

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 11, 2003

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Response to Presentations by Edmonton Public Teachers Local 37, CUPE Local 474, CUPE Local 3550 and Exempt Staff

ORIGINATOR: B. Holt, Executive Director Instructional and Curricular Support Services
A. Habinski, Executive Director School and District Services

RESOURCE
STAFF: Gloria Chalmers, Mary-Ellen Deising, Brian Fedor, Faye Parker

INFORMATION

This report is in response to presentations made to the Board of Trustees by four of the five district staff groups prior to the beginning of budget deliberations. Edmonton Public Teachers Local 37 and CUPE Local 474, representing custodial staff, made presentations on January 14, 2003. Exempt staff and CUPE Local 3550, representing support staff, made presentations on January 28, 2003. CUPE Local 784, representing maintenance and construction staff, did not make a presentation this year.

Insufficiency of provincial funding for public education was a common theme for all staff groups. Each group expressed its concerns for the upcoming year, given the district's projected financial position if there is no increase in provincial funding. The board shares these concerns and continues to advocate for increased provincial funding on behalf of the district and public education. The potential loss of staff positions was also a major issue for every group, and they requested that trustees be vigilant in examining school and decision unit budgets for next year.

Both CUPE Locals indicated their opposition to public-private partnerships as a method for building schools. The district is aware of the problems that have arisen with such partnerships in other areas, and will be cautious in responding to new directions that may come from the provincial government.

Edmonton Public Teachers Local 37

The district shares the Local's concern with respect to the possible deterioration of classroom conditions if there is no increase in funding. The fair and equitable allocation of resources has always been a district goal. Conditional funding such as the AISI grants makes is contrary to this principle. While the district appreciates all of the excellent work that has been done through AISI, it recognizes that some schools have not benefited from this funding.

It is recognized that working conditions are of great concern to teachers, as they work to achieve the best results possible with all students. The Education Commission was established, in part, to consider issues related to class size and other working conditions. The district is hopeful that the Commission will be successful in addressing some of these issues.

The Local's support for trustees and the trustee system is appreciated, and the board will continue to advocate and lobby for education funding. School councils are also being encouraged to speak out.

CUPE Local 474 – Custodial

CUPE Local 474's budget brief for 2003-2004 is entitled "Public Education at the Crossroads." The district is in agreement that this is a critical time for public education, and that decisions made by the provincial government over the next year will have a profound impact on the future face of public education.

Local 474's continued commitment to ensuring that district facilities are safe, secure, clean and available to meet the needs of the community is both recognized and appreciated. Some of the issues raised by the Local will be addressed over the next months by several joint committees that were created during the recent round of negotiations. These include a committee to examine workplace health and safety issues, the Joint Custodial Training and Advisory Committee, and a committee to develop and recommend a workplace education and training program for custodial staff. The Local's suggestion regarding Building Training Operator training opportunities provided by the Environmental Resource Centre and Destination Conservation could be considered through the work of the Joint Custodial Training and Advisory Committee.

Through the Facilities Department, some steps have been taken towards a mentoring program for head custodians. The district is willing to work with the Local to review mentorship models. The concept of mentoring will also be addressed through the work of the joint committees on custodial training and workplace education.

The district is supportive of all staff groups in schools being part of the shared leadership model, and recognizes the important contributions that can be made by custodial, support and exempt staff in the schools.

CUPE Local 3550 – Support Staff

The district appreciates the Local's support for programs of choice. The board has long maintained, as pointed out by the Local, that choice can be provided within public education, and that charter schools and vouchers are unnecessary.

In the difficult times we are facing, the Local's concerns related to the health and workloads of support staff are certainly legitimate. The district is concerned about the impact of our current financial situation on all of its staff groups.

We understand the Local's concerns about the impact of deferred maintenance on our buildings and their occupants. Although the provincial government made substantial cuts to

the district's Plant Operations and Maintenance grants, the district lobbied for the funding to be reinstated and was successful in obtaining a partial reinstatement. The district has been, and, remains committed to doing the best possible job of maintaining our buildings.

Even in difficult economic times, the district recognizes the importance of professional development for all staff, and is hopeful that schools and decision units will be able to continue to provide opportunities for all staff in the upcoming year.

Exempt Staff

In keeping with the district's focus on supporting teaching and learning, the exempt staff presentation highlighted best practices, as exemplified by specific initiatives in a number of areas where exempt staff are employed. It is appreciated that the wide scope of expertise of exempt staff supports both the focus work and the effective functioning of the organization.

The superintendent has emphasized to schools the importance of continuing to utilize district staff to provide services in all areas. This includes services in areas such as consulting, technology and facilities, where many exempt staff work.

FP:GC:fp