

FEB 6 2008

Minister of Education



Legislative Building
Regina, Saskatchewan S4S 0B3

January 23, 2008

Mr. Roy Challis, President
Saskatchewan School Boards Association
400 - 2222 13th A venue
REGINA SK S4P 3M7

Dear Mr. Challis:

I am pleased to provide responses to the resolutions that were passed at your 2007 annual convention which pertained to the Ministry of Education.

I look forward to working with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association to ensure that children have every opportunity to succeed through the best possible schools and education system. My government has laid out an exciting agenda for our province and our K-12 education system plays a significant role in our common sense plan for Saskatchewan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Krawetz".

Ken Krawetz
Minister of Education

Enclosure

Ministry of Education Responses
Saskatchewan School Boards Association 2007 Convention Resolutions

D-6 BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Provincial Government to amend legislation to have permanent residents, who reside within provincial park boundaries, pay education property tax.

The Ministry of Education has recognized the issue of education property taxation of residents of provincial parks as a matter of importance. Education has been directed to work with Municipal Affairs and Environment to clarify government's policy regarding the levying and collection of education property taxes within provincial and national parks.

D-8 BE IT RESOLVED that the Saskatchewan School Boards Association urge Saskatchewan Learning and Saskatchewan Government Relations to develop appropriate measures and consequences to ensure municipalities submit the School Liability Statements in a timely fashion.

The Ministry of Education is aware of and understands the difficulty that some school divisions are having in collecting information from their respective municipalities. At this time, we feel that the issue has been addressed through the passing of Bill 17. The contents of this bill address the requirements and responsibilities that municipalities have to the school divisions. As this piece of legislation is relatively new, effective May 2007, it may be an issue of making the municipalities aware of their responsibilities.

D-1 BE IT RESOLVED that the Saskatchewan School Boards Association designate adequate capital facilities funding to a level that would significantly address the needs of schools across Saskatchewan as one of its top advocacy priorities with government and the public; and as part of the advocacy initiative, prepare a business case for significantly increased capital facility funding, using available data and comparisons from other jurisdictions, and present the business case to government and officials in Saskatchewan Learning.

The Ministry of Education's capital budget for 2008-09 is being considered in the context of the overall provincial budget and will be announced at that time.

B-1 BE IT RESOLVED that the Association petition the Government of Saskatchewan to amend section 164 (school hours) of *The Education Act, 1995* to allow for greater flexibility in planning school hours to best meet the needs of our students.

The Education Act, 1995 does provide some limited flexibility for altering the prescribed hours of the school day or school year structure, but boards of education require approval of the Minister for any significant changes to either the school year or the school day.

Some years ago, the Department of Education, in collaboration with the partner organizations, developed formal guidelines to be followed by school divisions in seeking ministerial approval for alternative school year/school day arrangements. *The Guidelines for Considering Changes to the School Year/School Day* provides boards of education the opportunity to submit proposals to implement alternative arrangements.

Ministry of Education Responses
Saskatchewan School Boards Association 2007 Convention Resolutions

The guidelines are clear that approval of such proposals is conditional upon compliance with the stated principles, criteria and timelines. These include:

- adherence to provincial program and curriculum requirements and provision of an adequate amount of student instructional time to fulfill these requirements;
- compliance with collective bargaining agreements and employee benefit plans;
- evidence of broad community support; and,
- a plan for monitoring and evaluating the arrangement.

The Ministry of Education does not have any plans to make changes to the legislation as it currently exists.

N-3 BE IT RESOLVED that the Saskatchewan School Boards Association urge the provincial government to take any steps necessary to ensure that Saskatchewan Government Insurance provides financial support for the Driver Education Program that Sask Learning requires boards of education to provide.

