

CUPE LOCAL 474

**Edmonton Public Schools
Custodial Workers Union**



BUDGET BRIEF 2008

Presented to the Edmonton Public Schools Board of Trustees
March, 2008

Introduction

Madam Chair, Trustees, Mr. Superintendent. Thank you for inviting me here tonight to share the views of Local 474 and for your consideration of this brief as plans are made for the District's 2008-2009 budget. Our hope is that this brief and the concepts contained within it will give our Board of Trustees a chance to challenge their colleagues and the administration to address the outstanding issues that concern custodial workers in this district.

Half the board members were replaced in last fall's election and we recommend that the newly elected Trustees review the past budget briefs we have presented to familiarize yourselves with the ongoing issues of concern to our Local. You will find that many issues we have focused on remain unfinished, unresolved or unaddressed. Therefore the following Brief will address the following concerns of Local 474;

- **Staffing Levels**
- **The Need for A Custodial Department**
- **Custodial Training Centre**
- **Standardization and Modernization of Custodial Equipment**
- **Appropriate Technology and Training**
- **Training, Coaching and Mentoring for Head Custodians**
- **Green Cleaning**
- **Carpet Cleaning**
- **Window Cleaning**
- **Joint Hiring Committee**
- **Community Use**
- **Energy Management Plan**

Local 474 and Edmonton Public Schools relationship is rooted in our use of the principle of Win-Win bargaining. This principle has served us well not only during negotiations, but also, throughout the terms of our collective agreements. This principle, a legacy of Dr. Emery Dossdall's vision for the District, was embraced by Local 474. We are partners in education and our work is crucial to the success of students in this district. Studies have shown that the cleanliness of schools has a direct impact on student achievement.

History demonstrates that when an employer partners with the union, its employees, to develop strategies and share accountability, there are better outcomes for staff and students.

Staffing Levels

Custodial staffing levels were agreed to in our last collective agreement. We have however, been left out of the formulation. The District's Personnel Department has taken on this project with modest, meaningful consultation from the local. This is contrary to the spirit of the letter of intent we agreed to during the last round of collective bargaining.

In order to understand custodial staffing in the district, we have to look at what the roles and responsibilities are for each component of a school's custodial department. The Head Custodian for example, is responsible for the total building operation, including the heating and mechanical plant. Their Power Engineering certification is on the line if problems in a building's physical plant should occur. By this definition, the physical plant is the responsibility of the certified operator of the building not the Principal, the Administrative Assistant, or even Facilities.

The importance of proper maintenance and supervision of a schools heating plant cannot be exaggerated. Low water condition in overworked boilers can be considered bombs waiting to explode. Conditions such as this can occur if a computerized monitoring system fails. This was the case recently in a Saskatchewan school. Mistakenly adding water in such an instance does cause explosions. 80% of all such boiler accidents are due to the failure of having trained operators to deal with this type of situation.

Our district recommends the best practice of checking on our boilers every two hours. In the case of extreme cold weather the union recommends that custodial check boilers in their schools at least once during the weekend. This of course is not practiced in our district where, to cut costs, administration has attempted a twice daily check of boilers and the insistence on replacing boiler operator checks with internet computer monitoring.

The Head Custodian is also responsible for a wide variety of non-cleaning work and duties in the school and exterior cleaning of areas around the school. These are not usually defined as daily cleaning requirements. The actual classroom, washroom and daily cleaning that any Head Custodian on duty can do, regardless if they have other staff or not, is approximately two hours daily.

Without consultation we cannot know if these facts have been considered when the district calculated a staffing formula to address custodial staff reductions in our

schools. In some schools which have a single Head Custodian, the work day has been simply cut from eight hours to six hours. Cuts were made to satisfy a bottom line and nothing more.

Local 474 is willing to revisit the staffing formula issue and together to resolve this in a mutually beneficial manner.

Eight hour Division A custodians who work on afternoon shift as well as part time Division B Custodial Assistants were seen as interchangeable over the past two decades. Cuts in Custodial positions were made and afternoon custodians were replaced with less expensive Custodial Assistants. A Division A Custodian does heavy duty cleaning worked eight hours a day, and did the majority of cleaning during an afternoon shift. It is the afternoon shift that does the majority of cleaning in our schools. Consultation would have helped in accurately calculating the real cleaning needs in our buildings. Cleaning time needs to be calculated based on the afternoon shifts, not the day shift. Ultimately the accurate cleaning needs of our schools should be the issue; not the bottom line of saving schools money in salaries and benefits.

