



JAN 13 2012

January 10, 2012

Sandi Urban-Hall, President
Saskatchewan School Boards Association
400 - 2222 Thirteenth Avenue
REGINA SK S4P 3M7

Dear Ms. Urban-Hall:

Thank you for providing the resolutions passed at the Saskatchewan School Boards Association's 2011 Annual General Meeting and for the opportunity to provide responses.

The ministry's responses are enclosed. I look forward to continued collaboration with the SSBA to provide quality educational opportunities for all students in Saskatchewan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Donna Harpauer'.

Donna Harpauer

cc: Cheryl Senecal, Deputy Minister

**Ministry of Education Response to
Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA)
Annual General Meeting – 2011 Resolutions**

3.2-B BE IT RESOLVED that the Saskatchewan School Boards Association lobby the Ministry of Education to change its process for allocating relocatable classrooms to address student learning needs in a timely manner so that relocatable classrooms are allocated annually in October based on enrolment numbers in September of that year.

RESPONSE:

- Currently, the ministry does not consider a school to have a general instruction space shortage until the classroom utilization exceeds 110%. The ministry analyzes each school division request for additional classroom space as it is received and approves those projects starting with the highest utilizations. Block funding for approvals of this type is limited by the ministry's annual capital funding appropriation and varies from year to year. The ministry retains a limited amount of block capital funding to respond to emerging needs that may occur throughout the school year.

5-B BE IT RESOLVED that the Saskatchewan School Boards Association support the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse's "Portfolio of Canadian Standards for Youth Substance Abuse Prevention" as the standard for prevention programs.

RESPONSE:

- The provincial Health Education curricula are designed to be implemented within a Comprehensive Community School Health (CSCH) framework that features health professionals, community organizations, school community councils, and others supporting the school Health Education program and promoting the healthy development of children and youth through the school setting. This co-ordination reduces the ad hoc, sporadic, sometimes competing initiatives aimed at schools. Co-ordinated, sustained programs have significant, positive health and educational outcomes.
- Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse's Portfolio of Canadian Standards for Youth Substance Abuse Prevention is one of several research-based and available resources that schools/communities may choose to use to support their CSCH efforts regarding drug and alcohol prevention, and the ministry would be in support of the SSBA supporting its use.

2.1-A BE IT RESOLVED that the Saskatchewan School Boards Association partner with the Ministry of Education to develop an initiative to support and facilitate the transition of high school students into journeyman, technical programming and 21st century career options.

RESPONSE:

- The ministry would welcome the opportunity to enter into discussions to explore ways in which the ministry and the SSBA could collaborate to support the transition of high school students into Apprenticeship, technical training and 21st century career options in the province.

- Currently the ministry works closely with the Regina and Saskatoon Trades and Skills Centres, and with the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission to promote apprenticeship, Saskatchewan Youth Apprenticeship Program (SYA) and Apprenticeship credits.

3.2-A BE IT RESOLVED that the Saskatchewan School Boards Association request the Ministry to remove the requirement for portables as part of major construction in areas where student population is stable or increasing.

RESPONSE:

- The ministry's current policy regarding relocatable construction states that a school division may build permanent construction to accommodate the opening day enrolment of the school. As the enrolment increases towards the school's core design, the additional classroom space required to accommodate those students will be of relocatable construction. New school construction regardless of being built in locations with stable or increasing enrolments are never approved without the flexibility to expand and accommodate additional students through the use of relocatable construction.

3.2-C BE IT RESOLVED that the Saskatchewan School Boards Association lobby the provincial government to provide pressing necessity capital funding to school divisions that need to replace existing schools due to proven issues of health or safety where age of the facility makes improvement or adequate renovation of the existing facility impractical.

RESPONSE:

- As you are aware, the Infrastructure unit of the ministry publishes an annual Major Capital Request List. This list contains all major capital requests from school divisions across the province and is prioritized into four categories. The ministry's top priority category deals with health and safety related requests. In order to ensure the most appropriate use of ministry capital funding, each project is analysed to determine whether the most economical long term solution is to approve new construction or renovate the existing facility.

5-E BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Saskatchewan School Boards Association lobby the Ministry of Education to maintain existing guidelines surrounding alternative school year arrangements on a permanent basis.

RESPONSE:

- In collaboration with education stakeholders, the Ministry of Education is currently reviewing the legislative and regulatory framework governing the school year including variations in the school year. Any new guidelines will need to be amended to reflect the new framework. As the SSBA is one of the key stakeholder groups to be consulted, we look forward to further discussing the resolution during those consultations.