This government believes that it is important to reduce the fatality levels on our roads and highways. We also believe that education has an important role to play in preparing youth for the responsibilities of driving, for personal safety and as an employability skill. Saskatchewan Government Insurance funds the driver education consultant employed by the Ministry of Education. In addition, all automobile insurers in Saskatchewan, including Saskatchewan Government Insurance, pay 1 % of their premiums to the provincial government to fund the High School Driver Education program. This money goes into the government's General Revenue Fund, which in turn provides funding to the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education distributes funds through the Foundation Operating Grant to school divisions to support all the required services including Driver Education. This government and SGI are committed to improving the quality of the driver education program for Saskatchewan youth.

D-4 BE IT RESOLVED that, until unconditional funding for K-12 education is achieved, the Saskatchewan School Boards Association request Saskatchewan Learning to develop provisions under "Intensive Supports" that allow for full and complete funding for all technical aides that boards of education consider necessary to the specific educational needs of students who require them; and that funding for "Intensive Supports" be achieved in a manner that is transparent by providing calculation for technical aides as an "additional" factor based on the actual needs of students within the school division, and not the result of simply reallocating the current monies contained within the diversity factor.

Funding recognition for assistive technology is provided within the Intensive Supports (Special Education) funding factor of the Operating Grant. The 2007-08 grant of ~ \$64 million contains an additional \$2 million for the provision of assistive technologies for students identified as requiring intensive supports. This is an approximate 285 % increase over the 2006-07 assistive technology funding recognition of ~ \$700,000.

Ministry of Education Responses
Saskatchewan School Boards Association 2007 Convention Resolutions

D-2 BE IT RESOLVED that the Saskatchewan School Boards Association actively pursue working with Saskatchewan Learning to review the goals, principles and underlying assumptions of the Foundation Operating Grant, together with school division-level financial indicators, including mill rates and operating expenses, to evaluate the effectiveness of FOG in providing funding that meets the needs of all students and treats property taxpayers across Saskatchewan equitably.

The provision of education in Saskatchewan is a shared responsibility among the Ministry of Education and elected local and district boards of education. As such, the ministry recognizes the important role and critical interests of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association in the development of the K-12 Operating Grant.

In its May 2004 response to the Boughen Commission report, the department committed to developing a simpler, fairer and more transparent education funding allocation mechanism. Since this time, two K-12 Operating Grant redevelopment phases have been completed with a third phase now underway.

During each of the previous two and the currently ongoing third phase of K-12 Operating Grant redevelopment, the Saskatchewan School Boards Association has and continues to be a member of the K-12 Operating Grant External Reference Committee. As a committee member, the association's input and recommendations are taken into consideration throughout the grant redevelopment process.

As it progresses through the third phase of K-12 Operating Grant redevelopment, the ministry looks forward to continuing its existing working relationship with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association.

D-7 BE IT RESOLVED that the Saskatchewan School Boards Association urge Saskatchewan Learning to create new funding supports for the delivery of English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.

ESL/ESD funding recognition is an important part of the Diversity Targeted Funding for school divisions. The calculation of the funding recognition is based on two factors:

- a per pupil recognition based on the Principals September Statistical Report; and,
- a vulnerability recognition.

The vulnerability recognition is based on the following four Statistics Canada data:

- percent of families living below the Low Income Cut-off (LICO);
- percent of lone parent families;
- percent of families with low education attainment; and,
- percent of families whose first language is not English.

The total provincial allocation for Diversity Targeted Funding for 2007-08 is approximately \$75 million. The Children's Services Branch is responsible for developing program expectations for this funding allocation.

Ministry of Education Responses
Saskatchewan School Boards Association 2007 Convention Resolutions

C-1 BE IT RESOLVED that the Saskatchewan School Boards Association lobby the Government of Saskatchewan to amend *The Education Act, 1995*, to empower duly elected school boards to designate out-of-scope personnel as determined by local student needs.

Article Nine of the Provincial Collective Bargaining Agreement between the boards of education, the Government of Saskatchewan and the teachers of Saskatchewan describes the criteria for the designation of out-of-scope personnel. Boards of education have an opportunity to raise this issue at the collective bargaining table during the normal course of negotiations. It would be inappropriate for the Minister of Education to interfere in this process.

