

## EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

April 15, 2008

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Response to Staff Group Budget Presentation

ORIGINATOR: B. Tams, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE  
STAFF: Bonnie Zack, David Fraser, Ellen Ogilvy

### INFORMATION

This report is provided in response to the budget presentation made to the Board of Trustees on March 25, 2008 by CUPE Local 3550 representing support staff. All principals and decision unit administrators will be provided with copies of this report and the written submission by the Local as information to consider in their budget discussions for 2008 – 2009.

The District recognizes and values the important work done by our support staff. We appreciate that compensation is an important issue for these staff members. The recent amendment to the current collective agreement to adjust wages across the grid and to tie increases to the Alberta Weekly Wage Earnings Index reflects the District's commitment in this area. Together with other school boards, and on its own, the Board will continue to lobby the provincial government for adequate stable funding for education so that we can provide fair and competitive compensation for our staff members.

The Local's presentation focused on the importance of training and development of support staff. It highlighted the work that has been done by the joint administration and support staff committee to explore the needs in this area. Both the administration and the Local recognize the efforts that are necessary to ensure an effective transfer of knowledge from our employees who will be leaving in the next five years to the new employees who are joining us. The District provides ongoing training in Non-Violent Crises Intervention and differentiated training in a number of district software applications of interest to support staff members. The administration is in the process of reviewing feedback from participants to assist in revisions to our training packages.

In addition to providing training, the District is committed to establishing a position for a support staff mentor for teaching assistants in the 2008-09 budget. The Local rightly points out that the District has benefited from the excellent work of the two support staff mentors for administrative assistants. It is anticipated that a mentor for teacher assistants would be able to provide on-site coaching and support to teacher assistants, and share best practices across the District. As well, this individual would be an excellent resource for the District in terms of providing suggestions for training that is needed to support staff working with children with special needs.

The District shares the Local's concern for the need to update the Support Staff Classification Manual. Staff turnover within Personnel Services has delayed this important work. The District hopes to be able to address this issue in the upcoming year.

It is clear that our support staff work very hard to provide service in schools and decision units. The booming economy in Alberta has presented many challenges in recruiting and retaining employees. The District agrees that it has a responsibility to support balance between work and home life, and is pleased that the Local recognizes that individuals also share in this responsibility by seeking ways to look after their own health. The District further acknowledges the importance of educating staff in this regard. As a team, we need to seek strategies for all staff members to find ways to accomplish necessary work within the constraints of the time allotted.

The Local provided the District with copies of the Mackenzie report "Doing the Math" and has taken the information under advisement. District staff recently provided input into the province's Alberta School Alternative Procurement model which will deliver new schools over the next 3-4 years. The goal is to ensure that local needs for teaching and learning space will be met.

The Board appreciates the Local's acknowledgement of Trustee involvement in collective bargaining and in resolution of issues through the Interpretations Committee. Along with the administration, the Board looks forward to continuing to work with the Local in a productive manner.

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