

Remarks by His Honour
The Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan
Saskatchewan School Boards Association
103rd Fall General Assembly
Friday, November 16, 2018 - Regina

Good evening. I am delighted to join you for your Fall Assembly, here in Treaty 4 Territory and home of the Métis.

School Boards provide a level of leadership that directly impacts every child in our province, and indirectly impacts every resident, as you influence the future of Saskatchewan through the education of our youth. I want to thank each Trustee for running for office, and for working collaboratively and with foresight.

My father was a Trustee for the Saskatoon Separate School Board, and was later employed as the Secretary Treasurer to the Board – a position he held for eighteen years. And so my family “lived” the School Board experience.

I remember my father meeting with members of the Board in our living room, and they would sometimes talk strategy until 1 and 2:00 a.m., particularly during collective bargaining and budgets.

I know that yours are not easy jobs, and you are sometimes faced with choosing the best choice when there are no great choices. Thank you for making the difficult decisions on behalf of those you serve.

I commend you on your Assembly theme: “Inclusive Education.” This is an excellent and timely topic. Speaking as the grandparent of eleven grandchildren, I am very pleased that Saskatchewan schools are working hard to be inclusive.

When the Governor General was in the province recently, I invited several youth-led organizations to share their initiatives with Her Excellency. She heard from a mindfulness creative writing class, where two Syrian students shared how the class helped them to come to terms with the trauma of war, and to connect with other students.

We also heard from a high school class that has worked to raise funds for the Regina Open Door Society to provide funding for English lessons, and to raise awareness about refugees in crisis. And we heard from several groups that bring together Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to learn about Indigenous cultural traditions.

With strong teacher and elder mentorship, Saskatchewan youth are leading the way in terms of reconciliation, welcoming new Canadians, and creating inclusive schools where students of all gender and sexual orientations are made to feel welcome. This is cause for great hope.

This fall, I had the opportunity to travel to six Northern communities to present student awards. Despite many challenges, many young people in these remote communities are excelling.

During my time in the North, I was pleased to present a new series of Indigenous-language children's books to schools, and I have presented a set of the books to the School Boards Association this evening.

The books are a project of the Prince's Trust Canada, which was established by the Prince of Wales.

The Prince wants to support Indigenous communities as they revitalize and protect their languages. These wonderful books provide the text in each of eight Indigenous languages which are still spoken in Saskatchewan, and each line is also provided in English. As well as the phonetic pronunciation, students, teachers and parents can go online to hear the Indigenous languages of the book spoken. The books are a wonderful tool, both for Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples, to learn these historic and living languages. This is a wonderful example of reconciliation in action.

Before I close, I want to congratulate each individual who will receive an award later this evening. Thank you for your outstanding contributions to our province.

I also want to acknowledge the capable staff of the Association, who have planned this gathering, and provide valuable support to our School Boards throughout the year.

I'd like to close with the powerful words of Chief Ahtahkakoop – spoken during the Treaty 6 negotiations in 1874. He said,

“Let us think not of ourselves but of our children’s children. We hold our place among the tribes and chiefs and councillors because our people think we have wisdom above others amongst us. Then let us show our wisdom. Let us show our wisdom by choosing the right path now while we yet have a choice.”

Thank you, all, for your strong, and visionary leadership in our province.

In closing, it is my privilege to bring greetings on behalf of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada. Thank you.