It is puzzling why administration feels they alone can develop staffing formulae to support the cleaning needs of any school without consultation. Local 474 would not presume to tell teachers or principals how to teach students. It makes no sense to send a painter to perform heart surgery and equally no sense to develop staffing formulae for our schools without our Locals input.

To properly clean and maintain our schools each school less than 75,000 sq. ft. requires 2.5 FTE Custodial staff. That is a Head Custodian, an afternoon custodian and a custodial assistant. The current staffing formula letter that has gone out to principals from Personnel does not approach these numbers. Money is cited as the issue when we raise the issue of minimal staffing levels. The results of these cuts put cleanliness standards in our school at the mercy of the bottom line.

The local annually has to address arbitrary and non-consultative cuts in custodial staff in our schools. The majority of Principals do not consult when cutting custodial staff; they simply do it and announce it.

Our District practice seems to be the use of the custodial staffing formula to find ways not to increase custodial staff. Principals are trying to do anything but the right thing which is; meeting minimal staffing standards which was the purpose of the letter of intent in the collective agreement. Bearing in mind the model

employed in our approach to Personnel Services, our district needs to seriously consider developing a district wide cleaning standard that is centrally staffed and delivered.

Recommendations:

The majority of cleaning is done on afternoon shift and this is where staffing needs to be increased in all schools.

All District schools 50,000 sq. ft. or less require at least 2.5 FTE custodial staff

District schools between 50,000 and 75,000 sq. ft. require at least 3 or 4 FTE custodial staff

Custodial Department

No other school district in North America has decentralized its custodial operations except Edmonton Public. Custodial staffing and cleaning standards are seen as far too important to be left to the whims of individual school administrators. Since the cleaning of schools is a complement to the other maintenance required to maintain these valuable physical assets, they should be considered a District responsibility.

Under this model, are we serving the families of this District or have we failed to deliver quality cleaning standards that are required for the health and safety of students and staff and the longevity of our physical plants? After twenty years of site based management, we see the need to review the delivery of custodial services.

Local 474 believes it is time to remove custodial services from the school line budget, and return to a central department of custodial services.

Facilities as well as the carpet cleaning operations have a custodial consultant. They also provide the Mechanical Consultants who do custodial training around the 5th Class Power Engineering course. Consulting Services provides custodial consulting and training. Personnel have the Spares Board, a custodial mentor, hire custodial staff, provide health recovery for custodial staff, have Health and Safety consultants who work with the joint Health & Safety committee. Now the department also provides custodial training through Staff Development. Purchasing

and the Distribution Centre coordinate the purchasing of custodial supplies and Equipment.

Each of these departments has different approaches to financing custodial services. Some are centrally funded with no cost to schools, others charge for services under the maintenance agreement and Consulting Services is Cost Recovery. Schools may or may not choose to purchase custodial supplies and equipment from the Distribution Centre. There is absolutely no consistency throughout the District in funding custodial services. This is wasteful and inefficient.

Along with a lack of fiscal consistency, there is a lack of consistency in coordination and delivery of custodial mentoring, training, and consulting services. Principals are at a loss as to who to call for which service. Supervision of custodial consultants and services are not done by those qualified in our field, but rather by Principals promoted into central administration.

Last year, we recommended the need for a single central Custodial Department with a qualified Director who had a custodial services background. That recommendation was accepted but not acted upon. We draw this issue to your attention again this year with the following recommendations.

Recommendations:

Custodial services need its own department which the district has agreed to in principle.

This department needs to have its own qualified director who has experience in custodial services.

Custodial Training Centre

The Edmonton Public School District prides itself as a world leader in education. Why not project this concept on all areas of the District. Local 474 would propose the creation of a world class Custodial Department and Training Center.

Training in custodial cleaning procedures, boiler and mechanical operations and maintenance, central purchasing and storage of cleaning equipment and supplies, and a location for the two carpet cleaning trucks, would all be best facilitated out

of one location. Consideration could be focused on one of our Districts an unused schools.

A school that housed a steam boiler, as well as having a variety of types of flooring would aid in the training and upgrading of district custodial staff. Having custodial, mechanical, health and safety consultants and mentors in one location would allow for better efficacy for schools in accessing services they require.

This option would create a multi use facility that custodial services could operate out of. It would allow for actual work related testing of the latest equipment as well as cleaning products. Our District could become a world leader in its approach to custodial support for education.

Recommendations:

The creation of a custodial services department in an unused school to take advantage of a vacant building as a teaching centre for custodial staff.

