

DATE: October 11, 2011
TO: Board of Trustees
FROM: Trustees Michael Janz and Catherine Ripley
SUBJECT: Community Meeting on the *Education Act*
REFERENCE: <http://catherineripley.ca/education-act/resources-and-links>

ISSUE

Bill 18, the proposed *Education Act*, is currently on its way to Third Reading in the Legislature and is open for debate and amendments.

BACKGROUND

Although the precise timing of the return of Bill 18 to the Legislature is unknown, as ward trustees, we wanted to provide an opportunity for people in southwest Edmonton to gain a better understanding about the *Act* and also to provide comments to us and our area MLAs in advance of any further debate, amendments and Third Reading. To this end, we organized a southwest community evening on September 14, 2011. The Honourable Dave Hancock, MLA for Edmonton-Whitemud and Mr. Fred Horne, MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford were able to join us for much of the evening.

Thirty-five people gathered to (a) discuss the proposed roles and responsibilities for students, parents and boards and (b) ask questions of The Honourable Dave Hancock about Bill 18. In addition 13 people expressed interest in attending but were unable to. The unfiltered summary of the meeting is attached for the Board's reference as it considers its perspectives on the proposed Act and possible next steps (see ATTACHMENT I).

KEY POINTS

- RE: Section 31: e. There was uncertainty for students about how schools would ensure their safety if they were to report bullying.
- RE: Section 32: a, e, g. Parents raised the question of what would happen if they couldn't meet the responsibilities (for example, due to lack of skills or language barriers).
- RE: Section 33. Funding issues were referenced with respect to Boards being able to follow through on a number of the responsibilities.
- "Transformation will not happen because of an Act. It will happen because of people, and transformation will only be successful if education is a societal value." (Minister Hancock)

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT I REPORT "You're Invited to Shape the Future" Meeting Summary

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You're Invited to Shape the Future!

MEETING SUMMARY

Trustees Michael Janz and Catherine Ripley, Edmonton Public Schools

Will the proposed new Education Act (Bill 18) support “the transformation of our education system” so our children may be well prepared for their (and our collective) future? This was the primary question we invited people to consider at a community meeting held on September 14, 2011 in southwest Edmonton. Because Bill 18 has already passed First and Second Reading in the Legislature, we felt the opportunity to look at the Act and provide comments to our legislators in advance of any further debate, amendments and Third Reading was timely. We were delighted that The Honourable Dave Hancock, MLA for Edmonton-Whitemud (and the Minister of Education) and Mr. Fred Horne, MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford were able to join us for much of the evening, and we appreciate their time and their interest in listening to their constituents on the proposed Bill.

In this report you will find:

Feedback on proposed responsibilities for students, parents and school boards: pages 2 – 9.

Q&A with The Honourable Dave Hancock: pages 10 – 11.

Comments and questions from us (which were circulated to participants in advance of the meeting): pages 12 – 13.

Not only do we hope that the feedback and questions from participants will give our MLAs food for thought as they consider their votes on Bill 18, but they will serve to inform your trustees in our decision-making at the Board table as the Act moves forward and as Edmonton Public Schools begins to prepare to implement the Act, adjust Board practices and activities, etc. We also hope that this report will serve to enhance the reader's understanding of the Act. If readers have other ideas or comments on the Act before Third Reading, we encourage you to send them to our MLAs with a cc to us. **Contact information: page 14.**

We thank everyone for attending. It was a great evening of conversation focused around our favourite topic – public education!

We thank the following for participating on September 14...

