

DATE: April 19, 2016

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee Michael Janz

SUBJECT: Motion re Funding to Private or Charter Schools

REFERENCE: [Trustees' Handbook-Section 5.2.2-Notice of Motion News Article – August 8, 2008](#)

ISSUE

Notice of motion was served at the April 5, 2016, Board meeting.

Rationale

The Board of Trustees has had a long-standing position that public funding should not be spent on private or charter schools since the provincial government started providing public dollars to private schools in the 1990s and with the initiation of publicly funded charter schools in the 1990s. Both private and charter schools dilute the unity of the public education system, do not have the transparency and accountability of publicly elected school boards, and do not demonstrate an effective return on taxpayer dollars.

Last year, the Alberta Government allocated over 200 million dollars in public tax dollars to private schools in a per student allocation. It is unclear how much capital funding has been given to private and charter schools. Until this public subsidy was established, parents used to have to pay the full freight of tuition if they chose to opt-out of the public system for a private school.

Private and charter schools are segregated. The Board has held a long-standing belief that public education should be inclusive, open to all, and that every student deserves access to a good public school in their community. For example, our schools cannot reject a student because they are special needs. Private and charter schools can be selective of students that they accept.

Parent choice is respected within the public system. Charter schools were initiated as a temporary experiment that has not been repeated in any other province. With the advent of increased choice programs within public school districts, they have become redundant. Their programming is often offered within public school districts. Charters are not subject to the same oversight of publicly elected school boards as are Public, Catholic, or Francophone districts.

We believe that choice is possible within the public education system and that our District has successfully provided dozens of choice programs to students and families. Unfortunately, as a school district, we have lost the ability to tax or generate revenue as a school district, so we must advocate to the provincial government our needs for new schools, maintenance and operational funding.

While we acknowledge that private schools have a right to exist, we do not believe they have a right to a public subsidy. If a parent wants to choose a different program or educational journey, or even a

boarding school, that is their right to choose and pay for themselves. Giving public funding to these private organizations is just as troubling as giving public land or turning over assets to a private organization.

This motion would reiterate this belief and urge the provincial government to phase the public subsidy to private schools back to public schools. As a District, we would welcome any student currently attending a private or charter school back to our District.

Public education is the cornerstone of our democracy, and unites our society by ensuring all students regardless of income, faith, ethnicity, or any other difference are welcomed to study together and build understanding. Private and charter schools erode this unity.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board of Trustees reaffirm its commitment to the provincial government that public funding to private or charter schools be phased out and reinvested in public education.

NEXT STEPS:

Should the Board approve the recommendation; a letter will be sent to the Minister of Education by May 6, 2016.

MJ:mj