Standardization and Modernization of Custodial Equipment

While schools have incorporated the latest teaching related technology, this has not been the case with custodial equipment. Schools have been allowed to buy their own equipment without a professional assessment of school needs. Schools have existed with old outdated custodial equipment. Custodians have been recycling used equipment among schools for twenty years. Custodians at individual sites have been told there is no money for custodial equipment so they have given up asking for it. This is clearly not a best practice!

In an era where attracting and retaining talent in every staff group is an identified priority of CEO's globally, treating custodial in the manner this administration has chosen is just bad business. A culture of learned helplessness has been fostered.

Imagine a school trying to access the internet and district technology services using a Commodore 64. This is the state of our custodial equipment. Modern cleaning technology has changed in the last decade, while in our schools, chemical delivery systems as well as cleaning equipment remain from the 1980s and 1990s. In some extreme cases equipment may even be from the 1970s.

Modern advances in cleaning equipment reduced labour time, increased cleaning ability, and are more portable and light weight. Modern chemicals are more concentrated and use dilution pump systems that are wall mounted. Many of our schools have these units, many, however, do not. Chemicals are still poured out by hand using the old eye ball measuring method. Efficiency is lost and safety is compromised.

OHS considerations should have carpet cleaning done using small dry vacuums that have bags and triple filtration. Our schools however are still using wet/dry vacuums that are large, cumbersome and hard to empty. They are also noisier than modern dry only vacuums.

Companies developing cleaning equipment are out there selling products as the best. Our district has no program in place to assess what is best for our schools. Instead we use the word of mouth assessment method; a custodian in one school gets a new auto scrubber and promotes it. Whether this is the best auto scrubber for the school or for other schools is not reviewed. It is based on which salesman visited what school and who bought it.

District assessments of what schools need for cleaning equipment and the provision of said equipment is what is needed to streamline this practice. Not all schools for example, need propane burnishers. Many that do use them have equipment that is dangerous and harmful to students and staff as well as the environment because they are old and do not meet the current industry and environmental standards.

Many schools do not have auto scrubbers, and some have auto scrubbers that are twenty years old. Modern floor cleaning is no longer done with a mop and pail, except in many of our schools. Auto scrubbers clean floors, damp mopping merely spreads the dirt around. This is neither conducive to a healthy learning environment nor workplace.

The latest technological advances in auto scrubbers have produced a wide variety of sizes and capabilities that did not exist ten or twenty years ago. Today, Gel Pac battery-powered high speed burnishers are available that are less environmentally harmful and can be used on a wider variety of flooring. We have schools reluctant to invest in this much needed cleaning technology.

A centralized program could look at equipment testing and determine the school's assessed needs. It would allow for a more uniform provision of equipment across

the district. It would also allow for better familiarity for Spare Custodians and other custodial staff who move from one school to another in their careers due to uniform equipment usage. The creation of a central inventory of custodial equipment would provide access for other schools or district departments. This would be more cost effective for the District in the long run.

Recommendations:

Purchasing and supplying of custodial equipment needs to be standardized in order to supply all schools with the appropriate modern equipment.

Appropriate Technology and Training

Edmonton Public is a district that embraces computer technology for teaching, internal and external communications; in fact we are a wired district. Custodial staff access to appropriate computer technology and training however, is lacking.

Custodial staff in many schools do not have access to computers in their offices. Some may have computer access but no printers. Some custodial offices don't even have a phone. For ten years the district has developed and promoted technology. Local 474 was involved in the early discussions on District-wide computer use. Since that time, change in technology throughout the district has flourished. For custodial staff, technology improves at a glacial pace. Budgeting for custodial access to technology in schools is at best an afterthought. Schools will get the latest in Smart Board technology, while demanding that custodial staff access their email and the district's electronic information through the General Office or from a location like the school library where they compete with students for computer access.

All custodial offices should have appropriate technology: computers, monitors, printers, and, yes, even telephones. All custodial staff, not only the Head Custodians should have access to the computer and email. So much information is communicated directly to schools via the district's Infozone and email that anything less is unacceptable.

Two years ago in our budget brief, we recommended that Spare Custodians be equipped with the latest cutting edge technology, the Blackberry. They remain a group with no computer access in the district because they travel from school to school and may be in a different school each day. They have never been provided

with any technological access to the district's website or email. At the time we recommended the use of Blackberry technology, it was dismissed as too expensive. Within a year Blackberry use was more prevalent in the district. Today many central services staff has Blackberries but our spares do not. All spares should be provided with Blackberries which act as cell phones, as well as being capable of accessing email and the district's web site.