Angele Beaudoin (Grandview/Brander Gardens parent), Trustee Marilyn Bergstra (ECSD), Kathryn Burke (D.S. Mackenzie/Strathcona parent), Carol Chapman (President, CUPE 3550), Hong Chew (Heritage Valley resident), Jonathan Choi (Ainlay student), Wendy Clarahan (Riverbend resident), Malfay Das (Ainlay student), Agil Ebramin (Ainlay student), Michele Ewoniak (Greenfield/VB parent), Mike Hanna (Ainlay parent), Sara Heibert (Earl Buxton parent), Fred Horne (MLA, Edmonton-Rutherford), Sue Huff (Westmount/Ross Shepherd parent), Fatmeh Ibrahim & children (parent), Trustee Cheryl Johner (EPSB), Dave Jones (Principal, Ainlay), Alex Klinge (Lillian Osborne student), Colleen Knetchel (Greenfield/Avalon/Ainlay parent), Paul & Carmen Leung (Lillian Osborne parents), Rob MacDonald (Strathcona parent), Ron MacNeil (Assistant Superintendent, EPSB), Cheryl Miller (Brander Gardens resident), Dragos Niculescu (Westbrook parent), Susan O'Neil (Lendrum/Ainlay parent), June Park (Lillian Osborne student), Adam Paver (Lillian Osborne student), Baldwin Reichwein (Greenfield resident), Pat Sawatzky (Duggan resident), Jeff Shin (Lillian Osborne parent), Habiba Shurie (EPSB Intercultural consultant), Cheryl Siegel-Logan (Keheewin parent), Latika Srivastava (Blue Quill resident), and Ramita Verma (Ainlay student).

And thank you to those who wanted to come but couldn't ...

Karen Andrews (Allendale parent), Joyce Backstrom (Royal Gardens resident), Monalisa Calliou (Northern Development Resource Council), Yvonne Chiu (Multicultural Health Brokers), Greg Clarahan (Riverbend resident), Kim Gleason (Lillian Osborne parent), Nahla Gooma (George P. Nicholson/Ainlay parent), Karen Hann (Ainlay parent), David Hibbeln (Ward F resident), Kathy Malkin (Riverbend parent), Ida Richardson (Twin Brooks resident), Terri Rolfson (George P. Nicholson parent), Haley Simons (Creative Alberta & EPSB parent).

FEEDBACK ON Section 31: Student responsibilities

Discussions Led by Cheryl Miller and Jeff Shin

Bill 18 states that a student has the responsibility to...	<i>Comments and Considerations</i>
(a) attend school regularly and punctually,	<p>Suggested addition: ...and use the opportunities of education for their benefit.</p> <p>Enforcement could be an issue. How do we enforce students to attend regularly?</p> <p>We need to define “regular.”</p> <p>What about accountability for being late? Does this differ between schools? Should it?</p>
(b) be ready to learn and actively participate in and diligently pursue the student's education program,	<p>This will work as long as the school is being inclusive and making sure that students are “owning” their education</p> <p>One can be “Independent” and actively participate; active participation doesn't necessarily mean a social participation.</p> <p>We need to define “active.”</p>
(c) ensure that the student's conduct contributes to a caring, respectful and safe environment,	<p>Creating a safe learning environment is crucial. But can't expect every student to contribute to this.</p> <p>How does a student contribute to being caring?</p>
(d) respect the rights of others in the school,	<p>Yes, but like c), can't expect every student to do this.</p> <p>This is similar to the Constitution.</p> <p>Breaking this leads to expulsion</p>

<p>(e) refrain from, report and not tolerate bullying or bullying behaviour directed toward others in the school, whether or not it occurs within the school building, during the school day or by electronic means,</p>	<p>Bullying doesn't contribute to high school dropouts.</p> <p>Going through private messages is an invasion of privacy. Electronic means of communication do not convey emotion and thus can be misleading.</p> <p>Reporting bullying may hinder the person's safety as one becomes know as the "snitch." The school cannot protect those who have been labeled as the "snitch." Thus people are reluctant to report.</p> <p>This is a reasonable goal and the intention is good. But will it be enforceable? Need to distinguish between friends and real bullying. Need to have a reporting mechanism that ensures kids will be safe if they report and not put themselves at risk.</p>
<p>(f) comply with the rules of the school and the policies of the board,</p>	<p>Yes, by doing so, safety and protection is created for students.</p> <p>If students are going to have to comply with the Board, then they will need to know what the policies are. But is it reasonable for students know the policies of the Board (let alone understand them)? The feeling of the group was that it was reasonable and right to expect students to know school rules but that it was too much to expect them to even think about Board policies.</p>
<p>(g) co-operate with everyone authorized by the board to provide education programs and other services, and</p>	<p>Cooperating could mean "ratting" or "snitching."</p> <p>How do we connect (g) with (e) for students who are not comfortable with reporting?</p> <p>Need a definition of "cooperation."</p> <p>What is the extent of "everyone authorized by the Board"?</p>
<p>(h) account to the student's teachers and other school staff for the student's conduct.</p>	<p>This is reasonable but the wording is awkward and unclear. What does "account to" mean, for example?</p>

