

## EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 8, 2000

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dossdall, Superintendent of Schools

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

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

RESOURCE

STAFF: Gloria Chalmers, Brian Fedor

### INFORMATION

The administration will provide all principals and decision unit administrators with copies of the written submissions presented to the board by staff groups. Custodial Staff, CUPE Local 474, presented to board on January 11, 2000. Edmonton Public Teachers, Local No. 37 of the Alberta Teachers' Association, Maintenance Staff, CUPE Local 784 and Exempt Staff presented on January 25, 2000.

#### **CUPE Local 474**

The district continues to believe that the needs and interests of students and families are best met by the cooperative efforts of all staff groups and other organizations and agencies with responsibilities for serving children and families. The administration was pleased with the positive comments regarding improved communication and cooperation and is committed to continuing to work with all staff groups in this manner. Creative and effective solutions to issues are more likely to be developed in such an atmosphere.

Further to the discussion regarding a market orientation, it is important to note that the district introduced open boundaries in 1973 and alternative programs in 1974. The decisions predated by two decades the introduction of charter school legislation and were driven by the desire to be responsive to the diverse needs and interests of the students served by the district. The district believes it strengthens public education by ensuring that it is both inclusive and responsive.

Like the local, the district would prefer publicly built and financed schools. The district remains frustrated waiting for the province to review and revise their space utilization requirements and to fund new schools in new neighbourhoods. In this environment, the district needs to explore new and innovative ways to provide school facilities without abdicating responsibility for maintaining and operating the school facilities. The administration will consult with this local and other staff groups as necessary on capital projects and with respect to public private partnership (P3) proposals.

The district concurs with the local that advocacy on behalf of public education is essential. The trustees have forcefully raised issues at the ministerial level and in many other forums. Simultaneously, these issues have also been carried to the province by parents and the administration. The district is committed to working with staff groups, parents and other community groups to provide a united front in support of public education. The district would appreciate the continued support of the local in this regard.

The district has identified high standards of conduct, safety and well-being of students and staff as a district priority for 1999-2002. The suggestion regarding spare custodians has been forwarded to personnel for consideration during the budget process. As well, the process for inservicing staff regarding the collective agreements will be reviewed.

Further to the perceptions regarding the role of personnel, personnel staff advocate for custodial staff members, other staff and school administrators. In doing so, they work tirelessly to ensure that collective agreements are interpreted correctly and the requirements are met.

The district understands the importance of staff having professional development opportunities to enable them to remain current and effective. If the local is advised of professional development not being approved, it can work with the administration, through liaison, to examine the issue.

### **Edmonton Public Teachers**

The district knows that the underfunding of education has impacted directly on frontline staff. In response, the district is committed to ongoing advocacy for adequate funding of public education and to an organizational health initiative. It appreciates the support it has received from Edmonton Public Teachers in both initiatives and looks forward to continued cooperation in these areas.

Like the local, the district is encouraged that the province responded to the district's well-researched request for small class size in the early grades by providing funding for a pilot in ten schools. The district shares the teachers' confidence that the initiative will improve the teaching-learning environment and also believes it will impact positively on student achievement.

The district agrees that collaboration and coordination with staff and community groups can and should be used to achieve goals that will benefit children, youth and families. With specific reference to the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AIS), born out of collaboration, school and central services staff are involved in the development of a process that will enable the district to put forward worthwhile initiatives. With regard to working with the private sector, it agrees that the district must be vigilant in ensuring that its mandate is not compromised and that the educational value to students is clear.

The district believes that public education must be accountable. It agrees with the association regarding the inadequacy of simplistic approaches and recognizes that identifying measures that are broadly accepted as evidence that students are being well served is an ongoing challenge. Currently, district staff are working with the members of Superintendent's Council to broaden the definition of student achievement.

The district concurs with the association regarding the need to attract and support teachers in areas such as secondary mathematics, physics and special education. It would like to work cooperatively with the association in this area.

#### **CUPE Local 784**

The district and our principals recognize the skills and abilities of our maintenance staff and value the contributions that they make on a daily basis in our schools. Those contributions allow us to focus on student achievement and to maintain our facilities to the best of our ability. The challenge that we all face is that our facilities continue to age and with the aging inventory comes increased demand for re-investment. Unfortunately, the increased demand for re-investment is coming at a time when we are also facing the serious underfunding of public education. As a result, schools and central services must work creatively to meet both individual school and overall district needs with respect to our facilities. For example, a significant portion of the major needs of our buildings are addressed through the Major Maintenance Plan which is funded through BQRP and is developed and carried out by our maintenance staff. In this way district priority needs are being addressed.

In order for the district to obtain adequate funding to consistently and proactively maintain its facilities, the continued advocacy of all stakeholders is necessary. The genuine concern expressed by the local for the state of our facilities needs to be aligned with the advocacy initiatives that the district has in place. The local can play an important and powerful role in working with the district as an advocate for public education.

The district has taken major steps to demonstrate to the local that a collaborative approach to a common problem is the best approach and will continue to welcome the local's participation in improving our district. The principals, as senior staff, rely heavily on the expertise, integrity, and caring that our maintenance staff bring to our organization. They count on the local's reciprocal support to ensure that our students have safe, well-maintained facilities in which to learn.

#### **Exempt Staff**

The district is aware and appreciative of the critical support role played by exempt staff in the district. It is committed to maintaining the Exempt Staff Group Liaison Committee to ensure that exempt staff, like other district staff, has a vehicle for raising and resolving issues. As noted above, the district understands the importance of staff having professional development opportunities and encourages staff to identify their professional development needs through the budget process.

GC/BF:dh