Having the technology is not enough however, a comprehensive training program for use of the Internet, email and Blackberry technology should be provided to all custodial staff district wide at no cost.

Recommendations:

All custodial offices need to be equipped with telephones, computers and printers, internet access and email accounts and custodial should have adequate computer training.

Custodial staff working alone need to be supplied with cell phones.

Spare Custodians need to be supplied with Blackberries and training on their use.

Training, Coaching and Mentoring for Head Custodians

Advances in custodial training over the past seven years have been significant. These are the results of the recommendations from our joint committee on custodial education. Since then, this joint committee has addressed many of the training needs of custodial staff. Examples of individuals include custodial staff new to the district and custodians requiring their 5th and 4th Class Power Engineering certification. Currently the education and training needs of Custodial Assistants is under review.

Head Custodians however have no comprehensive training program. Consulting Services has provided Head Custodian in-servicing opportunities, but this is not the same as a comprehensive education program applied district wide for all Head Custodians. Those members of Local 474 who aspire to become Head Custodians have no educational opportunities that focus on the work or the role of a Head Custodian.

Head Custodians not only require education defining their roles and responsibilities but also on district cleaning standards. Head Custodians do not know what the district standards are for newly trained custodial staff. Head Custodians are leaders and supervisors but basic supervision and evaluation training is not comprehensive nor is it available. No systematic course of supervisory training has been developed.

Since Blueprints For Leadership began under Dr. Emery Doasdall and followed through under the leadership of Angus McBeath, leadership skills have been financed and delivered to all Principals in the district. It remains the core of the districts leadership training, coaching and mentoring. Furthermore the development of school and central services leadership teams, have all been paid for and extensive training given to Principals and select staff. Head Custodians, who themselves are responsible for custodial leadership in this District have been neglected.

Head Custodians who are responsible for million dollar facilities and thousands of dollars in staff and equipment are treated as an after thought when it comes to school leadership teams. They are not seen as the building or plant operator and manager but as the day shift cleaner. Yet as stated previously, with their power engineering certification on the line, they, not the principal, are responsible for the well being of the physical plant.

Many Head Custodians still are not allowed to manage their own budgets or work orders. Head Custodians are often given less responsibility than a teacher Department Head. Head Custodians are not included in the evaluation process in our schools. School administration and in some schools the Administrative Assistant do this work. A work environment that fails to give Head Custodians autonomy or control receives a failing grade from our Local regarding engagement and retention.

Head Custodians require access to basic training in supervision as well as cleaning; they also need access to Leadership Skills such as mentoring and coaching. We require Head Custodians to be responsible for much more than just cleaning, and yet their opportunities for training and education in these areas are haphazard and limited by their school's PD budgets. A central training program for all Head Custodians paid from by the district is required.

Finally, we still engage in the practice of hiring Head Custodians and not giving them time to train with outgoing Head Custodians. We acknowledge that often the

existing Head Custodian has already left the position. We would like to see mentoring opportunities put in place where, for at least ten days the newly appointed Head Custodian is able to work with the outgoing Head Custodian so they become familiar with the operations and protocols of the new school.

Recommendations:

A training program for Head Custodians is implemented in the next year.

Head Custodians leaving their schools be given time to mentor their replacements.

Carpet Cleaning

Last year the district acquired a second truck-mounted carpet cleaning unit in order to meet the needs of schools for carpet cleaning. Unfortunately, the Facilities Department decided to replace the custodial consultant responsible for the supervision of carpet cleaning with a non-custodial tradesman. The results included, a backlog of service requests, increased customer complaints and without consultation or any formal announcement, prices were increased. We are pleased to see that Facilities responded to school as well as union complaints and returned the supervision of these services to the Custodial Consultant.

Even with the price increase, our district carpet cleaning services are cheaper than any commercial competitor. As well, our carpet services use an advanced cleaning technology that deep cleans school carpets rather than just using wand extraction which is done by the commercial companies.

The elimination of centralized carpet cleaning in the eighties resulted in schools relying on their own custodial staff to do the carpet cleaning using hot water extraction. Schools purchased hot water extractors for custodial use but did not provide a training program to support the work. This in turn resulted in many carpets being damaged due to chemical residue being left in them.

Combining the cost of damage and the cost of labour created the perception that carpet cleaning was too expensive. School administration also incorrectly determined that because carpet cleaning is labour and time intensive, it could only be completed in the summer. Since we began to deliver a centralized carpet cleaning service, administrators have been resistant to hire this service because

they believe their carpets can only be cleaned during the summer. The district has done little to promote year-round carpet cleaning or the carpet cleaning service in general. In fact, Local 474 has done more to promote this service, including funding the initial truck purchase. As a result, some schools over the past years have continued to contract out this service or they have opted to have their own custodial staff manually clean carpets to save money despite the collective agreement.

