

DATE: April 28, 2015

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Motion re Council of School Councils

ORIGINATOR: Dr. Sandra Stoddard, Executive Director Governance and Strategic Support Services

REFERENCE: [November 13, 2012 Board Report – Motion re Council of School Councils](#)
[June 17, 2014 Board Report – Report #10 of the Caucus Committee \(From the Meeting Held June 10, 2014\)](#)
[Education Act](#)

ISSUE

The following motion was brought to the November 13, 2012 board meeting: *That the Administration create a Council of School Councils that will meet with the Board twice a year and provide advice on education issues.*

The Board approved referral of the recommendation to the Community Relations Committee for review and for the Committee to return at the end of the stakeholder mapping process to ensure that the recommendation met with the Board Work Plan.

The termination of the Community Relations Committee was subsequently approved at the June 17, 2014 board meeting; as such, this motion is currently unresolved.

RECOMMENDATION

That the following motion from the November 13, 2012 Board meeting not be approved: *That the Administration create a Council of School Councils that will meet with the Board twice a year and provide advice on education issues.*

BACKGROUND

The new *Education Act* reflects a significant shift in expectations for board governance, whereby boards are to engage with their stakeholders to increase common understanding of issues and trends, and collaboratively generate ideas for action. The word “empowerment”, which implies shared responsibility and decision-making, is new in the Preamble to the *Education Act*: “Whereas education is a shared responsibility and requires collaboration, engagement and empowerment of all partners in the education system to ensure that all students achieve their potential.”

Stakeholder engagement and collaboration responsibilities under the *Education Act* S. 33 (1) state that “a board, as a partner in education, has the responsibility to:

- provide, where appropriate, for the engagement of parents, students, staff and the community, including municipalities and the local business community, in board matters, including the board’s plans and the achievement of goals and targets within those plans

- 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
- collaborate with post-secondary institutions and the community to enable smooth transitions for students from secondary to post-secondary education”

As part of the comprehensive review and consolidation of Board policy, new policy is required to address the Board of Trustees’ stakeholder engagement and collaboration responsibilities under the *Education Act* S. 33 (1). Draft Board Policy AA.BP - Stakeholder Relations will be considered for the first time at the April 28, 2015 Board meeting and supports the rationale for the recommendation brought forward by the Administration in this report.

RELATED FACTS

- There are heightened expectations in the new *Education Act* for board accountability and assurance. The *Education Act* also articulates the need for increased communication with, and engagement of stakeholders to share responsibility for ensuring student success.
- Communication, engagement and collaborative practice are not new to the District.
- The District has conducted several large-scale stakeholder and public engagement initiatives (e.g., Growth Accommodation Plan, Replacement School Plan) that have had positive outcomes for stakeholders and the District.
- There are multiple demands on the time and resources of stakeholders, as well as the District. The District needs to be efficient by being purposeful and strategic in engaging stakeholders in initiatives that will have an impact on outcomes identified in the District’s Strategic Plan.
- The Administration recognizes that the heightened accountabilities outlined in the *Education Act* require that a framework of principles, and a range of options be developed to ensure the Board’s educational and fiduciary responsibilities are appropriately addressed.
- New draft Board Policy AA.BP - Stakeholder Relations has identified expectations for the Superintendent of Schools to develop district standards and guidelines for stakeholder engagement processes that contemplate ways in which stakeholders can contribute ideas and perspectives to inform district decision-making at the system and school level.
- While a Council of School Councils may be an appropriate venue under certain circumstances, other forms of engagement may be required to achieve desired outcomes. The development of a framework that includes a range of stakeholder engagement strategies that can be used, when appropriate, is critical for the District to develop and leverage strategic relationships.
- In addition, establishing a Council of School Councils might be a mechanism for engaging some parents; however, it may not be the best method for engaging all parents and may not be flexible enough for responding to emergent and time-sensitive issues that require immediate parental input.
- The development of district standards and guidelines for stakeholder engagement processes will ensure the level and extent of stakeholder engagement is aligned with the scope and complexity of the issue or decisions being made; how the issue or decision may affect stakeholders; and available District resources (time, funding, people).

SS:mmf