Section 32: Parent Responsibilities

Conversation led by Angele Beaudoin and Sara Heibert

We first discussed the question: *Are all of these expectations reasonable? Yes? No? If not, which one(s) is not?*

- Parent- Yes, they reasonable – education starts at home. (But) with High School students there is pressure. Parents want to dictate but students will not listen. Parents need to give information to students – to encourage them.
- Parent – Yes-I like it when the school carries out the personal values that I share.
- Grandparent- Concerned that law “is a hammer”. I offer a strategic recommendation and question. Why must we delineate parent responsibilities in the Act? It is dangerous putting law into the hands of people not familiar with it. This could lead to dangerous behavior. Concerned that parents will not accept this responsibility anyway.
- Parent – concerned about where this leaves a parent who might lack capacity. What if a parent is unable to fulfill these responsibilities – i.e. due to lack of high income level, lack of language skills to communicate with school, or no skills to engage their children? What would be the consequence of lack of parental abilities? Do not see a lot of room to allow opportunities. Is this a hammer rather than a tool? The Act wants to enable education, but for some parents, time barriers exist, literacy barriers exist.
- Parent- speaking to sex education. At what age can some decisions be given to the student? Is it 16 years? (At this point The Minister came into the discussion and we reviewed the current ages for mandatory attendance/support for learners versus those in new Act . The mandate to attend school from has been changed from 16 to 17 years, and the age where the costs are covered has been changed from 19 to 21 years. We did not specifically speak to the age when a child can choose to obtain sex education for themselves (without requiring parent consent).

Specific components of the Parent Responsibilities: A number of us (more than 2 or 3) voiced a selection of responsibilities we felt was more appropriate to be included in the Act:

- Yes, parents should make decisions respecting the child’s education (as per Clause “a”) and ensure that the child attends school regularly (as per Clause “c”), but until what age?

- Yes – parents should do b, e, f, g but it would be good to see “best practices” included in the Act
- Clause “d” was the one that did not get endorsed by the group specifically, but really, the questions in the first part of the discussion (on previous page) are mostly around “d” (i.e. ensuring that the parent’s conduct contributes to a caring, respectful and safe environment).

Bill 18 states that A parent of a child who is a student or enrolled in an early childhood services program has the responsibility to

(a) make decisions respecting the child’s education,

(b) take an active role in the child’s educational success,

(c) ensure that the child attends school regularly,

(d) ensure that the parent’s conduct contributes to a caring, respectful and safe environment,

(e) co-operate and collaborate with school staff to support the delivery of specialized supports and services to the child,

(f) respect the professional judgment of teachers, principals, other school staff and professionals providing supports and services in the school, and

(g) engage in the child’s school community.

We then discussed the question: ***Why do you feel the expectations are reasonable or unreasonable?***

- Who would determine if “parent” is fulfilling these obligations? Would there be ramifications? Who would police?
- What would be a non-English speaking parent’s role? What would the repercussions be? What consequences?
- How could more flexibility be addressed in the Act?
- Should parents have a right and a duty to students (rather than a responsibility)?

At this point, we heard from the Principal Dave Jones of Harry Ainlay. He reviewed for us the duty of the School to ensure parents have access to information about their child’s education “in their own language.” He gave some examples where he has enlisted interpreters to ensure communication between home and school is effective. He mentioned that prior schools in which he has been a Principal have had HUGE needs for interpreters, which he felt the school was able to enlist effectively. This support can come from community and the district.

