natural gas purchases.

### Insurance Strategic Plan

The Association retained Marsh Canada Ltd. Actuaries to study the financial directions of the Association's insurance programs. The results of the study concluded that the pools and programs are adequately funded and administered, and are well positioned to service boards for years to come.

### *Employee Benefits Plan*

**Director: Karen Smith**

The Association established a group benefits plan in 1986 which current provides benefits to approximately 6,000 (primarily support staff) employees and 75 boards of education.

Group benefits is one of the Corporate Services provided by the Association. The Employee Benefits Department is responsible for the administration and management of the benefits plans. This

includes information and seminars on costs and the administration of the available employee benefits for board support staff.

The benefits plan provides the following:

<b>Core Benefits</b>	
Life Insurance	2 plans
Accidental Death and Dismemberment	2 plans
Employee/Family Assistance Plan	1 plan
Long Term Disability	5 plans

Health Plan	3 plans
Dental Plan	4 plans
Vision Plan	2 plans
Dependent Life Insurance	2 plans
Weekly Indemnity Plan	1 plan
Optional Life Insurance	1 plan
Voluntary Accidental Death and Dismemberment	1 plan
Register Retirement Savings Plan	numerous

The staff of the benefits department include the Director as well as Benefit Administrators Leona Baun, Chris Petford and Leanne Gunderson, and Benefit Clerk Jennifer Creeley.