

speaking notes

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The Year Ahead

This year will no doubt be an interesting year ahead for the Board in working with government. I want to take a few moments to talk about that and share some thoughts with you about what we can expect for the Calgary Board of Education.

The Board of Trustees plays an important role within the CBE. The Board establishes the mission, results and values which provides clear expectations to Administration. Similar to the way that school councils work, the Board does not get involved in day-to-day operational decisions.

The Board of Trustees plays a lead role in connecting with government to ensure that our school board and government work as effectively and appropriately together as possible. I'd like to spend a few minutes today talking about this role.

The provincial government funds and sets the direction for education in Alberta. We work very closely with them on matters related to funding, curriculum and best practices.

In regards to funding, we are allotted operational and capital dollars. The operational budget covers salaries for all staff and resources to operate our schools. In addition, we are given capital funding to build new schools, modulars and modernize aging school facilities. We rely on the province for these funds and work closely with the Ministries of Education and Infrastructure when the funding is approved.

And as you know, we have a new premier and a new education minister. By-elections have been called.

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**Calgary Board
of Education**

Our premier Jim Prentice has been clear about his priorities for education in his mandate letter to Minister Dirks. Those priorities, as far as we can see, really build on the work the CBE has been doing over the last several years.

A key priority identified by the Alberta Government includes addressing the province's school shortage and providing school boards with long-term, predictable sustainable funding. We have had many conversations with parents, staff, community members and government asking for attention to be focused in these areas.

Another priority area for this government is revisiting changes to curriculum and developing strategies for higher student achievement. This is in addition to providing students with a solid foundation in the basics while developing other important competencies such as critical thinking, communication and innovation.

At the CBE, we are continually exploring different ways we can improve our practice and better prepare our students for their future. We recognize things are very different today than they were when we were all students of the same age. We need to be able to change with the times – for the sake of our students.

A final priority area identified by the government is the importance of creating safe and respectful environments for students. That is central to everything we do at the CBE. Every student has a place here and every student is unique. All our schools create inclusive environments that consider all students. This will look differently at each school because each school community is unique. A one-size-fits-all approach is not respectful and inclusive.

The CBE is aligned well with the provincial government's education priorities, however challenges still remain. This past year, this Board has provided a consistent message regarding the need for new schools to meet the growing number of students in Calgary along with predictable sustainable education funding. We want to remind you that the Board

made the difficult decision to utilize all of its operating reserves to balance the 2014-2015 budget. As a Board we have begun to inquire about the impact on schools should the budget remain the same next year.

On behalf of the Board, I want to remind you that you always have a voice. If you ever have concerns or questions about government decisions affecting education, you are welcome to contact your MLA directly.

Trustees have also worked quite closely with members of city council over the last few years. By connecting with one another, we have gained a better understanding of each other's priorities and challenges. We will continue to work together on behalf of what is best for students.

Another important relationship that the Board values and feels is critical is that of school councils as Judy indicated earlier this evening. Through the Council of School Councils, you have a voice that reaches beyond your school. These meetings are your chance to represent your school communities to the system. The majority of school council members are parents; you are really sharing the voice of parents with us. We encourage you to share your thoughts and ideas at these meetings. We are here to listen and to support you in the important work that you do. As trustees we are always open to attending one of your school council meetings. Please contact us directly and invite us. We would love to come and listen to how your school is doing, and share and communicate things that are of importance to you.