Section 33: Board responsibilities

Discussions led by Former Trustee Sue Huff and Trustee Cheryl Johner

Group One

Generally, the words are good, but why is this different from previous good words? What assurances do we have for accountability of these measures? What assurances do we have re: appropriate funding?

The opportunities for Boards are huge. But is there a strong respect for governance structure or is it ruled by administration? It often appears that Boards rubber stamp policy created by Admin, which is the reverse of what it should be.

In the Act, there is opportunity to forge unique partnerships and be more responsive to community.

The possible challenges for Boards in living out these expectations include: passive aggressive political games getting in the way, culture being perpetuated. Some of these are not actionable and success is really hinged to funding. What does inclusive education mean? Decentralizing services promotes inequality. Better training for teachers at post secondary level is needed and if they don't receive it, then Boards will have a challenge.

Group Two

There was quite a long discussion around the shared use of buildings/closed schools and also, about Boards' responsibilities and Municipalities' responsibilities. Schools are buildings and municipalities are responsible to provide spaces for uses such as seniors' drop in centres. Boards are responsible for education delivery while Municipalities are responsible to community. Should school boards just have responsibility for "schooling," not the buildings? There are money constraints here – money is invested in the classroom and building maintenance is neglected. Also, the cost of after-hour use of school buildings is a systemic barrier.

We also looked at raising the age of mandatory education to 17 (from 16). A starting date on either end (March 1/ September 1) may help and provide an adjustment period. Enforceability of attendance until 17 will be a challenge for Boards.

Finally, the group discussed funding. There is not a standard delivery of funding and costs are downloaded to parents. There needs to be constant, adequate, sustainable funding.

Bill 18 states that A board has the responsibility to...	Questions and Comments
<p>1 (a) deliver appropriate education programming to meet the needs of all students enrolled in a school operated by the board and to enable their success,</p>	<p>This is ideological and not practical. One teacher cannot meet 35 different needs in students.</p> <p>This seems like “fluff.” How are we getting kids ready to compete on global scale, so for example, they can get into the top 100 universities in the world?</p> <p>This is great language, but how well will it be implemented? Definitions would be good – re: appropriate, re: success.</p> <p>Success entails transition to post-secondary, but there is lack of transition prep; assessment needs to be accurate; lacking clear focus on leadership</p> <p>We need a definition of “school.” OK with “delivery of education” but school raises a whole host of issues about shared use of buildings/roles and responsibilities of boards/municipalities. See Group 2 comments on page 6 for further detail.</p>
<p>1 (b) be accountable and provide assurances to students, parents, the community and the Minister for student achievement of learning outcomes,</p>	<p>Two way dialogue around “student achievement” could be improved, especially from Board to parent. Often not as responsive as one would like.</p> <p>Supports are not consistent , measures are not consistent... funding is needed.</p> <p>High school teachers may not have the credentials to teach subjects effectively.</p>
<p>(c) provide, where appropriate, for the engagement of parents, students, staff and the community on board matters, including the board’s plans and the achievement of goals and targets within those plans,</p>	<p>Board is already doing this.</p>

<p>(d) ensure that each student enrolled in a school operated by the board and each staff member employed by the board is provided with a caring, respectful and safe environment that fosters and maintains respectful and responsible behaviours,</p>	<p>Board is doing this.</p> <p>There were questions regarding the governance and structure of schools.</p>
<p>1 (e) provide a continuum of specialized supports and services to students that is consistent with the principles of inclusive education,</p>	<p>This is entirely dependent on funding. Dollars are needed and we need additional training for teachers. Also, Boards have no control over other mandates, such as Health.</p> <p>What about accountability? What if you don't get answers from the Board with respect to services being provided?</p> <p>Definition of Inclusive Education is needed.</p>
<p>1(f) collaborate with municipalities, other boards and community-based service agencies in order to effectively address the needs of all students and manage the use of public resources,</p>	<p>This would support the idea of Wrap-Around Services and Mr. Hancock's encouragement of school partnerships.</p>
<p>1 (g) establish and maintain governance and organizational structures that promote student well-being and success, and monitor and evaluate their effectiveness,</p>	<p>This seems to be a work in progress and it is dependent on the board.</p> <p>"Governance" needs to be defined more clearly. There are no clear boundaries between governance and management.</p> <p>Should have a list of criteria to BIND behaviour of governors.</p> <p>What about stipulation re: measuring what a board is doing, how it is doing? Who is evaluating the BOARD activity a the end of the day? We want to promote competency, transparency and independence. Levers here are missing or misplaced. Systems work is needed.</p>

