

Regina Board of Education Presentation to the K-12 Education Governance Review January 26, 2017. Regina, Saskatchewan.

Discussion document

This discussion paper is a collection of some of the feedback received by RBE Trustees and they do not necessarily reflect the views of the board. The board has chosen to submit these comments to the Panel as we heard that the process: made no focussed attempt to hear from parents; had questionable timing; resulted in boards of education having to do the communication legwork of the Government; hindered open and honest participation from some stakeholders; and had questionable transparency. These points are expanded upon and can be found in "Community Engagement in the process" below. Additionally all of the feedback heard by trustees is also shared below.

- **What strength is gained through elected boards in Saskatchewan?**
 - a) The trustees of the Regina School Division #4 of Saskatchewan Board are locally elected representatives of the parents and communities that send their children to public schools.
 - b) The trustees come from a very diverse background and bring with them real-world skills and an empathy of the needs of parents, communities and employees that complement and backstop the expertise of school division administration.
 - c) Elected trustees are a reflection of the communities, and in the Regina case, the diverse areas of the city that elected them; they work to develop a deep understanding of the community in which they live.
 - d) Usually have children or family within the school division – have a stake in what happens locally.
 - e) More equity within the division – understands and accounts for differences within entire community.
 - f) Government is democratically elected, this should to be reflected in all systems of governance, including school divisions – this also serves as an educational piece for students on the working of a healthy democratic system.
 - g) Elected Board offers sober second thought and direction to school divisions, as well as having a direct representative voice of the electors.
 - h) They have the ability to ask questions come from a variety of professional and socio-economic backgrounds and stakeholder groups, not just education.
 - i) They are involved in the hiring of key employees with the necessary skills to responsibly run school divisions.
 - j) Boards reflect the electors that voted them in, and this may or may not be different from the sitting government. This can be both a strength and a weakness, depending on perspective.

- **What is the weakness of elected boards?**
 - a) Popular individual may be elected or acclaimed and may not have the ability to lead or manage.
 - b) Low attendance at elections may lead to acclamation of unqualified members – subject to apathy of voters.
 - c) Political or social biases or agendas of individual members or small groups they may represent.
- **What student-focused need would appointed boards serve?**
 - a) Appointed boards could more easily include members of visible minority or underrepresented groups.
 - b) Appointed boards would serve the mandate of the government and would not necessarily represent the community, parents or students they served.
 - c) While the needs of students and fiscal realities may not always be exclusive, an appointed boards presumed mandate to keep spending at a minimum, may and will go against the needs of the ESSP.
 - d) Appointed boards would serve the needs of those that appointed them, they would not necessarily have the confidence of the parents and students they serve and would considerably disrupt the democratic backbone of education in Saskatchewan.
- **What is the role of SCCs?**
 - a) Support schools in educational programming.
 - b) Fundraising within schools.
 - c) SCCs provide a nurturing environment for individuals wanting to serve in increasingly more responsible public roles.
 - d) There is opportunity for SCCs to play a significant role in strategic planning, community engagement, advocacy, etc. They are supposed to develop an understanding of their communities (needs, resources, supports, goals for learning, etc.).
 - e) Each SCC is going to advocate for the interests of their school.
 - f) They can have competing agendas, especially for schools in the same neighbourhood, e.g., Rosemont School and Walker School may both be competing for community investment in building a playground or offering a specific program. This is not going to serve the students well. The SCC with the strongest marketing ability will be the one who gets the funds.
 - g) Those schools that have no functional SCC are at a disadvantage. They won't have the loudest voices.
 - h) SCC governance can lead to inequities because of the backgrounds, or levels of participation of the members.
 - i) If the SCC executives are voluntary, it is doubtful whether they will commit the time and resources necessary to govern well.
 - j) Many SCC members want less long-term responsibilities and, unfortunately, the existence and effectiveness of SCCs differs from school to school.
 - k) Strengthening SCCs may seem like a good idea in certain jurisdictions. However, in the urban setting, where there is significant overlap of school neighbourhood boundaries and parents'/community members' eagerness to volunteer/commit to more is rare, SCCs may either hinder students' achievement and division goals, or may be completely disinterested in them.

