



## Looking Back: “The Language Issue”



*R.J. Westgate, first president of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association*

The issue of language of instruction in Saskatchewan’s schools was highly evident at provincial gatherings of trustees throughout the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In addition to English and French, the discussions dealt with eight other identifiable language groups – Bohemians, Russians, Germans, Romanians, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Scandinavians and Jews. Each group wanted permission to use its language in its schools at least to some extent, but the dominant number of delegates at early conventions insisted on “English only in the schools”. Hostilities of the First World War caused feelings to run high.

*The School Trustee* of June 1965 summed up the situation: “The province was united in only one desire – education spelled opportunity to these pioneers and the desire for education transcended language, religion and all obstacles.”

Today, 100 years later, trustees in Saskatchewan remain united around the importance of education and the opportunities it provides for all students in the province to succeed and achieve.