# Educational Governance Review Report

## Kindergarten to Grade 12

*By Dan Perrins*

Government of Saskatchewan

# Letter of Transmittal

December 10, 2016

Honourable Don Morgan, Q.C.
Deputy Premier and Minister of Education

Dear Minister Morgan:

On November 15, 2016 you asked me to develop a report providing options in response to the question "What system of governance and administration is needed in Saskatchewan's K-12 education sector to achieve the outcomes established by Saskatchewan's Plan for Growth and the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP)?" I am pleased to provide you with a report that offers four options. The report also describes the context and changing environment that has impacted education governance, outlining the key challenges and considerations used in developing and analyzing the options.

In the development of my report, 32 stakeholders who approached me for a conversation, including 19 school boards, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF), Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA), SSBA Public and Catholic sections and Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials (SASBO), as well as a parent group, the opposition education critic and members of the general public. While this was not a formal consultation because I did not discuss the options, in summary, the comments coming from the SSBA and the 19 school boards can be described as follows:

- Unanimous support for elected boards as the only effective way to represent the local voice;
- Unanimous support for no more amalgamation noting that the 2006 amalgamations have created school divisions that are large enough to achieve all significant economies of scale; additional outcomes will not improve student outcomes or result in other savings;
- Unanimous support for the ESSP noting that progress has been made since the plan was approved in April 2014 (September 2014 to August 2015 was the first year of implementing the ESSP) on reading levels and First Nations and Metis student graduation rates;
- Agreement that further progress on the sector plan would be lost due to the transfer of energy required to reorganize;
- Agreement that more can be done by the school divisions to find sector-wide efficiencies by working together; and,
- General agreement and acceptance that government may need to be more directive in requiring these sector-wide efficiencies to be realized.

Thank you for the opportunity to work on this important initiative.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Perrins

# Education Governance Options

## Purpose:

The purpose of this paper is to provide options in response to the question "What system of governance and structure is needed in Saskatchewan's K-12 education sector to achieve the outcomes established by the Saskatchewan Plan for Growth and the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP)?"

The Saskatchewan Plan for Growth recognizes the critical importance of education and has established two key targets for K-12 education:
- reducing the difference in graduation rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students by 50 per cent by 2020; and,
- leading the country in Grade 12 graduation rates by 2020.

As well, the Plan for Growth includes a commitment to "continue to deliver smaller, more effective government … as part of an ongoing process to ensure the programs and services delivered by government are being delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible and are aligned to the government's priorities.  [The government will] develop a two-year plan to require third parties that receive significant provincial funding such as health regions, school boards and post-secondary institutions to demonstrate financial efficiencies such as joint supply purchasing, shared back office services, LEAN initiatives and workforce adjustment targets that can be directed towards supporting front-line services" (*Government of Saskatchewan 2012*).

To meet current challenges and to prepare for the future, Saskatchewan's K-12 education system requires a governance system that is structured to:
- Achieve improved student outcomes in keeping with Saskatchewan's Plan for Growth and the ESSP;
- Maintain and improve the quality of instruction for all students, wherever they live;
- Achieve cost-containment by maximizing the use of resources;
- Ensure consistent, effective and efficient business processes;
- Improve accountability and transparency through clear lines of authority and responsibility; and,
- Preserve and strengthen parent and community voice.

## Education Sector Strategic Plan:

Plan for Growth targets are reflected in the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) outcomes, which were developed by the Provincial Leadership Team (PLT) in collaboration with the sector and launched in 2014:

- By June 30, 2020, 80 per cent of students will be at grade level or above in reading, writing and math.

- By June 30, 2020, collaboration between First Nations and Métis and non-First Nations and Métis partners will result in significant improvement in First Nations and Métis student engagement and will increase the three-year graduation rate from 35 per cent in June 2012 to at least 65 per cent.

- By June 30, 2020, Saskatchewan will achieve an 85 per cent three-year graduation rate.

- By August 31, 2020, implement a sector-wide approach to find efficiencies and increase value-add in order for the sector to be responsive to the challenges of student needs.

- By June 30, 2020, children aged 0-6 years will be supported in their development to ensure that 90 per cent of students exiting Kindergarten are ready for learning in the primary grades.

