

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

April 24, 2007

TO: Board of Trustees
FROM: B. Holt, Acting Superintendent
SUBJECT: Board Submission to ASBA Governance Review
ORIGINATOR: B. Tams, Executive Director

RESOURCE
STAFF: Anne Sherwood

RECOMMENDATION

That the attached School Board Focus Group Report (Appendix I), as the board's corporate position for the ASBA Governance Review, be approved.

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The Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) is conducting an ASBA Governance Review addressing the following areas:

- Membership, voting and fees;
- General meetings and how school boards set association policy
- The role and structure of the Board of Directors and Zones; and
- Suggestions for how the ASBA can improve the way it does business.

They asked each board to complete a focus group exercise to develop an approved corporate board position and submit it by May 1st.

Trustees participated in a focus group exercise on April 3, 2007 to provide input on four questions posed by the ASBA Board of Directors with respect to the review of the ASBA governance model. Input received from the focus group exercise formed the basis of the recommended board position as outlined in Appendix I.

AS:mmf

APPENDIX I – School Board Focus Group Report

School Board Focus Group Report

Please complete and fax or e-mail this document to:

ASBA Board of Directors
 c/o ASBA Office
 Fax: 1.780.482.5659
 Email: kayers@asba.ab.ca

Summary of school boards responses to Questions 1 through 4

1. With regard to membership, voting and fees our board believes the ASBA should make the following changes:

- a) The benefits of membership in a provincial association of school boards is the power in numbers to influence provincial policy and to access cost effective services. While large boards recognize the need for smaller boards to have access to cost effective services, the large boards do not for the most part use those services. The main benefit of membership for larger boards is access to a means to influence provincial policy. The current voting and fee structure frustrates boards with responsibility for large student populations as their ability to influence association policy is not commensurate with their responsibility. The current structure inhibits the effectiveness of the ASBA as an advocacy means for larger boards.

With the current voting structure, it is perceived to be unlikely if not impossible for a metro or urban board representative to be elected as ASBA president.

Either adopt a weighted ballot based on student population for each board's vote on all issues (budget, policy, and elections) or a double majority vote as outlined in the metro board study phase 2.

- b) All decisions should be decided by weighted vote cast by each board. The ASBA is an association of school board's not trustees and a show of hands of all trustees present is not representative of board positions. Trustees have no authority for decision making other than when seated at a board table and this should be no different at the ASBA General Meetings.
- c) Examine membership fees in relation to fee for service so that services are totally self-supporting. There is a perception that membership fees subsidize the infrastructure for services. Larger board's do not use the services but do pay more for membership. Larger boards' main benefit of membership is access to the group insurance(s) and provincial advocacy and they do not believe that they are receiving the benefit of the fees paid because policy and advocacy

positions are not decided on by votes weighted based on student population served.

d) All labour and legal services should be provided on a fee for service basis as authority for these areas rests with the individual boards.

e) The fee for attendance at the Annual General Meeting business session should be separate from the fee for the professional development sessions that follow to encourage boards to send all trustees to attend the AGM business session. Member boards should not have to pay for more than cost recovery for attendance at a business session.

2. With regard to the general meetings and how school boards make association policy, our board believes the ASBA should make the following changes:

a) The criteria for association policy and directives for action should limit policy/resolution submission to strategic issues of a provincial nature which the ASBA can advocate on behalf of all school boards at the provincial level. There are far too many resolutions and policies for the ASBA to be a credible advocate.

If boards want the ASBA to be effective in advocating on their behalf at the provincial level, the issues must be strategic, limited in number, and of importance to all boards. Identifying the strategic issues would be assisted by recommended changes to the current zone structure and ASBA Board of Directors in 3 below. This would also assist in subscribing the authority of the ASBA Board of Directors to make policy decisions between AGM's to those that are reflective of the will of all boards as there would be appropriate input mechanisms.

3. With regard to the role and structure of the Board of Directors and Zones, our board believes the ASBA should make the following changes:

a) The ASBA must find a different model to truly reflect the diversity of interests and issues faced by various sized boards. The current zone structure is based on geography rather than commonality of issues based on the student population served. Geography is no longer the barrier it once was for communication. A different structure may assist in better identifying appropriate policies to bring forward as ASBA positions that can benefit all boards or at least be supported by all boards for the benefit of a group of boards when those positions are identified as such.

Eliminate the current ASBA Board of Directors and Zones structure and replace zones with rural, urban and metro board caucus groups. ASBA Board

of Directors would be comprised of 3 vice presidents and 3 directors from each caucus and the president elected at large. Each Caucus would determine the frequency and length of caucus group meetings required during the year. Current zone meetings meet monthly which is unnecessary. Time must be used more efficiently.

- b) It was noted that the governance model of the Public School Boards Association Council with a representative from each member board meeting 4 or more times a year encourages greater collaboration and support for fellow boards. In addition to the suggested caucus meetings, representatives from each of the 60+ boards could meet a couple of times a year to share perspectives.
- c) The ASBA Fall and Spring General Meetings would still serve as a useful mechanism to bring all school board trustees together.

4. Thinking about ways the ASBA can improve how it does business, our board believes the ASBA should make the following changes:

- a) Review the role and responsibilities of the Executive Director. There is a perception that the Executive Director may be initiating the work of the ASBA Board of Directors rather than the other way around. In part, this may be because of the dual role of the ASBA as both a service organization and a provincial association representing member boards. The service organization half of the role requires ASBA promotion of services which falls to the Executive Director to give direction whereas the provincial association role requires the Executive Director to take direction.

Separating the service function from the provincial association would keep the lines of authority more clear in everyone's minds and would address the needs of all boards for development, advocacy and provincial voice. The dual role of the ASBA as both a service provider and provincial association of school boards diverts much of the energy of the administration and Executive Director to sustaining and enhancing services rather than serving as an effective vehicle for representing boards in the provincial sphere.

- b) When the ASBA requests a representative to sit on a provincial committee, it should be made clear to the representative whose voice they represent. Does the representative represent the ASBA position (if so, there should be a position provided) or does the representative represent their board or simply the opinion of a trustee as an individual?
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Please complete the following before submitting

Jurisdiction: Edmonton Public Schools

Completion Date: April 24, 2007

Board Chair Signature: _____

N.B. As well as sorting this data for the purpose of analysis, this School Board Focus Group Report will be included verbatim in the appendix of the report compiling all member feedback.