2.2-B BE IT RESOLVED that the Saskatchewan School Boards Association lobby the provincial government to study the current evaluation system for 30 level courses on the

principles of equity and relevance for 21st Century teaching and learning and make recommendations to the Ministry of Education for changes to the current evaluation system.

RESPONSE:

- For 440 of the 454 courses in the regular, modified and alternative programs, the current evaluation system is teacher-based with the certified teacher submitting the mark which is then reported on the official transcript.
- 14 of the regular program courses, English Language Arts A and B 30 and the French and English courses in Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Math A, Math B and Math C, can be evaluated as a 100% teacher mark or through a blended mark.
- If the course instructor is accredited, meaning that the teacher has 12 credit hours of university coursework in the subject area including an education methods class (3 credit hours) in that subject area, has two years of successful teaching experience and has attended the accreditation seminar offered by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, that teacher can set his or her own evaluation system for 100% of the student mark. If the teacher is not accredited, he or she submits a mark that counts for 60% of the student mark and the student writes a provincial exam for 40% of the mark that is then blended with the teacher mark.
- Provincial exams are based on the provincial curricula for the subjects examined, many of which have been recently renewed to reflect 21st century teaching and learning. As renewed or new curricula are implemented, the assessments are updated to reflect changes to the content and skills in those curricula. These changes are appearing in the 2012-13 assessments for the new math courses at the 30 level and also in the revised English Language Arts assessments for 2013-14.
- The process for managing provincial exams has also been reviewed and changes to the shipping, receiving and data management systems have been implemented to streamline the process. At this time no further review of the evaluation system is underway.

3.1-A BE IT RESOLVED that the Saskatchewan School Boards Association lobby government to recognize the voluntary participation and fund the extra costs associated with the requirements of the provincial auditor for the Boards of Education and the Conseil scolaire fransaskois.

RESPONSE:

- As the Lieutenant Governor in Council now determines education property tax rates, the Ministry of Finance consolidates the audited financial statements of boards of education and the conseil scolaire into the government's financial statements.
- The Provincial Auditor Act states that the auditor shall examine all accounts related to public money; this includes all entities consolidated within government's financial statements. As such, boards of education and the conseil scolaire are required to comply with the audit process determined by the Provincial Auditor.
- Boards of education and the conseil scolaire are expected to manage costs associated with the preparation, review and audit of financial statements, within their existing funding appropriation.

2.1-B BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Saskatchewan School Boards Association petition the Government of Saskatchewan and the Ministry of Education to expand Kindergarten programming to a full day, every day program supported by full educational grant resources for Kindergarten aged students in the Province of Saskatchewan.

RESPONSE:

- The Ministry of Education recognizes the importance of having a variety of early learning opportunities available for children and their families. As a result, significant resources have been committed to expanding the Pre-K program for vulnerable three- and four-year-olds. Saskatchewan's educational funding and policy direction currently supports voluntary half-time Kindergarten.
- School divisions are provided with funding through the School Operating Grant, which does not set aside specific amounts for specific programs, such as Kindergarten. Boards of education can choose to allocate their budgets to best fit the local needs. School divisions operate kindergarten in a variety of ways, including half-days every day, and full-days every other day, primarily in rural areas. Several school divisions in the province provide full-time kindergarten in selected schools.
- The Ministry of Education continues to monitor the research on full-time kindergarten. No decisions on this issue will be made without first studying the results from other provinces, looking at the impact on rural as well as urban communities, and considering input from parents and stakeholders. The Ministry of Education is open to considering new and innovative ways for supporting student achievement, and will continue to work with school divisions on determining how to best meet the needs of children and students.

5-D BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Saskatchewan School Boards Association lobby the provincial government to amend The Education Act, 1995 to change the spring break from the five consecutive days following Easter Sunday to five consecutive days at a fixed time in the calendar year.

RESPONSE:

- In collaboration with education stakeholders, the Ministry of Education is currently reviewing the legislative and regulatory framework governing the school year including the prescription of annual holidays. The continuation of a spring vacation period including the option of setting another period other than an Easter holiday period will be discussed and addressed in the new regulations. The SSBA resolution is expected to be raised and will be noted as the ministry continues its consultations with the SSBA and other stakeholders on the school year framework.