

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

November 28, 2006

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: L. Thomson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Apprenticeship Training Program

ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Executive Director

RESOURCE

STAFF: Jan Anderson, David Fraser, John Nicoll, Garry Padlewski, Stuart Wachowicz, Stephen Wright

RECOMENDATION

That the district establish on a pilot basis for three years, provision to hire up to six apprentices and six Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) students in Facilities Services.

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Background

The recommendation is resultant from a feasibility study requested by a trustee motion stating:

Be it resolved, that the administration examine the feasibility of implementing an apprenticeship training programme designed to help meet present and future needs for qualified trade personnel, and further, that the programme be designed to include the provision of regular apprentices and Registered Apprenticeship Programme (RAP) students, and further, that the report include the potential costs and benefits to the district of the aforesaid programme.

Edmonton Public Schools is heavily reliant on the skills of the approximately 110 journeymen who currently work in Facilities Services. These staff are essential in maintaining the infrastructure necessary to educate students, and support the process of teaching and learning. In considering the feasibility and value to the district to accommodate apprentices and Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) students, the following points are useful:

- the average age of the journeymen presently with the district is 55+, many of whom will be retired over the next five years
- young journeymen, recently certified, are entering a market with a high demand for their skills, and they seldom seek employment in the public sectors

- experience shows that there is a greater likelihood of an apprentice or RAP student considering the benefits of a position in the public sector, if they have had an opportunity to experience work in that area early in their training.

The district currently has one apprentice working in Facilities and no RAP students. A recent assessment of the district's position indicates there is capacity to engage one apprentice and one RAP student at several shops located at Maintenance Services (e.g., welding, plumbing, carpentry, electrical, etc.).

Administration has, over the past two years, in an effort to grow the number of RAP openings available to students, explored the possibility of providing RAP placements in Maintenance Services.

Maintenance Services is very supportive of having apprentices and RAP students and CUPE Local 784 have indicated initial support for the proposal, provided the following requirements are addressed:

- the funding for RAP students is provided by another area of the district, so that plant operations and maintenance funding for maintenance services is not impacted
- the total number of RAP student placements does not exceed the total number of apprenticeships at any one time
- foremen and journeymen will require time for planning, coordinating and assessing the RAP students
- RAP students are not paid at a higher rate than apprentices
- the insurance and liability issues of transporting RAP students to district sites need to be clarified and resolved
- while RAP students are free to apply on any advertised apprenticeships once they graduate, they would be treated as external candidates and not given any special consideration in the competition process.

The Local also advised that there will be a higher degree of buy in from the members if they see that apprentices are on board first.

All parties are agreed that this proposal would support the ability of the district to better meet its long term staffing needs in Maintenance Services.

In addition to the issues raised by the Local, there are other challenges to implementing the proposal:

- Costs associated with salary and training expenses (tuition) for apprentices, and salaries for RAP students. *(Possible funding strategies are suggested below)*
- The perception from school principals that costs to schools will increase with an extra person attending a job; *(Depending on the funding strategy employed, there may be a marginal increase in the amount charged for work done, but it is a cost that will better ensure the continuance of access to Facilities support for school operations)*
- Concern of lower productivity of the present journeyman charged with the supervision of the apprentice or RAP student; *(This is however similar to the role and impact of the student teacher in the classroom.)*

- Graduated Driver's Licenses, reducing the ability of RAP students to drive their own, or another's vehicle to and from the job site;
- Insurance requirements for RAP students in particular, but also for apprentices and their vehicles on the job.

It should also be noted that RAP students must complete 1000 hours to achieve their credit allotment, and this would end the district's commitment to that student's program. It is still necessary however that the student complete an additional 250 to 400 hours to be able to complete first year apprenticeship hours. The district will seek partnerships with trade unions and other employers, to support these students either by finding positions to enable them to acquire the additional hours, or by contributing to an endowment to support the district to have them complete those hours in their present position.

Possible program and Associated Costs:

Target hiring	Cost breakdown	Total Costs
6 Apprentices	On the job: \$7,250 /8 week term Tuition: \$1,500/8 week term Cost per one apprentice per year = \$8,750	\$8,750 x 6 = \$52,500
6 RAP students	Approximately \$8,000/year per student	\$8,000 x 6 = \$48,000
Total Cost Per Year		\$100,500

Funding Strategy:

The district can support the above program through a direct central allocation to cover salaries and training costs. Funding, available in the currently approved allocations in the following units would support the program:

- Facilities Services: Apprenticeship salaries totaling \$43,500*
- Personnel Staff Development: Apprenticeship tuition totaling \$9,000
- Curriculum: RAP salaries totaling \$48,000

*NOTE: some of these costs may be eligible for offset under an employment insurance (EI) sub plan, similar to the plan that covers the disabling period during maternity leave.

Conclusion:

It is the conclusion of this review that it is desirable, for the district to pursue the hiring of up to six apprentices, and up to six RAP students. A pilot program may be designed, which could be carried out over a two to three year period. This will assist in meeting the inevitable need for trades personnel in the future. Any associated costs are in fact investments to ensure the long term operating capacity of the district, supporting the work of teaching and learning. A full review on the pilot involving input from all participants will be conducted and reported to public board.

LT/dh