<p>1 (h) ensure effective stewardship of the board's resources,</p>	
<p>1 (i) recruit the superintendent and entrust the day-to-day management of the school division to the staff through the superintendent,</p>	<p>What, exactly, is the Superintendent's role?</p>
<p>1 (j) develop and implement a code of conduct that applies to trustees of the board, including definitions of breaches and sanctions, in accordance with principles set out by the Minister by order,</p>	<p>A corrupt Board can get rid of good trustees, then. "It scares me!"</p>
<p>(k) comply with all applicable Acts and regulations,</p>	
<p>(l) establish appropriate dispute resolution processes, and</p>	
<p>(m) carry out any other matters that the Minister prescribes.</p>	
<p>2) A board shall establish, implement and maintain a policy respecting the board's obligation under subsection (1)(d) to provide a caring, respectful and safe environment that (a) includes addressing bullying behaviour, and (b) is in accordance with any requirements established by the Minister by order.</p> <p>(3) An order of the Minister under subsection (1)(j) or (2)(b) must be made publicly available.</p>	

Q&A with The Honourable Dave Hancock Minister of Education & MLA for Edmonton-Whitemud

(as facilitated by Trustee Michael Janz)

Q. Could you please comment on why the government took away taxing from local school authorities?

A. Originally, the idea was to pool all corporate taxes and distribute evenly across the province, thus eliminating very rich school districts and very poor districts. In 1993-97, the government ended up pooling ALL property educational taxes (i.e. including residential). The purpose in pooling was to ensure equity of funding across the province. Municipalities collect the educational portion and submit to the government, but this is not enough to fund education adequately. The government increases the education budget from its general revenues and distributes to districts based on number of students (and the types of students they are).

Due to their constitutional right, Edmonton Catholic Schools can still tax directly and the government also increases their collected monies from general revenues to ensure ECSD students are funded at the same rate as all other students across the province.

Q. Should it be easier for a school board to issue a special tax levy as per the right in the current School Act (which remains the same in the proposed new Education Act)?

A. The connection between school boards and their electorate is very, very important. Possibly this could be looked at, because frankly, in a plebiscite, who is going to vote YES to increased taxes? However, such a levy would have to be reasonable.

Q. One of the Parent Responsibilities states that parents must cooperate with and respect professionals. Will the same be required of teachers?

A. Section 7 (The Teaching Professionals section) has still to be reviewed, worked on, and renewed. Once the 2007-12 Teachers' Agreement expires, we will be able to look at and discuss all the responsibilities for those working in education, but yes, the expectation is that the relationship would be reciprocal.

Q. It states that the Minister can prohibit a program in a school. Why can parents exempt their kids from a course (such as one that teaches about homosexuality, for example)?

A. We need to find a balance between the rights of the individual and the rights of society. Parents do have paramount interest when it comes to values – and so have a right to opt out their child from human sexuality or religious courses or course segment. For example, we receive requests for exemption from the CALM (Career and Life Management) course. These are granted for particular circumstances – for example, Mormons have a similar course in structure and therefore, upon request can be excused if it is shown that the student has taken that course.

We need to recognize the cosmopolitan nature of society. As a society we have the right to say schools will be safe, caring and respectful places – no one is exempted from that.

Q. With respect to the proposed Student Responsibility to report on bullying (both inside and outside of school), what systems will be put in place to protect students from retribution? And why isn't this requirement (to protect students), under the Board responsibilities?