- l) This Board brought forward a resolution at the SSBA Fall Assembly clearly defining the role of the SCCs.
- **Different LINC agreements**
 - a) LINC agreements very much reflect the school division in which they are signed. The needs and expectations put on professional teaching staff in an urban setting are very different than those expected in a rural setting.
 - b) Teachers who must deal with higher PTR, EAL and Intensive Needs students may have negotiated different agreements that account for these expectations.
 - c) Having a single agreement may result in “equality” in that everyone has the same agreement, but it certainly would not result in “equity,” as some professional staff in certain parts of the province would have benefits for work not needed and others may not be adequately compensated.
 - d) Beyond LINC, School Divisions may also have agreements with up to five employee groups including CUPE, SGEU, SUN and RPSTA.
 - e) Any short-term and unpredicted changes in agreements would certainly result in labour disruptions that would impact students and their parents who may have to scramble to find alternative care for their children during the work day.
 - f) In Regina, there are 22,000 students – imagine how their not being at school unexpectedly would impact the Regina workforce that would have to cope with finding appropriate child care.
- **FNMI partnerships**
 - a) The Regina Public School Board regularly works with the Elders’ Advisory Council in decision-making.
 - b) The Elders’ Advisory Council – which was one of the first of its kind in Canadian provincial K-12 education, is comprised of seven members who represent a variety of Treaty 4-area First Nations and Métis communities.
 - c) The Board meets quarterly with the elders on this council.
 - d) Some of the work that the elders have been involved with include the naming of Seven Stones Community School and the development of the self-declaration project that helped the school division and the Government of Saskatchewan better quantify how many students were of indigenous descent.
 - e) In addition, the school division maintains a number of partnerships with local and provincial First Nations and Métis organizations and groups and strives to ensure that education services and programs meet the needs and the expectations of all students, including those of indigenous descent.
 - f) Regina Public Schools is on Treaty 4 land. Individual school divisions and boards of education may hold partnerships with a variety of local, community or provincial indigenous groups. If a school division were to cease to specifically represent a particular area and were to expand into other areas, it would create new opportunities, but it would, as well, make it more difficult to sustain existing partnerships, understanding of local-level issues and history of cooperation and respect.
- **Existing Partnerships/agreements**
 - a) Creating and sustaining money saving partnerships and partnerships that benefit students does not require amalgamation to take place.

- b) Province wide agreements and partnerships, such as those with SaskTel and Microsoft, are two examples of how leveraging of purchasing or services can occur without changing the fundamental structure of an organization.
 - c) Other examples of new partnerships could include transportation consortiums, as well as province-wide equipment, supply, stationary and textbook contracts/agreements.
 - d) An example of how amalgamation could hurt existing partnerships is where school divisions have agreements for in-kind supplies or services from an organization whose sole interest is the local market and would not necessarily be interested in supporting the learning of students whose families may never be in a position to purchase or use their products or services.
- **There is no Province-wide consensus on the benefits of amalgamation.**
 - a) The province of Saskatchewan is a very diverse place. The needs and expectations of one community may be completely different than those of another. It is difficult to understand how an amalgamation would benefit students if the needs of one area's students took on more significance than another's.
 - b) This is not only evident in rural vs. urban schools, but it is also evident between same demographic areas. The needs of a Lumsden school student and her family may be different from those in Ft. Qu'Appelle. Similarly, a suburban Regina school's demographics may require other professional educational services than would a suburban school in Saskatoon.
 - c) This is not to say that achieving the goals of the ESSP requires completely different criteria depending on place: it is saying that local knowledge, representation and nimble adaptiveness are necessary to ensure students achieve at their best.
- **Why are we having this discussion?**
 - a) Is amalgamation about financial savings or improvement of student achievement?
 - b) Administration of the school division is already very lean, at 3% of total budget, with most resources going directly to Student Achievement and Instruction (68%) (Transportation 4%, Plant 16%, Other 9%).
 - c) If this discussion is about saving money, Regina Public Schools is already running extremely efficiently and could serve as a model for others.
 - d) If this discussion is about enhancing student achievement, Regina Public Schools is already applying many of the directives of the ESSP and seeing year-over-year results in literacy, math and graduation rates.
 - e) Regina Public Schools is one of the two biggest school divisions in the province
 - f) It has spent the past 10 years right-sizing its inventory of schools, and took a leadership role in the province when student population was declining.
 - g) The school division closed many schools in that period, upgraded its building portfolio and changed its transportation, enrolment and boundary policies at the elementary and high school levels to ensure the highest level of efficiency in all its schools.
 - h) The closing of schools and the subsequent opening of new schools – Arcola, Douglas Park and Seven Stones - were all done in an era of shrinking budgets and tighter government funding.
 - i) Two of these schools are community schools, and serve lower socio-economic neighbourhoods.