# Saskatchewan's Education System

## Structure:

Saskatchewan's system of education governance has its roots in Canada's Constitution, which gives responsibility for education to the provinces, except for First Nations students living on-reserve.  The Constitution also protects the rights of people of minority faith (i.e., Protestant or Catholic) and official minority language (i.e., French in Saskatchewan).

Saskatchewan's education system comprises 28 school divisions (18 public school divisions, 8 separate Roman Catholic school divisions, 1 separate Protestant school division and 1 francophone school division).  Each school division is governed by an elected board of education.  The overall student population is approximately 176,000.  In the 2016-17 school year, the total operating funding distributed to boards of education is $1.892 billion.  Appendix A provides an overview of Saskatchewan's school divisions, including their geographic size, number of board members, total spending on governance and administration, number of schools, number of teachers, student enrolment and number of other educational staff.

## Roles and Responsibilities in Saskatchewan's Education System:

Duties and powers are ascribed by legislation to the Minister of Education, Ministry of Education, Boards of Education and School Community Councils:

### Minister of Education:

*The Education Act, 1995* outlines the duties and powers of the Minister of Education to:
*   Establish the boundaries for public school divisions;
*   Establish the goals and objectives of the educational system;
*   Prepare and distribute recommendations and advice on the management of schools and school divisions;
*   Distribute funding to school divisions;
*   Establish regulations authorizing provincial courses of instruction;
*   Provide courses of study or curriculum guides pertaining to these courses;
*   Provide lists of prescribed or recommended curriculum resource materials; and,
*   Make regulations for the classification and certification of teachers.

### Ministry of Education:

As outlined in *The Ministry of Education Regulations, 2007*, the Ministry of Education provides the structure to carry out the powers, responsibilities and functions of the Minister of Education.  In addition to its roles related to early childhood, libraries and literacy, its role specific to K-12 education is:
*   To support the growth and development of children and youths;
*   To coordinate, develop, implement, promote and enforce policies and programs of the Government of Saskatchewan related to Kindergarten, elementary, middle and secondary French and English language education; and,
*   To coordinate, develop, implement, promote and enforce policies and programs of the Government of Saskatchewan related to developing curriculum for early childhood, Kindergarten, elementary, middle and secondary education; professional development of early childhood, Kindergarten, elementary, middle and secondary educators, e-learning and distance education.

*Boards of Education:*

Elected Boards of Education have responsibility to manage and administer the Prekindergarten to Grade 12 school system in their school divisions, within the regulations and guidelines set out by the Ministry of Education.  School boards are responsible for:
- Making budget decisions for the funding they receive and ensuring accountability;
- Establishing procedures for the management and supervision of schools;
- Providing and maintaining schools, equipment and facilities;
- Determining policies for staffing, including the number of teachers and other staff;
- Determining the grades offered in a school and the size of classrooms;
- Determining the programs that are offered (e.g., French Immersion, band); and,
- Making decisions about busing and transportation.

*School Community Councils:*

School community councils were established in 2006, replacing local boards of trustees and local school advisory committees. This followed the amalgamation of the 119 school boards to 28 over the 1995 to 2006 time frame.  School community councils are advisory bodies made up of elected and appointed parents and community members.  Their role is to engage parents and community members in school planning and to share responsibility for the success and well-being of all children and youth.  School community councils are tasked with developing a good understanding of their community, including its needs, resources, supports and goals for student learning and well-being.  They provide advice to the board of education, school staff and other organizations about the needs of their school community.

## Other Partners in Education:

Saskatchewan's provincial education organizations represent each of the major participants in the education system – boards of education, teachers, and administrators.

*Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA):*

The SSBA is a non-profit voluntary membership organization founded in 1915.  It defines its role as speaking as the collective voice of publicly funded school boards and ensuring advocacy, leadership and support for members of boards of education.  Its guiding principle is that public education is best governed by locally elected accountable boards of education.

It is a legislated corporation under *An Act to Incorporate the Saskatchewan School Boards Association*.  SSBA members elect an Executive with a President and Vice-President and one member from each of the following constituencies: Aboriginal, Catholic, Central, Conseil scolaire fransaskois, Northern, Southern, and Urban Public.

The SSBA employs 20 staff and provides direct services to boards, such as trustee education and board development, administrator development, legal services, employee relations, education and research, communications, an insurance plan and an employee benefits plan.  See http://saskschoolboards.ca.