Carpet Care saves the district money by increasing the longevity of school carpets. Done correctly as a program, carpets will last longer. Health problems or health concerns around carpet cleanliness are reduced with a proper cleaning using the truck mounted method. Manual carpet extraction and cleaning by school custodians is not the same as the deep steam cleaning process we use with truck units.

Schools need to have annual carpet cleaning done by the truck mounted units, regardless of other carpet cleaning methods they may use. We would encourage the district to mandate such a program.

We would further suggest that in order to recover costs of the carpet cleaning units, the district look at providing this service to other school districts interested in contracting our services. This would go a long way in reducing costs to district schools.

To date, Local 474 has been promoting this idea and has only met with resistance from the Director of Facility Services and this current administration. This is further grounds to support the need to form a District Custodial Department; Facilities treats custodial services as an after thought.

Recommendations:

All schools will have their carpets cleaned annually using the district carpet cleaning services.

***Carpet cleaning services will be offered to other school districts.
Schools using carpet extractors will ensure their custodial staff is trained in carpet cleaning principles.***

Window Cleaning

There was a significant cost to the District to have selected custodial staff in the district trained on Genie and Scissor Lifts in order to facilitate a school window cleaning program. Such a program however, has not been developed. School custodians are expected to clean school windows and in some cases climb ladders and scaffolding in violation of Occupational Health and Safety Standards.

A school window cleaning program using the spare board needs to be developed and run from spring through to the fall. Window cleaning is an industrial operation, not at all like cleaning your windows at home and needs to be addressed as such. Like carpet cleaning, it is a specialized cleaning operation that is labour and time intensive. It cannot be adequately or efficiently completed by school custodial staff.

Schools and buildings with large interior and exterior glass paneling need to be specially cleaned. This can be accomplished by district custodial staff trained as window cleaners.

Currently, the district has only taken tentative steps in addressing this cleaning need. The District has been contracting out this work in violation of the collective agreement. Despite all the evidence that in-house custodial staff do better quality work more cost effectively, window cleaning has been assigned to outside contractors. Even this building has failed to take advantage of our own custodial services to clean the atrium, instead opting to contract out.

Recommendations:

The district will implement a window cleaning program using spare custodians.

Flood and Fire Clean Up

Two years ago, District schools faced major clean ups after record flooding. Custodial staff in the district, along with the use of the truck-mounted carpet cleaning units, met these challenges. Disaster clean up both fire and flood, is an extension of custodial services . Both are based on the same cleaning principles and we have district staff trained in disaster clean up both post flood and fire.

Yet last year, we had three fires in District schools, and Facilities Services flagrantly violated the collective agreement by contracting out the post fire clean-up to an outside contractor. The contractor merely supervised the clean up, which was done by district custodial staff, and in some cases, parent volunteers.

The local grieved this and won its grievance in interpretations. We would encourage all the Trustees to review this grievance. As a result, a post disaster clean up protocol was to be put in place. The slowness in the process of addressing this issue by Personnel resulted again with Facilities contracting out fire clean-up supervision six months later at Delwood School. This situation happened despite Local 474's efforts to mobilize custodial staff for clean-up.

The point is; this District paid two times to have an outside company supervise our staff. This company did not clean they merely supervised. We have trained custodians, trained union executive, and district custodial consultants as well as Health and Safety Consultants who are all capable of doing this kind of supervision. There is no need in this district to contract out post flood or post fire supervision for clean-up. This is an extreme waste of District resource and shows the need for widening our training for post flood and post fire clean-up for all district custodial staff.

A firm protocol needs to be in place that cannot be ignored by senior administration in the case of future events. There should be significant consequences to either party for flagrantly disobeying the protocol and/or the collective agreement.

Recommendations:

Post flood and fire clean up will be done in-house using custodial and health and safety consultants as supervisors, and spares and school custodial staff.

District custodial staff will be trained in post disaster clean-up.

Joint Hiring Committee

The District finds itself challenged to fill custodial positions with the current labour shortage in our city and across the province. Regardless of the positions to be filled by those requiring power engineering certification or day to day

temporary custodial, we remain dangerously short staffed. This situation has been compounded by two decades of District cuts to custodial staff. We have done more with less for too long and the results have been devastating to our staff group. Increases in health related problems, personal stress and injuries on the job are more common than at any other time in our history.