- j) During this same period of reduced or status quo education budgets, the school division continued to innovate programs and teaching to meet the needs of its students and communities.
 - k) During tight financial times, the school division pioneered educational practices including high school level skills training and completion (Skills and Trade Centre, Campus Regina Public, Adult Campus), MYPAA at the elementary level, as well as expanded enriched programming through Advanced Placement programs available at every Regina Public high school.
 - l) It has paved the way for indigenous student achievement by introducing an Elder Advisory Council, Aboriginal Advocate Teachers and other dedicated consultants.
 - m) As a result, it has seen increased results in FNMI achievement and overall graduation results.
 - n) The school division took on the lion share of the province's Syrian refugees and continues to take more than other area public or separate EAL and Intensive Needs students.
- **Immediate impact of Governance changes and Amalgamation on Students and Families**
 - a) Although all changes can be made over time, the immediate impact to students and their families will be felt in the following areas – especially as there is no obvious plan on how to address these issues in the short term (this is just a brief list):
 - i. Class sizes and PTR
 - ii. School calendars
 - iii. Staffing – teachers, school-based administrators, other professionals and support staff
 - iv. Student supervision; differences in school start, end and recess times
 - v. Report cards
 - vi. Student and achievement protocols
 - vii. Attendance controls/programs
 - viii. Payroll systems
 - ix. IT systems and incompatible software, hardware and networks
 - x. Transportation needs, including field trips and other daily requirements
 - xi. Teacher supervision protocols
 - xii. Essential duties, as defined in the The Education Act
 - xiii. Volunteer vetting and protocol
 - xiv. Board policies and division administrative procedures
 - xv. Local agreements/partnerships with cities/RMs
 - xvi. Legal agreements with other organizations, such as easements, etc.
 - xvii. Parental involvement and say in any change, especially since they ultimately fund the education system at the local level
 - xviii. Additional funding required for any transition – severance, payouts, contract breaking, etc.
 - **Differences between Health Regions and Boards of Education**
 - a) Many of the changes that have been proposed and implemented in the health sector have seemingly found their way into the education sector.
 - b) While there are obvious efficiencies that can be achieved province-wide (purchasing, IT- but not necessarily local level IT support – payroll and maintenance), there are significant differences between the two sectors that have been ignored.

- c) Health is a one or multiple-touch system where the client uses it only when there is need. It can be centralized – although that is inconvenient, the same services can more or less be provided whether the patient needs to travel to get them or not.
 - d) Education, on the other hand, is a legally mandated, daily touch experience for all of the population under 18 years of age, not just those who need it. It is a 13-year commitment to each individual student, and often their parents, and continuity (of teaching staff) must stay relatively constant for a successful school year. Is amalgamation about financial savings or improvement of student achievement?
 - e) Education is more heavily impacted by the quick changes of demographics, birth rates, and immigration, than is health care. A school may one year be the perfect size and two years later require three or four portable classrooms. The model that may serve the health sector, does not translate well into the education sector.
- **Changes for Public, but not Separate or Catholic Boards of Education**
 - a) Why is there a discussion of transformational change for public boards, but not Catholic?
 - b) Trustees have heard that parents would entertain the possibility of sending their kids to a Catholic school that has a stable, elected board and is community representative rather than to a public school that must undergo the turmoil of change and transition.
 - c) The Government of Saskatchewan has done little to ensure that separate boards of education are diligent in ensuring that all the students (at the elementary school level) are indeed of the Roman Catholic faith and eligible, by legislation, to go to a Catholic School.
 - d) It is our experience that many parents will pick a school based on convenience – bussing, language offerings or proximity, rather than whether it is a public or a Catholic school.
 - e) Fortunately, Regina Public and Regina Catholic have excellent relationships that mitigate significant enrolment problems.
 - f) We still see non-Catholic students going to Catholic schools.
 - g) Why would any parents choose to send their children to a public school division that is in the midst of administrative and structural change when there is a Catholic school (often times) across the street whose teachers and administrator can focus solely on teaching and not “Transformational Change”?
 - h) Parents will always pick stability over change and public education would suffer.
 - i) Parents are becoming increasingly skeptical of Transformational Change. How can public boards focus on student achievement and the ESSP, as well as the opening of new schools, (in Regina Public School’s case, the opening of six new school facilities in September 2017), with the looming, unknown and perhaps radical changes to governance, boundaries, administration and relationships with its employee groups that transformational change urges.