*Saskatchewan Teachers Federation (STF):*

The STF has been the professional association for educators in the K-12 education system in Saskatchewan for over 80 years.  It has a membership of over 13,000 teachers and receives its mandate through *The Teachers' Federation Act, 2006.*

The STF provides programs, services and resources to support teachers to fulfil their professional roles and responsibilities, including opportunities for professional development, codes of conduct and competence; opportunities to participate in committees to contribute to the profession; advice (professional relationships, contracts, legal, pension and benefit plans), insurance (health, dental, disability and life), and collective bargaining at both the local and provincial levels as mandated in *The Education Act, 1995*. See https://www.stf.sk.ca/about-stf.

*League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents of Saskatchewan (LEADS):*

In existence since 1969 as an organization for senior educational administrators in Saskatchewan, LEADS was formally recognized through legislation in June 1984, when the Saskatchewan Legislature adopted *The LEADS Act*.  That Act determined that all educators employed by boards of education working in supervisory, administrative or similar capacities or who are regional directors of education must be members of LEADS.  In 1991, LEADS was granted legislative authority, and it remains the only Canadian organization of its type to register its members prior to their employment with a provincial school division.

LEADS maintains full disciplinary powers over its membership, and is governed by an elected executive chaired by a president.   A government-appointed public representative sits with the executive.

Membership requirements include successful graduate studies and a professional teaching certificate.  Associate membership is available to individuals who are employed in supervisory or consultative positions by the Ministry of Education, members of faculties of education, professional staff of the STF or the SSBA and others approved by the executive.  Offices are located in Saskatoon and staffed by the executive director and a full-time secretary (Nieman 2006). See saskleads.ca.

*The Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials (SASBO):*

SASBO is a professional organization to promote efficient school business management.  It is governed by an executive in accordance with *The Non-Profit Corporations Act, 1995*.

Its members include chief financial officers, superintendents, financial managers, Information Technology managers, procurement managers and other managers of business operations in school divisions.  There are also associate memberships and representative committees.  Fees are required.  SASBO has an executive director in Regina. See http://sasbo.com.

*First Nations and Tribal Councils:*

For First Nations students living on-reserve, K-12 education is under federal jurisdiction according to the Constitution.  First Nations organizations (band councils and tribal councils) take responsibility for operating on-reserve schools through contracts with the federal government.  Saskatchewan's provincial education system – at the ministry and school division levels has a strong history of partnerships with First Nations.  For First Nations students who live on-reserve but attend a provincial school, educational services agreements are established between boards of education and band councils.  In addition to these formal agreements,  an array of partnerships have developed.  Most recently the Invitational Shared Services Initiative supports 16 partnerships that share supports on- and off-reserve to ensure smooth transitions for students and to support improved education outcomes for all students.

# Interjurisdictional Context:

In general there are three levels of governance that characterize education in all Canadian provinces: the provincial ministry or department of education, school board, and school levels (*Lessard and Brassard 2005*).  Galway and Weins (2013) cite a number of trends in the past 20 years in the governance of education in Canada, including:
   - reduction in the number of school boards;
   - reduction in the number of school board members, as well as administrators and professional staff;
   - changes to board structure, such as replacing boards in New Brunswick with District Education Councils (DECs) in 2001;
   - Constitutional changes to move away from denominationally-based school boards;
   - increased emphasis on parent involvement in education governance and creation of school level councils;
   - reduced or eliminated taxation authority at the school board level; and,
   - centralized curriculum, provincially-defined learning outcomes and implementation of provincial and interprovincial assessments.

Garcea and Munroe (2014) described a series of reforms to the funding of primary and secondary education in the past 20 years, noting that Alberta, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and British Columbia have all moved to centralize authority for education funding and taxation. Conversely, in Manitoba both the provincial government and school boards have taxing authority.

An interjurisdictional scan completed in 2016 shows that all provinces have one or more boards representing minority language. Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario also have boards governing minority faith (separate) school divisions. Newfoundland replaced faith-based school boards with public school boards and Quebec replaced them with language based boards[1] in the 1990s. The number of school boards/districts by province varies greatly, from two in the Atlantic provinces of Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador (one English, one French), to 75 (37 public, 38 separate) in Ontario and 72 (60 French, 9 English and 3 special status) in Quebec, respectively. British Columbia is close behind with 60 (one francophone and 59 public). Saskatchewan has the lowest number in the prairie provinces with 28 (18 public, 9 separate and 1 francophone), while Manitoba has 37 (36 public and 1 francophone) and Alberta has 63 (42 public, 17 separate and 4 francophone), respectively. Appendix B provides an overview of education governance in all ten Canadian provinces.