D-9 BE IT RESOLVED that the Saskatchewan School Boards Association urge the Department of Learning to reinstate the recognition for monies expended for payment of an allowance in lieu of conveyance.

During the past few years, the ministry has undergone changes to the K-12 Operating Grant. During this time, a number of grant factors have been adjusted, including transportation and its components. The ministry is now in the process of evaluating and examining the effects of the grant changes. In the upcoming year, the ministry will be reviewing the Transportation Factor in terms of its transparency, accountability, simplicity, and equity. Communication with school divisions will continue throughout this process.

N-1 BE IT RESOLVED that the Saskatchewan School Boards Association meet with the provincial government and business leaders in Saskatchewan to obtain relevant data and information about future plans and projected population patterns to share with its member boards; and, that the Association research initiatives and responses from other jurisdictions reacting to similar circumstances, and prepare a report on the findings, to include results and outcomes.

The government has for the past several years been monitoring economic patterns around the province. There has been difficulty obtaining all the information that would be required to make accurate predictions about population patterns. Much information is dependent upon information from the private sector and their future development plans. As you can understand, they are very guarded with this information as it may provide information to their competitors. The government will be considering more effective ways to obtain information linked to economic and population patterns as the directions of the new government are developed during this term.

N-2 BE IT RESOLVED that the Saskatchewan School Boards Association urge Saskatchewan Learning to review the process by which school division boundaries may be altered.

The process of altering the school division boundaries is an inclusive and transparent process. When a family or families contact the ministry requesting a change of attendance to a neighbouring school division or to become electors of the school division in which their children presently attend, the ministry collects background information, provides a document outlining the process of a Land Transfer Request, and requests documentation from the family or families outlining the reasons for the request.

Ministry of Education Responses
Saskatchewan School Boards Association 2007 Convention Resolutions

When the ministry receives the documentation from the family or families, a package is sent to both school divisions affected, outlining the request. In the package, a copy of the documentation received from the family or families is included and a formal request, from the ministry, is stated to each board of education to provide the ministry with the official position of the board of education regarding the request.

When the boards of education responses are received and both are in support of the request, a Minister's Order is processed and the boundary is altered. If one or both are not supportive of the request, the ministry requests documentation outlining the reasons for the denial of the request. Ministry officials will review the documentation, conduct further discussion with school division officials, and review past practices of the Educational Boundaries Commission (sections 37 to 39 of *The Education Act, 1995*), before putting forth its recommendations to the Minister to either alter the boundary or not.

If the situation is not similar to a previous Educational Boundaries Commission recommendation or the family or families feel that they have not been heard or ministry officials feel that a nonpartisan approach is required, the Minister can call on the Educational Boundaries Commission to conduct a review of the situation and provide a recommendation on whether the boundary should be altered and/or another approach involving tuition and transportation can resolve the issue.

As stated in section 54 of *The Education Act, 1995*, the Minister has the power to alter the school division boundaries. The Ministry of Education denies a number of requests for school division boundary alterations yearly due to the fact they do not meet minimal requirements, such as there is no education need to be resolved, a purely taxation request, and/or the land resides too far from the school division boundary.

D-5 BE IS RESOLVED that the Saskatchewan School Boards Association urge Saskatchewan Learning to create new funding supports for delivery of the pure Practical and Applied Arts Program.

The funding that the Ministry of Education provides to school divisions is provided through the Foundation Operating Grant, and the majority of those funds are not targeted to any particular program. School divisions have the autonomy to determine the allocation of funding in order to provide the most effective and appropriate experiences for their students. In some cases, Practical and Applied Arts Survey courses are the most appropriate experience for the students in a school, while in other cases, it may be advantageous to offer pure courses. At the current time, there are no plans to create new funding supports for pure Practical and Applied Arts programs, but the Foundation Operating Grant continues to be reviewed to ensure that the distribution of funding is fair, equitable and transparent.