A. With this Act we have tried to move from being prescriptive to an enabling piece of legislation that contains principles and values. It is not intended to be enforced per se but to announce the values and principles we should all be aiming for. We all have roles and responsibilities related to this issue. As citizens, you are required to help maintain safe, caring and respectful places.

Q. What about the funding challenges that we continually face? How do you envision that the Act will truly engender transformational change when right now it appears we are slipping behind in terms of supports for students, etc.?

A. Transformation will not happen because of an Act. It will happen because of people and transformation will only be successful if education is a societal value. Resourcing issues will always be there, and right now there is excellent work being done thanks to various government departments as well as boards working together. (Responsibilities of Boards are detailed in Section 33: 1(d)). The work of transformation will happen because "we" care, because "we" will make it happen.

Q. How will the Act help drop-outs?

A. The Act won't. However it provides direction and states that education is important – the mandatory age has been increased to 17, for example, and increasing support for students until 21 is also good. By the way, people should know that we have an excellent high school completion rate by age 35. Most people complete high school between ages 25 and 35. Even though the Act itself won't change practice, the government and school boards are working on other initiatives to keep students in school...and progress is being made. The rates are going up.

Q. We are moving to a knowledge economy, and I think that the traditional 13 or 14 years of education is not good enough any more. Also, we know our First Nations, Metis and Inuit (FNMI) student population is growing and is having trouble, and I am wondering about how we are addressing their needs as well as those of immigrants. I believe we need 16 years of education, which could help with the transition between school and post secondary/apprenticeships/world of work. Can you please comment?

A. Transition into post secondary, etc. is very, very important and you're right we need to ensure everyone is able to participate in the knowledge economy. Several districts are co-locating high schools with colleges (Olds College Campus is one example). This is good, and Boards need to have the flexibility to look at ideas like this.

If we were to add more years on, the Province would need to determine this, and we would all need to engage our communities in such a conversation.

In terms of FNMI and immigrant students: Extensive resources are available for FNMI. It is shown that immigrant students do very well.

The New Education Act: Likes! & Questions?

Trustees Michael Janz and Catherine Ripley, Edmonton Public Schools

Please note: Our Board has not yet developed a final position on the new Education Act to share with the Minister and our Edmonton MLAs as they consider Bill 18 the next time it comes to the Legislature. But here are some of our personal thoughts as your ward trustees for your reflection as you prepare to come to our September 14 "You're Invited to Shape the Future!" meeting. To see the full Act, please visit <http://ideas.education.alberta.ca/engage/current-initiatives/action-on-legislation> and click on the pdf link at the bottom of the page.

Like! Overall, the whole Act. The new Act directly builds on what was heard over two years of consultation with students (Speak Out! Initiative) and with other education stakeholders and the public (Inspiring Education dialogue and Setting the Direction for Special Education). It is an enabling piece of legislation focused on student success, and it recognizes that "collaboration and cooperation of all partners in the education system is necessary to ensure the educational success of all students" (Preamble Statement 4).

Like! The proposed Act increases entitlement to an education until age 21 (Section 3: a) and makes attendance compulsory until age 17 (or the completion of high school) (Sections 7: 1c and 2). For some students, the extra support and time to complete their high school education will be excellent. Raising the mandatory age shows an increased value being placed on education by the Province. Again, excellent! Note: the challenge for school boards is to provide education that keeps ALL students fully engaged and excited about learning as well as to work with community partners to address home issues that contribute to students dropping out.

Like! Emphasis on everyone's responsibility for creating safe, caring and respectful learning environments – Students (Section 31: c, d & e), Parents (Section 32: d) and School Boards (Section 33: 1,d and 2). This emphasis mirrors two current Edmonton Public Schools policies that state that we will make our best efforts to ensure safety, caring and respect in both working AND learning environments. Potential problem: The language proposed in the new Act makes this an obligation (as opposed to specifying that Boards will make their best efforts) and this may increase risk of litigation. Also, the Act states that students are to "refrain from, report and not tolerate" any disrespectful and hurtful behavior (bullying) that happens outside of school and the school day (including when online) as well as when in school. Enforcement for events outside of school could present a challenge.