Overall, Saskatchewan is most similar to Alberta, in terms of its composition of public, Catholic and francophone boards. In terms of geography, Alberta (661,848 km$^2$) and Manitoba (647,797 km$^2$) are the most comparable provinces with Saskatchewan (651,036 km$^2$). Manitoba and Saskatchewan are closest in student population (184,957 and 176,301 respectively). The following chart provides a brief overview of the education systems in the four western provinces. Overall, Saskatchewan has the lowest number of public boards, and the fewest board members.

| | BC | AB | SK | MB |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Land Mass | 944,735 km$^2$ | 661,848 km$^2$ | 651,036 km$^2$ | 647,797 km$^2$ |
| Number of Boards | 60<br>• 59 public<br>• 1 francophone | 63<br>• 42 public<br>• 17 separate<br>• 4 francophone | 28<br>• 18 public<br>• 9 separate<br>• 1 francophone | 37<br>• 36 public<br>• 1 francophone |
| Number of Board Members | 416 board members<br>• 409 public<br>• 7 francophone | 450 board members<br>• 307 public<br>• 119 separate<br>• 24 francophone | 252 board members<br>• 173 public<br>• 70 separate<br>• 9 francophone | 316 board members<br>• 305 public<br>• 11 francophone |
| Number of students (2015-16) | Total of 553,378 students in public and francophone schools | Total of 635,187 students<br>• 464,567 public<br>• 162,552 separate<br>• 8,068 francophone | Total of 176,301<br>• 134,664 public<br>• 40,034 separate<br>• 1,603 francophone | Total of 184,957<br>• 179,582 public<br>• 5,375 francophone |
| Taxation Authority | Centralized<br><br>Mill rate set by the province | Centralized<br><br>Mill rate set by the province | Centralized<br><br>Mill rate set by the province | Both the provincial government and school boards have taxing authority |

In Saskatchewan, the Separate (Catholic and Protestant) and francophone school divisions share the same land mass as the public school divisions. Assuming a comparable situation in Alberta and Manitoba, only the public school divisions have been considered within the comparison of land mass. Through a simple process of dividing the land mass by the number of public school divisions (recognizing that actual sizes will vary), the provincial average size of public school divisions for Saskatchewan (i.e., land mass per number of school divisions) is 36,200 km$^2$, for Alberta, 15,800 sq. km$^2$ and for Manitoba, 18,000 km$^2$. Saskatchewan's land mass per school division is approximately twice that of those in Alberta or Manitoba.

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[1] In 2015, Quebec introduced a Bill that would have removed minority-language (English) school boards but later withdrew the Bill in May 2016 due to significant concern among both English and French Language Boards.

For Saskatchewan, if the public school divisions that encompass single communities (i.e., Saskatoon Public, Regina Public, Ile à la Crosse, Creighton, and Lloydminster) are removed from consideration, Saskatchewan has 13 public school divisions that are relatively large.  The largest – Northern Lights School Division – covers over 322,000 km$^2$ (approximately half the province).  The remaining school divisions range from approximately 15,500 km$^2$ (Prairie Spirit School Division and Saskatchewan Rivers School Division) to close to 43,000 km$^2$ (Chinook School Division).

The majority of provinces have elected boards with four year terms and provisions for appointments by the Minister in the case of a vacancy.  Since August 2016, Prince Edward Island has an appointed board for the public sector, with three members, one of whom is the deputy minister.  In the past, Newfoundland and Quebec appointed or partially appointed boards and in the case of Newfoundland, a public referendum led back to elected boards.  Most provinces, however, have provisions to appoint members to the board in the case of vacancies.  Saskatchewan has no such provisions.

With respect to the numbers of board members, board composition is typically prescribed in legislation or regulations as a range per division or district or a number determined by the Minister.  The highest numbers of elected board members range from up to 22 in Ontario and as low as 3 in British Columbia and Alberta.