- **Urban Vs. Rural**

- a) Boards, like those in Regina have become experts in the education of its urban students. Rural boards, similarly meet the needs of rural population.
- b) This expertise and understanding of one's one market does not easily translate into a new market-customer base. Marketing best practices suggest significant study of new markets before any expansion is ever made. The recent fiasco of Target into Canada and Saskatchewan is clear evidence of how a proven formula in one market, without adequate research, development and time will fail in a new market. School divisions are not very different in terms of serving a given market.
- c) Culture is also not something to be ignored. Culture can be in the sense of demographic make-up between school divisions. It may also define different work/employment culture. When two or more organizations merge, as with any change, significant work must be done in advance to ensure a) the workforce can indeed work well together; and b) customers (students and parents) will see no change other than better service or results.

- **Local knowledge in emergent situations**

- a) In an emergency situation, such as a school lockdown, or as in the tragedy that the province recently witnessed in La Loche, local knowledge, quick reaction and boots-on-the-ground management is critical.
- b) The decisions that need to be made at these critical times are, often times, generic in terms of action, but the responses must be extremely specific and made out of a deep understanding of the school and community that is affected.
- c) Partnerships with local law enforcement, fire and health authorities are critical in both short-term/emergent responses, but also in long-term strategies for the benefit of communities – arson prevention programs, U11, TRiP, etc.
- d) Public, media and parent relations and communications are far more effective from a consistent and local source, than from a distant or provincially-focused entity.

- **Community Engagement in the process**

- a) The Saskatchewan Education Governance Panel and Survey has been a Government initiative. However, short of the media release, there has been no obvious attempt to solicit comments or feedback from Saskatchewan communities and especially parents.
- b) This process was also announced almost simultaneously with Health Sector announcements that took the media headlines for several news cycles. Following that, there was zero coverage in the media of the process. It is hard to believe that this is a coincidence.
- c) It has been left to boards of education, employee groups and the SSBA to convince the public to participate in a process that was being pushed by the government.

- d) This is not a credible process, it does not contribute to transparency, and it is inherently limited, with respect soliciting feedback from the primary consumers of public education in Saskatchewan – parents.
- e) The process required all respondents to the survey to identify themselves, with the assumption that their names would be published along with their comments.
- f) The need to establish identity, credibility and authenticity is a given in the collecting of comments. This is usually done by having a third party manage a survey and anonymize the responses. This was not done. In fact, it was stressed that names would be used and shared.
- g) Many potential respondents are also civil servants, members of labour groups, and individuals who work in the education sector. Many of them are reluctant to share their comments out of fear of retribution from their employers, the government or their peers.
- h) News came on January 24th, the day after the survey was closed for entries, that names would not be used. What good does this do? It is insulting to the thousands and thousands of Saskatchewan parents, teachers, administrators and other education sector workers who were afraid of retribution. This is a legitimate fear – it is not one we throw out lightly.
- i) While we very much appreciate the opportunity to present and participate in the process as a group, we seriously question how transparent the process actually is and how deep the information and public opinion gathering will be.

The Regina Board of Education has heard and observed that that the Perrins' Report fails to outline how any of the four proposed options would benefit student achievement or parent expectations of the Education Sector in Saskatchewan. Moreover, there is little in the report that points to any form of significant long-term financial savings as a result of "Transformational Change" that would result in amalgamation of school divisions or elimination of elected boards. In fact, the up-front costs of significant organizational changes would be, potentially prohibitive and the knock-on, negative effect on student achievement may be felt for many years to come. In summary, short-term financial benefits are questionable and long term educational detriments are more likely for the parents of students and the people of Regina and Saskatchewan.

Board Presentation to the Governance Panel

Thank you

- Exhausted
- What we can contribute that is new
- We hope not to bore you with all of the same points you have heard over and over again
- But rather, to bring you an introduction to who are board is, what we feel makes our division unique, and how we welcome this discussion.