Like! Increased Expectation for Involvement by Everyone in Public Education. The Act recognizes that for the transformation of education to be successful, everyone is needed and plays a part (Section 33, c & f). As trustees and as per Section 34: d, we are both big believers in engaging communities and helping them to understand the value of public education, its challenges and its successes.

Like! Natural Person Powers for School Boards. This enabling provision gives boards greater flexibility to respond to their students and their communities' needs. As per municipalities, boards will be able to act without asking for permission (as long as it is not prohibited). But note that the Minister reserves the right to approve any partnership a Board wishes to create to co-own a building (187), can take capital funding saved up for one project and apply it to another (Section 139: 3), and approve the borrowing of any money (176: 1).

Like! *Enabling School Boards to create their own School Closure processes.* In cases where a school must close for K-12 educational purposes, the ability to create our own “made in Edmonton” process would allow the Board the chance to work more collaboratively with our communities during a difficult time. For example, we might be able to build into an EPSB policy the idea of considering a closure or consolidation at the same time as developing a future plan for the building with the community and/or to conduct the process over several years (not have to start and complete it in one school year as is currently the case).

Question? *Will the change to recognize students based on their residency, rather than their parents’ residency, be workable in our school district?* Currently, each student is guaranteed a space at a designated school based on their family’s home address. Pressure on popular programs and schools and the district itself may grow as student residency is more easily changed than parent residency. The district may not be able to respond effectively if students can reside with friends or relatives to be closer to a preferred school. Also, this may affect district resources. Currently, if a student requiring specialized services and supports comes from outside Edmonton, EPSB and the home district arrange for the full cost to be borne by the home district. If the student were to be residing with a relative, there would be no ability to approach the home district for full funding (i.e. to cover the additional costs not supported by the Province’s grant for the student).

Question? *Should the process around the Minister’s Power to Make Regulations be more specific?* For many sections, the Minister retains the power to make regulations. On one hand, this will allow a timely response by the Minister as situations emerge because regulations are not subject to legislative review. On the other hand, there is no requirement outlined for any stakeholder engagement in developing the regulations. Also, in Section 66 the areas in which the Minister can make regulations have been expanded to include board governance and administrative procedures.

Question? *What does the Government mean by inclusive education?* (as mentioned in the Preamble Statement 7 and Section 33: e). Including a definition in the Interpretation Section could be useful for parents, boards, and staff in the case of disputes over how to best meet the needs of a student (Part 3, Division 3 and 4).

Question? *Should Boards have to hold a plebiscite to enact a Special School Tax Levy?* As per the current School Act, the new Act allows Boards to propose a special tax levy for a specific initiative that costs no more than 3% of their annual budgets (Division 5). The levy must be voted on in a plebiscite. In the situation of insufficient resources, removing the plebiscite requirement would allow Boards to respond more quickly to community needs and also, reconnect Boards directly to their taxpayers.

Question? *Should there be a commitment in the Act by the Government to fund education in a sufficient, predictable, sustainable manner?* While the Government commits to “...one publicly funded education system that provides a choice of educational opportunities to students...” (Preamble Statement 9), and while there are requirements for the Board to be accountable to its community (Section 33: b, h; Sections 136 and 137) for educational outcomes and its financial decisions, there is no corresponding accountability for the government with respect to funding in the Act.

Please note that the Board of Edmonton Public Schools has made two previous submissions to the School Act review in October 2009 and January 2011. You can access those documents at

http://www.epsb.ca/board/february08_11/act.pdf

Do you have a question or a comment
on Bill 18 (the proposed Education Act)?

Please send them to your MLA before Third Reading.

A cc to your trustee would be much appreciated!

Serving Southwest Edmonton....

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<p>Other Edmonton Public School Trustee contact information can be accessed through http://www.epsb.ca/trustees/brdwho.shtml</p>	