The routine cutting of utility and charge hand positions by principals to save money has not paid long range dividends. Had these positions not been cut in the first place, we would have had custodial staff in the district to fill them. By cutting these positions, there was no incentive for anyone to want to advance. Recent requirements under the collective agreement however, see some of these positions being reluctantly replaced. The District though, now finds itself unable to fill these positions either internally or externally.

Why would someone want to work for a District that is perceived to undervalue its work force? Why would someone who, with their power engineering certification and is able to work in the surrounding chemical industry as a process engineer, take a position with greater responsibilities such as, managing a school and cleaning staff for example, for the pay and benefits the Edmonton Public School District offers?

We face a similar situation with Head Custodians in larger schools and many schools throughout the District. When the pay differential is so minimal, afternoon custodian are reluctant to give up their position to take on more responsibility?

When Head Custodians are subject to the whims of site-based decision making that cuts their staff continually year after year and still expects the same level of cleaning to be done, it is not a challenge to be creative; it's an impossibility.

We suffer a lack of sufficient spare custodians to replace custodial staff who are ill, absent, or out looking for other work. The failure of this District, to hire the 50 spares we recommended over the last decade would have addressed this need. Now the District cannot reach this target even if it wanted to.

Temporary workers, who work day-to-day with no benefits and were knocking on our door two years ago, are now working elsewhere. Perhaps they are taking Tim Hortons offer of equivalent pay and benefits with positions of far less stress and expectation.

The district has failed to address the custodial staff shortage in any meaningful way because it has failed to adapt to the changes in the labour market. Instead of advertising in the Edmonton Examiner for custodial staff, they continue to put expensive ads in the Edmonton Journal Career Opportunities section on the weekends. This section is for corporate and executive positions, for professional careers. This is not the section of the paper someone looking for a custodial job would normally look. Papers like the Edmonton Examiner and the Edmonton Sun reach folks who are looking for work in custodial positions. There are even specialty newspapers available for jobseekers distributed free in boxes around the city. But you will not find Edmonton Public advertising in their pages. These are lost opportunities to reach potential workers. This district refuses to adapt. No real staffing strategy has been developed or proposed to this Local to address the changing nature of custodial staffing.

For instance, while the district sponsors its own career fair to expose district students to future careers, it does not advertise itself as one of those careers. Why? The District has not advertised custodial jobs at the University, College or NAIT. The hours of work for our afternoon shifts would be perfect for students needing jobs. This District does not tap all its available resources.

The district needs to be visible at job fairs being held around the city. It needs to be aggressive and advertise the advantages available for custodial workers. The district is a unionized workplace with a benefit plan and custodial workers have job security. This message must be sent out. The district needs to cooperate with its CUPE locals and promote itself at job fairs.

Once upon a time, we had a building service worker program in our high schools that offered vocational training, but that was abandoned. It may be revisited and viewed as a viable alternative.

Norquest College has revived its Building Service Worker program and a member of Personnel sits on this advisory committee. We do not seem to be benefiting from the graduates of this program. If simply having someone on the advisory committee is enough, are we targeting these workers with information about the benefits of working for Edmonton Public Schools?

The district new tag-line *Bright Futures Begin Here* was recently introduced to the employees. This message should not only apply to students. This is the message to promote this District to job seekers.

Any solution to the labour shortage we currently face must be a new approach to hiring. Our greatest successes have occurred when we developed win-win strategies by working together. The problem is that our personnel department is not skilled in dealing with custodial hires because its mind-set is geared to hiring teachers. Personnel views hiring custodial staff no differently than hiring teachers. They are two completely different professions. And the people who qualify for custodial work do not read the careers section of the Edmonton Journal or Globe and Mail.

We need to have experienced custodial staff sitting on hiring committees. The District struggles to hire custodial staff and when they do, they too often hire unqualified people. Personnel sets the hiring bar for custodial staff so low and they reap the rewards. We cannot afford to have a revolving door for custodial workers which is what occurs when people without proper qualifications are hired.

Local 474 believes a joint hiring committee would be the best solution both for the short-term and the long-term in order to address the custodial staffing needs of our District.

Recommendations:

The district should be advertising for custodial positions in the appropriate sections of the local print media.

The district should broaden its use of local print media to advertise for custodial positions.

The district should develop a job fair display in cooperation with Local 474 to do outreach for custodial staff.

The district should encourage post secondary students to consider custodial work.

The district should offer a building service program for High School students.

The district should review its relationship with the Norquest Building Service Workers program.

Custodial hiring for the district should be done by a joint union district committee.

