

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 10, 2009

TO: Board of Trustees
FROM: Trustee G. Rice, Conference Committee Chair
SUBJECT: Report #8 of the Conference Committee (From the Meeting Held March 3, 2009)

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Report #8 of the Conference Committee from the meeting held March 3, 2009 be received and considered.

Central Administrative Designation

2. That the following designation for the period March 11, 2009 to August 31, 2011 be confirmed:

Bonnie Zack - Director

Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) Infrastructure Survey

3. That submission of the attached Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) Infrastructure Survey (APPENDIX I) to the ASBA be confirmed.

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Background – Recommendation 2

In accordance with Administrative Regulation GBA.AR - Designation, Appointment and Assignment to Leadership Positions, exempt management staff who hold a teacher contract are designated for a three year term.

Background – Recommendation 3

The attached ASBA survey (APPENDIX I) focuses on issues faced by school boards relating to school infrastructure.

AS:mmf

APPENDIX I – ASBA Infrastructure Survey

1. Purpose

The Alberta School Boards Association has identified school infrastructure as a priority advocacy initiative. Pursuant to this priority, the ASBA Infrastructure Task Force, chaired by Serafino Scarpino, has requested that a report be prepared, in consultation with School Boards, that provides a provincial overview of school infrastructure and its key pressure points. The committee plans to use the information contained in the report to help shape its advocacy efforts.

The following brief survey will provide the ASBA Infrastructure Task Force the information needed to further its infrastructure advocacy efforts. School boards are asked to complete this online survey by February 27, 2009.

2. Respondent Information

Our board is a:

Public School Board (Edmonton)

For funding and operational purposes, our board is classified as:

Metro

3. Infrastructure Issues

Alberta's school boards have identified a number of issues of concern related to school infrastructure. These have been debated at Alberta School Board Association (ASBA) general and zone meetings and recorded as ASBA policy statements.

The ASBA Infrastructure Task Force wants to determine the priority school boards ascribe to these identified issues so that it can better focus its advocacy efforts.

Please review each of the following eleven issues statements and then rate them in order of priority in their respective text box at the end of each statement. For example, your board's highest priority issue should be numbered #1, the second priority issue should be numbered #2 and so on.

In addition, space is provided for any comments that elaborate on your board's concerns or provides "evidence" of these concerns.

School boards report concerns with:

- Their attempts to provide school facilities to growing communities in a timely and proactive manner 2
- The effectiveness of the current long term capital planning process in that it inflates community expectations and is unrealistic in addressing needs 2
- Site preparation and servicing costs as well as issues with land use and zoning 5
- The difficulty in replacing or preserving aging school buildings 2
- The current school closure process in that it is antagonistic and provides little, if any, benefit to boards 3
- The ad hoc nature of funding mechanisms and programs; boards prefer funding mechanisms to be predictable and stable 2
- The provincial approval process related to three and ten year capital plan requests 2
- The calculation and use of utilization rates for existing schools 1
- The lack of flexibility to meet community needs with regard to school facilities 1
- The lack of provincial funding for the facility and equipment costs associated with provincial initiatives such as the new occupational health and safety requirements 4
- The lack of funding for school board non-instructional space 1

3. Infrastructure Issues

continued/

Are there any comments your Board would like to make regarding any of the above issues?

Edmonton Public Schools has grouped the eleven issue statements into five priority areas of concern.

Edmonton Public Schools' first priority area of concern related to Infrastructure is the lack of access to capital and Plant Operating and Maintenance funding for use of our buildings outside of the early education and Kindergarten to Grade 12 mandate. School buildings are valued community amenities and there is strong community expectation that surplus school space be used for child and family services. Provincial utilization rate calculations should also recognize all private and not-for-profit tenants and partners that provide services to families and children. Regulations which limit lease-term periods to one-year should be relaxed as an incentive for tenants to invest in school building improvements. These service providers could be granted access to provincial grants and loans to invest in these improvements, through Ministry programs outside of Alberta Education.

Edmonton Public Schools' second priority area of concern related to Infrastructure is the process for school capital planning and the lack of predictability and stability of receiving funding for new or replacement schools, or the preservation priorities for aging schools. To address the significant maintenance backlog in our inventory of older school buildings, a commitment to providing an industry standard of two percent to four percent of facility replacement value to school districts annually for capital upgrades and IMR funding would provide predictable funding. School jurisdictions are also required to submit priorities for the capital projects each spring, in the first quarter of the provincial fiscal year. There is no standard to respond or reply to these requests. A commitment to reply to submitted requests would be recommended and would help manage community expectations.

