

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 13, 2001

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dossall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Response to Presentations by CUPE Local 3550, CUPE Local 474, Edmonton Public Teachers, CUPE Local 784 and Exempt Staff

ORIGINATORS: A. McBeath, Department Head
G. Reynolds, Department Head

RESOURCE

STAFF: G. Chalmers, B. Fedor

INFORMATION

This report is in response to presentations made to the Board of Trustees by the district's staff groups prior to the beginning of budget deliberations. Support staff, CUPE Local 3550, Custodial staff, CUPE Local 474, Maintenance staff, CUPE Local 784 and Edmonton Public Teachers, Local 37 made presentations on January 16, 2001. Exempt staff presented on January 30, 2001. All principals and decision unit administrators will be provided with copies of the written submissions provided by the staff groups.

The view that the board continue to advocate for adequate funding for public education was a recurrent theme across presentations. Advocating for sufficient funding to provide a quality and sustainable public education system has been and will continue to be a major focus for the board and the district. District representatives, along with representatives from the three other urban boards, met recently with the minister of education to put forward a public education agenda. At that meeting, issues related to staffing, facilities and overall funding were discussed. It is the district's intent to put the education agenda on everyone's agenda. In this regard, it appreciates the advocacy work performed by the locals and welcomes their continued participation in this important work.

CUPE Local 3550

The district regrets that some members of CUPE Local 3550 feel that their input is undervalued. The district is committed to ensuring that all voices are heard and acknowledges that all staff contribute meaningfully to student success. It is appreciative that the local did make a presentation and that it placed emphasis on professional development. The wish to have access to professional development, to coordinated inservices and training, as well as access to computers, speaks to the members' desire and willingness to remain current and effective.

The district recognizes that the provision of quality education requires skilled staff in all areas of the district's operations. To maintain and attract such staff, it is important that workloads and the duties assigned are appropriate and that the contributions of staff are valued. Through the district's various leadership-training opportunities, its healthy workplace initiative and personnel practices, staffing considerations are discussed and ongoing efforts are made to address them. At this time, the administration is reviewing its regulations and practices with respect to interns.

The importance of trustee participation on negotiating teams is recognized.

CUPE Local 474

The local's continued and vocal support for public education is one of the necessary ingredients that will continue to carry Edmonton Public Schools forward into the future as an innovator in education. The local's concerns with respect to a number of issues such as staffing levels, work standards and class size are all issues that are recognized as legitimate, and related to adequacy of funding.

By continuing to communicate the concerns and by working with the district, the message with respect to inadequacy of funding is being heard by our stakeholders. Our stakeholders also appreciate when the local and the district are seen to be working collaboratively on common issues and in the best interest of students. This presents a powerful image and the reality that our organization and its key players are working together. This, in turn, results in stronger support for the organization and its key players. As has been stated many times in the past, it is only through a concerted and unified effort that the various participants in public education can make an enduring impression on the public and on the government.

The concerns related to the symptoms of underfunding are real and are felt throughout the organization. Many of the items such as the custodial consultant, carpet cleaning, crowded classrooms, deteriorating facilities are being dealt with and responded to on an ongoing basis and in a collaborative fashion. It is the ongoing communication that is making resolution of common issues possible. The local's continued commitment to public education and its persistence in pursuing better conditions for its members and our staff and students is being recognized, and heard by our stakeholders.

Edmonton Public Teachers, Local 37

The district shares the view expressed by the local that education plays a pivotal role in the quality of life of Edmontonians. As noted above, it will continue to advocate for adequate funding to ensure that the current generation and those that follow receive the education they require to prosper in this new century. The local's commitment to working in partnership on advocacy and its recognition of district cost-saving initiatives, revenue generating activities, the healthy workplace initiative and the school and staff technology initiatives are appreciated.

This district is very proud of the calibre of staff in this district. As noted above, it is aware of the impact of societal and workplace expectations and, consequently, the importance of appropriate assignment of duties and provision of resources. It is committed to making adjustments when and where possible based on input received through various channels, including these presentations to board, liaison committees and the teacher advisory group to the superintendent to name a few. Through these channels, and significantly referenced in the presentation, the district has been made aware of the need for a variety of current teaching and learning resources. The development of Decision Unit 306, Teacher Support Initiative, is one example of responding to this identified teacher need. Teacher-developed resources continues to be an important district focus.

As referenced above, the administration is currently reviewing its regulations and practices with respect to interns and the proposal provided by the local will be considered in this review.

CUPE Local 784

The district appreciates the significant progress that has been made with respect to communications with the local, its members and the administration. This is one of the key areas that has been identified by both the local and the administration in the last few years as requiring improvement, and, positive results are becoming evident. The local's reference to the last round of bargaining as being intense represents a transition to a positive state where issues of importance to each party can be vigorously discussed, advanced and defended, without compromising the underlying trust in each other. This represents a significant step in district's labour-management relationship.

The local's concerns related to preventative maintenance and health and safety in our aging facilities is shared by the district and it is through this joint expression of concern, that improvements are being made in our advocacy efforts. The voices of our maintenance staff are being heard in our district, and perhaps more importantly, by our government through the advocacy efforts that are being put forward. There have been a number of announcements related to improvements in the way that school facilities are funded and the government's recent province-wide inspection and evaluation of school buildings is reflective of the local's urgings for a system to evaluate building condition.

The continued support of the local and its members is critical to our district's efforts to access the funding that is necessary to maintain our schools in a satisfactory and safe condition. The expertise of our maintenance staff and their careful vigilance of our facilities will continue to play a key role in the provision of safe, secure, and comfortable schools. The innovation that is being demonstrated in a number of areas with respect to better ways and means to carry out necessary work is reflective of this commitment.

Exempt Staff

Because the exempt staff group involves a broad skill base and encompasses a multiplicity of tasks, the district appreciated the focus on results that demonstrated clearly how this group contributes to student, school and district success. The presentation reinforced the importance of professional development, the need for strategies and compensation that will enable retention and maintenance of highly qualified staff and the need for district initiatives, such as the healthy workplace initiative, to include exempt staff.

As district initiatives are intended to be inclusive, it is advised that should there be issues with any initiatives that they be brought to liaison for discussion. Healthy workplace services are available to all upon request. The district is aware that the retention and recruitment of staff in many areas is very competitive and requires vigilant action. Staffing is on the agenda when district representatives meet with Alberta Learning and our personnel department continues to introduce new recruitment strategies. Also, the district realizes that professional development opportunities provides one strategy for maintaining staff and for developing staff in areas of need.

GC/BF:bly