The existence of this panel, in many ways, has accomplished great work already

- Because it has caused boards of education to pause and consider some of the larger questions
- To get someone to question their very existence is a good thing on a personal level and a corporate level.
- Pausing and considering the larger issues is something our board has done for the last number of years at least on an annual basis during our board self-evaluation and our Director's evaluation.
- I also believe the establishment of the Board Chairs Council at the SSBA has the boards working together in a more collaborative way.
- And, most certainly the work our administration does together with boards of education across the province again is realizing efficiencies and the sharing of best practices which has us pushing towards established goals and targets.
- These are good innovations for Saskatchewan's education sector and, ultimately for all of the province's students.

I say all this as a preamble to our presentation

- However, right now, I would like to introduce you to the Regina Public Board of Education
- Our Director, Mr. Greg Enion – we are very pleased to work with. After quite an exhaustive national search we were pleased to offer a contract to

Greg two years ago. Greg came up through our system. He has been with Regina Public for 34 years – teacher, principal, superintendent, deputy director and now director. Greg’s leadership has brought many valuable partnerships to our division.

- Trustee Jay Kasperski is not with us today. Like many trustees, Mr. Kasperki balances full time employment and real-world experiences with trustee responsibilities. Today his employment kept him from these proceedings. Mr. Kasperski is also a board member of a community association and local daycare. A father of two school-aged children, he works as a Records Manager at the Co-op Refinery Complex.
- I would now ask our Trustees to introduce themselves to you.

And, I am Katherine Gagne, Chair of Regina Public

- What brought me to the table?
 - o Well, I am the mother of 3 daughters who are all very high achieving students.
 - o I am the sister to and primary caregiver of a 40 year old brother with Down Syndrome who came in from rural Saskatchewan to attend High School in Regina due to the extra supports available.
 - o To me, I come at it with a personal realization that both ends of the spectrum need to be supported and given the opportunity for success.
- I work fulltime for Junior Achievement of Saskatchewan partnering with teachers with supports in financial literacy and entrepreneurship instruction.
- Prior to that I spent the better part of a decade working internationally in the area of Customs Assessment as the Economic Affairs Manager for the World’s largest inspection and testing company.
- And after that I travelled throughout southeast Asia in a consultancy role working to bring our offices up to International Management Standards.
- 3rd term trustee
- I am also of Metis ancestry.

So, as you can see, there is a diversity of backgrounds amongst our board.

- We bring some specific competencies
- However, we also recognize some of our shortfalls and on an annual basis look to identify areas of board development.
- To accomplish this we regularly engage in opportunities to expand our expertise in the areas of budget analysis, governance, conflict resolution, media and government relations, among others.
- We also regularly reach out to parents and School Community Councils for their feedback and thoughts on issues of the day and who we are doing as a Board and school division.

Two nights ago, we had former trustees come to our board meeting and we presented them with a token of appreciation.

- During that presentation it became apparent, and in addition to what you just heard from our current trustees about their motivations for public office
- Trustees run for election for many different reasons
- But overwhelmingly, trustees begin with participation at a local level, at an SCC level and then strive to contribute for elected office of increasing responsibility.

This realization had us, as a board, ponder who are SCC members and what role do they serve and what would happen if their role were strengthened.

- We began asking the questions of our SCC members
- And this is what we heard –
 - o “we don’t want any more responsibility.
 - o We are volunteers and we just want to help out at our kid’s school.
 - o If we wanted more we would have run for your position”
- We recognize, SCC members play an important role however, as a board we see some gaps in the function of SCC’s and this is why we brought a resolution to the floor of the SSBA Fall Assembly asking for a review of SCC’s

- Because, we were seeing that urban SCC's can have competing agendas, especially for schools in the same neighbourhoods
 - o SCCs in close geographic proximity often must compete for community investment in building a playground;
 - o or for offering a specific program or support;
 - o or for some regular or one-off fundraising;
 - o Typically it is the SCC with the loudest voice or most business or marketing acumen that that wins.
- Schools with no functional SCC or in lower socio-economic neighbourhoods are at a distinct disadvantage.
- They not only find it difficult to find active members and volunteers, but seldom can find reliable community support.
- This is both something we have heard from parents and have observed in our interactions with SCCs.
- We have heard that many SCC members want less long-term responsibilities.
- It is the reality, at least in Regina, that the existence and effectiveness of SCCs differs from school to school and from neighbourhood to neighbourhood.

A point of consideration for the panel is – what about amalgamating SCC's rather than boards.