Edmonton Public Schools' third priority area of concern related to Infrastructure is the school closure regulation. The current regulation does not provide flexibility in developing and proposing innovative and comprehensive solutions to the issues of school sustainability. School jurisdictions should have more authority to set policies and guidelines for consultation requirements. Predictable funding for possible school consolidations, including school alterations or replacement schools models, could help advance discussions to a level of what collective communities might gain rather than focusing beyond what a community may feel it is losing.

Edmonton Public Schools' fourth priority area of concern related to Infrastructure is the cost to meet the new and emerging requirements in provincial regulations, particularly Occupational Health and Safety standards in the areas of air quality, hazardous materials, audio devices, as well as building code changes.

Edmonton Public Schools' fifth priority area of concern related to Infrastructure is the emerging trend by municipalities to request school project budgets to absorb costs for replacement utility services and improve roadway infrastructure along school frontage to meet municipal bylaw requirements. There has also been a trend to move services previously covered through property taxes to a utility based fee approach (Drainage Utility Fee). School districts are expected to either absorb these new utility fees within their current budgets or request the funding from the Province. There has also been consideration in Edmonton to apply a rate cost for arterial roadway construction to all lots in new subdivisions, including future school and municipal reserve lots.

4. Other

In addition to the issues identified above, are there any other “pressure points” related to school facilities that your board would like to raise? What are these additional “pressure points”, in order of priority, faced by your board with regard to Infrastructure and related services? Please provide any “evidence” or “stories” that support your designated issues and some possible suggestions as to how the issue might be resolved.

e.g. Issue #1

State the issue

Provide evidence or stories that illustrate why this is a pressure point for your board

How might this issue be resolved?

- *Issue: Plant Operating and Maintenance (PO&M) funding is insufficient to heat, clean and maintain schools
Suggest that funding be provided based on the area of square meters of buildings rather than on a per student basis*
- *Issue: Even with recent increases to IMR funding and modernization / preservation project funding, there is a significant maintenance backlog in our inventory of older school buildings
Suggest a commitment to providing an industry standard of two percent to four percent of facility replacement value to school districts annually for capital upgrades and IMR funding*
- *Issue: Even with the provincial technology grants, there is insufficient funding in furniture and equipment budgets to properly outfit new schools, especially for technology items
Suggest that furniture and equipment budgets be based on a standardized amenity list for classrooms and spaces, and that funding be provided specifically for this as opposed to being funded as a percentage of a total school construction budget*
- *Issue: A significant pressure area is the appearance of interior and exterior spaces, with insufficient funds to maintain a reasonable painting program. Painting is not considered eligible for IMR funding
Suggest that additional funds be provided for PO&M to support major painting projects, or allow major painting programs to be funded through IMR*
- *Issue: Lack of support for cafeteria spaces in new high school projects
Suggest that provision be included in the school design manual for food preparation and service areas*
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5. Promising Practices

Many school boards have reported promising practices at both the provincial and local level. These include (but are not limited to):

- Provision of school facilities through P3 procurement.
- Energy conservation measures such as the adoption of the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) silver design standards.
- The design of, and flexibility associated with, modular classrooms.
- Local capital planning processes.
- The positive relationship between Alberta Education facilities personnel and school boards.
- The trimming of "red tape" when school buildings were a responsibility of Alberta Infrastructure.
- The support Alberta Education is showing for the provision of "Choice."

Describe any "promising practices" (these might include the above noted practices) that your board has adopted that promote the efficient and effective operation of school infrastructure.

- ASAP school design and construction process appears to be meeting the physical needs of construction and delivering cost savings based upon standardization and scale of economies*
- Adoption of LEED Silver as a design standard for school construction encourages energy conservation and quality building design*
- The increased IMR funding support provided over the past several years has allowed for better long-range planning and reaction to local needs; Maintenance backlog is still an issue but the increased funding is appreciated and is showing positive results*
- The working relationship with Alberta Education, Alberta Infrastructure and the ASAP Project team has been exceptionally good based upon professional relationships and understanding of each others roles and responsibilities*
- The level of cooperation between government and the City of Edmonton in ensuring delivery of the ASAP schools has been particularly positive and helpful*