New Brunswick eliminated school boards altogether between 1997 and 2001.  In 2001, New Brunswick implemented District Education Councils (DECs).  DECs are made up of elected volunteer members.  DECs hire the superintendent for their school district, subject to the approval by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.  The Superintendent assumes responsibility for all other employees and therefore, the DEC does not have any authority related to principals, teachers or school employees.  DECs establish a District Education Plan, set policies within their authority under the Act, and monitor the performance of the school district.  The Superintendent is accountable for the overall performance of the district and is evaluated annually by the DEC according to the performance of the district.  This differs from most other provinces where the board of education has overall responsibility for the management and administration of the school division/district and delegates responsibility to the director of education or superintendent.

During the 2015-16 school year, the Government of Prince Edward Island (PEI) dissolved the English Language school board and established a Crown Corporation called the Public Schools Branch, governed by a three-person board of education, reporting to the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.  The Public Schools Branch is responsible for the day to day operations of 56 English language schools.  The new Branch was in operation in time for the 2016-17 school year.  The student achievement section of the former board was integrated into the department.  The French school board was unchanged.  Three new advisory councils (administrative bodies) were established to provide advice to the department, including eight Family of Schools District Advisory Councils, a PEI Principals' Council, and a PEI Learning Partners Advisory Council.

Although education legislation from one jurisdiction to the next varies in terms of it specificity, there are a number of duties and powers of boards that are common to most jurisdictions.  For the most part, boards must:
   • Submit an annual report and an annual budget to the ministry and provide any other information requested by government;
   • Exercise wise stewardship of the funds provided by government;
   • Hire administrators/staff for the school district and monitor/evaluate their performance;
   • Implement the education programs prescribed by the province;
   • Manage their schools;
   • Establish policies and procedures to guide operations in the school district;
   • Insure their school properties;
   • Manage student records;
   • Determine requirements in terms of school construction, maintenance and repair; and,
   • Promote student achievement.

## Student Achievement and Board Governance:

Performance measures of student achievement vary significantly across the country. Those who do well on Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) have elected boards and those who don't do as well also have elected boards. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) provides a few considerations when looking at the impact of board governance. School boards form only one element of the context in which learning occurs and thus it is challenging to isolate the impact of school board governance on student achievement. For example, provincial and/or federal actions, teacher education programs and the quality of classroom teaching, and students' socio-economic and family characteristics may significantly impact learning. There appears to be more research on broader questions of school leadership than there is research focused on the impact of school boards on learning. School boards create or contribute to the conditions in which teaching and learning occur in order to promote the most advantageous growing/learning environment.

# Two Decades of Changes to Improve Equity and Quality in Saskatchewan's Education System

Since the early 1990s, Saskatchewan has sought to improve equity and quality through a number of policy changes. The focus in Saskatchewan has traditionally been on achieving equity in taxation and equity in distribution of funding with a view to providing equitable access to education wherever a student may live.

## 1990 – 2003

In 1990, the Minister of Education commissioned the *School Finance and Governance Review* (1991) by Dr. Herve Langlois and Dr. Murray Scharf. They recommended that the size of school divisions in the province be increased to an average of 7,000 students in order to provide a full range of programs and services. Membership of the larger school divisions' boards would be from 11 to 15 members.

It is interesting to note that in 1993, the *Saskatchewan School Trustees Association Task Force on Educational Governance Final Report* recommended restructuring that would provide for about 35 public school divisions. Each division would have an enrolment of between 2,500 and 5,000 students, except where the population is sparse or dense. Each full service school divisions would be governed by an elected board responsible for system operations and educational outcomes. Local control and decision making would be enhanced through school level governance bodies.

Both studies concluded that school divisions should be restructured to strengthen their ability to provide a wide range of programs and services. Both reviews also called for an expanded role for parents in providing advice and participating in decision making at the school level (*Government of Saskatchewan 1996*).

In May 1996, the Minister of Education announced a public consultation process to determine how the education system should be structured to maintain and improve the quality of education, particularly in rural and northern Saskatchewan. The goal was to determine whether savings from structural change could be reallocated to support young people in the classroom. Key themes in the consultation were ensuring quality of education, readiness for change, importance of local determination, the need for strong government leadership, opportunities for parent and community involvement and building effective partnerships.