Green Cleaning

We are pleased to see that our initiatives over the past several years calling for a green cleaning program for our schools have finally reached fruition. The district is now addressing this matter through a joint committee. However, we remain concerned that with site based management, schools will still have the option of opting out and purchasing cleaning supplies from outside suppliers.

In order to affect a real green cleaning program, all cleaning supplies need to be purchased through the distribution centre after having been subjected to proper testing as proposed by the Green Cleaning Committee.

An enhanced effective Green Program would find advantage for our District if we engaged other school districts and encourage them to supply their needs with our cleaning materials. The work we do in the promotion of this area will save them time and money. Our efforts could go a long way in promoting endless replication by other districts.

If products we use can be shown to have been tested and properly vetted as part of a comprehensive green cleaning program, we may be able to expand the Districts serviced by our Distribution Center.

In this light, it would be counter productive to allow district schools to continue to purchase non-approved alternative products or spurious 'equivalent' products from outside sources.

Recommendations:

Our Green Cleaning Program will only be effective if all custodial cleaning supplies are purchased through the Distribution Centre.

Custodial staff will be provided with training around the use of Green products brought into the district.

Community Use

Greater amounts of community pressure are being placed on our schools to open up gyms for community use. With changes in the booking procedures used for accessing schools after hours however, last year resulted in a lot of disruption for custodial staff trying to deal with both community use groups as well as rentals. The City of Edmonton now does the bookings centrally for all schools. The District is now awash in complaints, including; lack of central booking system which restricts the use in one person schools. The District is routinely requested to open up all school facilities that have afternoon shifts and with overtime for weekends or schools that have weekend shifts.

After hours use of our schools is admirable, however it is problematic for the custodial staff who oversee these groups while trying to clean around them. Cleaning schedules in schools do not account for the time required to take care of rentals or community use. (Another formula consideration)

The letter sent to Principals regarding custodial staffing, addresses this issue. The letter is sent with the notion that principals understand the actual time it takes to care for renters and community use groups. The reality is, many school administration need to be fully informed on the actual time it takes custodial staff to take care of rentals and community use groups combined with the disruption it causes to a cleaning schedule.

An advantage to Weekend community use of a school has the advantage of time for custodial staff to complete extra cleaning. Too often however, custodial staff are shorted on week end hours and not given sufficient time to cover weekend shifts when the school is in use. Planning needs to allot facilities for community use and direct the hours these will be used. Included in this plan must be adequate time for custodial to clean up after rentals in evenings and on weekends.

There is a disparity with some of the Christian Schools in our district. They came into our district to benefit from PMO funding, and to give them access to funding for much needed upgrades and repairs. However it is not a level playing field since several of them still maintain their own control over after hours use of their facilities.

Again, this situation cries out for district-wide standardization and centralization of planning to meet our responsibilities to ensure community use and access. The district has an obligation to meet its commitment to the Joint Use Agreement. This is not a school by school agreement, but a district obligation. The District needs a standardized plan to look at which schools can be used and which can't. Schools

with no full-time head custodian, for example, or with only one head custodian, would not be available for after-hours use.

We know which schools have the most use, schools which currently may not be offering after hours use but could etc. We need our own Joint Use Committee in this district to review this and to advise Planning. That committee should be made up of the Custodial and Athletics Consultants as well as members of Leasing and Rentals in facilities, a Principal's representative and a member of the Local. Since the Athletics Consultant and the Leasing Director sit on the City Joint Use Committee, they would facilitate two-way communications. They would come up with a plan over the next year on how to deliver community access to our schools after hours, and to list which schools could or could not be used.

Like everyone in the educational community, CUPE 474 believes schools are community institutions. Opening our doors to community groups and activities are an essential part of making a school a part of its community. Local 474 supports the policy of broad community use. This is not to say there are no issues.

The District has altered its policies regarding community rental, and as a result community use continues to decline. Costs are higher for community groups, and principals are often reducing access due to reduce custodial service costs for night functions. This is short-sighted and damaging to the District's reputation in the community.

A decision by the Principal on community use of schools, rentals, etc. create a state of unease. Whether or not a school is open for community after hours use is not a matter of custodial staffing, except in those schools where there are only day shift custodians.

The benefits of community and outside use of schools are clear – but there are costs and responsibilities associated. Our research in 2003-2004 found a number of significant concerns related to community use of schools. These include additional work requirements, security, wear and tear, and damages.

Security concerns include: open doors, windows unauthorized entry into the school areas, exit doors not closed properly, problems with alarm systems and vandalism. Additional work and damage concerns include: black marks on gym floors, wear and tear in washroom areas, toilets blocked and breakage and equipment damage.