- We have seen SCC's in our city begin to work together because the schools are in close proximity.
- Regina Public Schools has significant expertise in opening and closing schools – our administration likewise have some exceptional experience in helping develop SCC synergies – with new, existing and sunsetting SCCs
- These SCCs have looked at shared services, shared programming and supports.
- In Regina, we see the strength of the SCC vary greatly from sectors of the city.
- In Regina, we see this diversity as a strength that reflects our parents and communities desire to see excellence in education.

- We wish to nurture this community diversity and strength that SCCs can deliver

In terms of our Division

- We have 50 schools with 3 associate schools
- Educating more than 22,000 students
- 19% self-identify as aboriginal ancestry
- A growing number of EAL and refugee students
- We have more Kindergarten to Grade 6 students than any other school division in the province
- And we expect more than new 2,000 additional students in our high schools in the next 10 years.
- Next year we are projecting more than 500 new students in our division than we had this year
- And every year for the past number of years we have been growing by the equivalent of a large elementary school every year
- At the same time we have kept to status quo budgets, have kept Pupil Teacher Ratios reasonable and have resisted triple grading.
- We have 2231 FTE staff of which 1400 FTE are teachers
- We also have a significant number of other staff positions that work directly with students
- We have welcomed and taken on the provincial ESSP targets, and we have our own stretch targets
 - o 80% grad rate with 95% of students at grade level in reading/writing/math
 - o Achieve a 10% gap reduction between FN/M/I students
 - o A 95% grade to grade transition rate

As we consider transformational change and the Governance review

- We are perhaps left with more questions than answers
- And that isn't necessarily a bad thing because as I said, it causes us to pause and look at processes and assumptions that we may have otherwise taken for granted.
- However, we remain unclear as to whether the intent of this review is to find efficiencies, to save money or to improve student achievement.

We want to make sure that whatever decisions are made are made through the lens of the impact on student achievement and student success.

In the work of creating a successful province, we must not lose sight of the fact that all the work we do as adults is for the benefit of our children, our youngest citizens that will inherit and have to live with our successes or challenges!

- We are grateful for the work that is going on across the province in terms of the ESSP
- We don't want to see anything interrupt this work
- And, we as a board, have a legitimate concern that if we were to amalgamate and/or take on additional schools or be included in a change of boundaries to an educational region it would unduly shift the attention of our administration away from the Sector Plan
- And even if that was temporary, it affects a cohort of students.
- We don't want to be looking at disappointing PISA or other student assessment results 10 years from now and thinking –“oh yeah, that's when Transformational Change was imposed on the province...”

Regina Public works diligently in continuing to finding efficiencies and working together with Regina Catholic School Board.

In previous years, Regina Public also had an official partnership with Saskatoon Public School Division and the two divisions shared expertise.

- As boards, we meet a couple times a year with Regina Catholic
- And, our administration is frequently in discussions
- Subject experts work side by side on shared programs and in emergent situations, benefiting for complementary expertise
- Our neighbouring school divisions look at ways we can work together, streamline or align processes and establish efficiencies
- For example, we spent last year looking at bussing and the year before we looked at joint purchasing for portables etc.
- The process of working together has been in progress for many years and is not because of any talk of amalgamation.

- We work together because it makes sense for our students and all the students of Regina!

I know we do not need to convince you of the diversity of our division.

- Large urban boards, particularly Saskatoon Public and Regina Public tend to have the highest numbers of students requiring extra and intensive supports.
- I think of my brother, who 20 years ago, came in from Prairie Valley to be schooled in Regina Public due to the extra supports he required. This trend continues and may have been accelerated as the economics of the province has changed significantly in the past two decades
- We educate more students with intensive needs than any other area school division
- Regina Public also accepts a significantly high percentage of the students coming out of custody. These are students that no other area school division will accept.
- We do it willingly and gladly and have exceptional programs with Justice, with Social Services, with local Police, with Health and RQHR and others to help all our students!
- But this work also takes targeted funding and Government recognition, which isn't always forthcoming.