It is the position of CUPE 474 that many or most of these problems could be addressed by adequate staffing using our members to do the work in EPSB schools.

Unfortunately, that is not always the case, and related problems abound:

- Frequently weekend shifts are not covered by EPSB custodial. Where work is scheduled, the shifts are unrealistic, staff is expected to end shifts at the same time as rentals and community users leave.
- This year, schools cut rentals and community access to coincide with cuts to afternoon custodial hours of work. This is unrealistic and leads to our inability to honour the Joint Use Agreement.
- Schools are allowing unsupervised use of the school, which violates the Boilers Act and is a security and safety concern.
- Vandalism has increased because our schools are not being staffed at night. Schools used to be cleaned until 11:00 p.m., now they are closing earlier, making them more insecure and vulnerable to vandalism.

REPORTED INCIDENTS AND REPAIR COSTS (by year)

Year	Reported Incidents	Repair Costs
1991/92	624	\$375,636
1992/93	966	359,286
1993/94	775	311,648
1994/95	492	269,961
1995/96	467	276,955
1996/97	410	321,213
1997/98	308	311,567
1998/99	562	186,030
1999/00	206	37,440
2000/01	467	96,174
2001/02	440	124,912
2003/03	1,193*	259,377
2003/04	1,135	293,603
2004/05	1,115	304,600
2005/06	1,089	\$311,943
2006/07	1,054	\$202,515

*** NOTES: The number of incidents for 2002/03 (1193) reflects a change in the recording system to include all glass breakage as vandalism unless proven otherwise. Removal of the glass breakage from 2002/03 would result in 447 reported incidents (i.e. - there were 746 glass breakages reported.)**

The previous chart documents incidents of vandalism with the addition of statistics on breakage in the last year: (School maintenance budgets to cover these costs were decentralized in 1995-96 and recentralized over the past two years - schools were not paying for vandalism out of maintenance money unless it was for windows - maintenance money was being used to shore up classroom costs.)

Incidents of vandalism are more likely to occur during times when there is no staff on site. The physical presence of a person working in the building is effective in deterring many potential acts of vandalism – as it increases the risk of being caught, identified or seen. A number of staffing decisions have resulted in an increase in vandalism in the past couple of years. While custodians are not security personnel, their increased presence in the school can help deter vandalism and reduce costs to the District accordingly.

Using host/hostesses for rental groups does not allow custodial to get extra required cleaning done. As a result, cleaning must be done, in addition to all regular responsibilities on a regular shift after the groups have used the school.

Lack of custodial staff cleaning lease and rental areas, and day cares creates additional costs in overtime cleaning and use of supplies to bring these areas up to standards. The standards of cleanliness, safety and security are best serviced by having ESPB custodial staff responsible for the work and the costs incorporated as part of the lease/rental cost.

Recommendations:

Custodial services be included in rental and leasing agreements.

Require that a custodial staff member be on duty during all rentals and community use of school.

Custodians be provided time outside regular hours to perform custodial duties arising from the community use.

Create a Joint Use Planning Committee for the district including representation from the Local.

Energy Management Plan

Despite Facilities Services having hired an Energy Management Consultant, there has been little progress made in addressing our concerns and recommendations around this issue.

“We still do not have an energy management plan for reducing utilities costs. Such a plan would expand on the ‘greening of schools’ goal. An energy management plan needs to be put in place through a joint union management committee made up of teachers (doing environmental education), custodial and facilities. We would hope to introduce a Destination Conservation like program into the schools involving all the school community. Our aim should be to make all stakeholders environmentally aware.

While the Utility costs have been returned to Central Services after being decentralized, these POM costs are still not resulting in energy conservation and savings to the schools. While the centralization of these funds is a first step, a full training program for all staff and students in Energy Conservation is a necessary next step.

Training custodial staff in Energy Conservation methods is the first step in a district-wide training program. During the 1990’s, custodial staff engaged in a voluntary Energy Conservation effort that saved the district \$19 million dollars. A new program could save the District millions more if custodians have the proper training, support and resources to make it effective.

Recommendations:

An Energy Conservation course should be provided for all custodial staff in the 2008-2009 school term. The course is to be provided at no cost to schools, with funding from the Utilities budget. Any money saved by the District custodial staff in energy conservation should be reinvested in the hiring of more custodial staff.

Madame Chair, Trustees, Mr. Superintendent, thank you for the opportunity to present this brief tonight on behalf of the custodial workers of Local 474.