But, I think one of the items our board would like to highlight is the focus we have on finding efficiencies

- In the past 10 years we have focussed on right sizing our inventory of schools and took a leadership role in this regard in the province when student population was declining.
- Regina Public closed a significant amount of schools during that period.
- We upgraded our building portfolio, changed our transportation, enrolment and boundary policies at the elementary and high school levels to ensure the highest level of efficiency in all our schools

With student achievement as our priority and in particular Indigenous Student Achievement

- We introduced an Elder Advisory Council, Aboriginal Advocate Teachers.
- Our board regularly works with the Elders' Advisory Council – which was the first of its kind in Canadian provincial K-12 education.
- It is comprised of seven members who represent a variety of Treaty 4 area FN and Metis communities.
- The board meets quarterly with the elders on this council
- Some of the work the elders have been involved with include the naming of Seven Stones Community School and the development of the self-declaration project that helped the school division and the Government of Saskatchewan better quantify how many students were of Indigenous descent.
- Our work with our Elders also brought forth the resolution to fly the Treaty 4 flag outdoors at our division office, and inside every one of our schools, which we do proudly every day
- As a result of these initiatives and other work, we have seen increased results in FNMI achievement and overall graduation rates

A point of consideration for the panel is in the relationship established with our FN/M/I communities.

- Our Elders are placed in a position of Honour and respect in interactions and events with other elected officials.
- They feel they have direct input.
- They do not like to be relegated to a bureaucratic relationship where their influence is minimized, only for ceremony or potentially filtered.

As we are responsible and accountable to our elders and our indigenous students, we, as a board, believe that the strength of elected boards comes in the sense of accountability with the public.

Another point of consideration we would like to present to the panel is: are there ways we can, as larger boards, offer our services in leading certain areas or initiatives.

We have already seen this done as some school divisions successfully led ESSP initiatives on behalf of the whole education sector.

- We would like to begin to explore these options rather than filtering everything through the funnel of amalgamation.
- We are not taking a position, rather we would like this to really establish the beginning of a dialogue and place of discovery.
- We are confident these discussions would be fruitful much in the same manner the ESSP directions have been
- What, I believe boards across the province have witnessed, is a true team approach to education. I believe there is evidence of silos coming down.
- Why, in a time of developing partnerships would it make sense to pre-empt, curtail or force work already in progress?

We are concerned that wholesale change will erode public confidence in the education system.

- For example, if we move towards appointed boards, partisan political bias will come into play in a much larger manner than currently exists.
- I know many parents/taxpayers who would resist the direction of an NDP government appointed board much in the same manner others would question the integrity of a Sask Party appointed board.
- Elected boards provide accountability giving power to the parents/taxpayers through the voters booth
- Trustees regularly field concerns from parents. Parents/taxpayers want to be able to hold elected officials to account.
- If boards were appointed, we believe the issues that trustees handle would be diverted around administration and appointed boards to elected officials namely MLA's because parents/taxpayers are empowered through their ability to influence or vote someone out of office.
- Considering recent Regina political history, parents only having recourse to their MLAs for issues, may never get the opportunity to discuss issues with a sitting government MLA.
- The questions trustee's field also holds administration to a higher degree of accountability and has the ability to effect change.

In closing, our greatest concern, as a board, is in regards to the work we are doing with the ESSP. We do not want to see it de-railed.

- Regina Public has 6 new school facilities opening in September 2017 and with looming, unknown and perhaps radical changes to governance, boundaries, administration and relationships with employee groups it seems like a perfect storm may be brewing.

Closing comments:

- The handout you received is not a duplicate of this presentation but rather a collection of comments we have received as a board.
- We expect you will see a lack of submissions from Regina and we urge you to NOT take this lack of submission from Regina taxpayers as evidence of a lack of engagement with our public.
- Instead, we witnessed a very real hesitancy to submit without the ability to remain anonymous.
- In fact, you will see some of the comments in this regard in the handout
- These comments distributed are not necessarily a reflection of our board but rather a collection of feedback we have received.
- This, again, is another example of the strength of an elected board and the trust community places in it...people unwilling to take a risk with a government process, we willing to be candid with their local school board officials.
- This, more than anything else is truly revealing!

I would ask each of my fellow trustees just to give their closing comment or point they want to make sure you take away.

Aleana – value of accountable locally elected trustees

Cindy – why are we having this discussion, is it about financial savings, we need to keep student achievement in the fore of this discussion.

Tanya – There is no strong evidence that any of these models will save money. To go through this level of disruption without a cost/benefit analysis, business case and consideration of long term implications

Jane – Are the changes aimed at improving student achievement? With the ESSP we are making improvements and we have clearly defined goals in place. What impact would this disruption have on the education of students? Education impacts social service and justice. So, disruption will have an impact on these other social services.

Adam - .2 or 3% of a massive educational budget. Let us find real savings within our budgets. Let us do the job of efficiencies if that is the purpose.