Following the consultation, government announced a leadership approach to encourage voluntary amalgamation of school divisions and published a Restructuring Guide and other supporting materials. The Guide described the full range of services expected of a school division and processes to use in developing partnerships and in moving toward restructuring. As a result of the process, the number of school divisions moved from 119 to 82 over the course of six years.

## 2003 - 2006

The Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education (The Boughen Commission) was established in May 2003 to engage the public and stakeholders in reviewing K-12 education financing, particularly related to the balance between provincial and school board contributions, the balance between the use of property tax and other sources of taxation for education funding, fairness and equity among the existing classes of property taxpayers, and the impact on education quality of school division fiscal capacity and variations in assessment and spending per student.  In order to reduce inequity in the K-12 financing system, one of the Commission's recommendations was to establish a task force to recommend revised boundaries to increase equity among school divisions and maintain local responsiveness and accountability.

Government responded to the Commission's report in May 2004 with a three phase program to renew the school system.  The three phases included renewing and restructuring the school divisions, developing a fairer system of funding and committing to a long-term solution to lowering education property taxes.

With respect to the restructuring component, government announced a three member Education Equity Task Force, which was to recommend new school division boundaries based on a map with no more than 40 school divisions, with no fewer than 5,000 students in each division, and to ensure that all divisions, based on their taxable assessment per student, would be eligible to receive funding under the then current foundation operating grant system (no zero-grant boards).  Equity of access to education programs and services and enhanced quality of education programming were among the key principles (*Government of Saskatchewan 2004*).

Based on the work of the Education Equity Task Force and voluntary amalgamation of separate school divisions, on January 1, 2006, the new school divisions were established, resulting in a map very similar to today's school divisions.

## 2007 - 2012

### Property Taxation:

In 2007, government committed to achieving a fairer balance of education funding, ensuring the education system was properly funded and significantly reducing the education portion of property taxes.  This commitment was met in March 2009 when, following extensive consultation by Legislative Secretary Jim Reiter, government announced a new system of funding PreK-12 education.  This new system reformed education financing by cutting and capping education property taxes by setting a uniform, province-wide tax rate for each class of property and increasing the provincial (general revenue) share of PreK-12 education funding to school divisions to offset the loss in tax revenues and offset other increased costs.

### New Funding Model:

With the changes to property taxation in 2009, the funding mechanism in place at that time could no longer be used (the Foundation Operating Grant / K-12 Operating Grant).   From 2009 through 2011, the ministry developed a new funding distribution model through a process involving sector input with various working groups and committees.  The PreK-12 Funding Distribution model (the model) was implemented for the 2012-13 school year.

This new model moved away from providing the majority of funds on a per-student rate and rather considered the operating costs of school divisions' major functions (e.g., instruction, transportation, plant operations, administration, etc.).  Formulas were determined for each of these areas.

The previous K-12 Operating Grant considered only a portion of education property tax revenue in its formula.  This resulted in fiscal disparity among school divisions depending on their local tax wealth.  The new funding model considers the full amount of education property tax, and equalizes it across the province such that school divisions no longer benefit from or are impaired by different levels of tax wealth.  This redistribution of tax wealth created funding shifts among school divisions; some of these shifts have still not been fully implemented due to continuing transition adjustments.

In 2015, government requested a review of the funding model to ensure it was working as intended. The Funding Model Review Committee was struck, which includes school division and ministry representatives. This review is nearly complete and will provide a number of recommendations to the Minister.

## 2012 - 2016

**Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) and the Provincial Leadership Team:**

Saskatchewan's ESSP (see page 3), launched in 2014, is the first province-wide plan to be developed through cooperation among all education partners. The Plan was not mandated by government. It was approved by the 28 boards of education and accepted by the Government of Saskatchewan. It is intended to provide a unified approach to education in order to meet the needs of all students. To provide leadership to the Plan, school division directors of education, leaders from First Nations and Métis education organizations and members of the Ministry of Education Deputy Minister's Office voluntarily work together as a Provincial Leadership Team (PLT).

The PLT was brought together as a new structure for directors of education to voluntarily plan and work together toward common outcomes. In the past, each school division and the Ministry of Education prepared its own strategic plan, independent of one another. The purpose of the PLT and the ESSP is to identify common priorities and focus resources toward achieving those priorities. Regular reporting and review is intended to promote mutual accountability and to develop corrective actions when strategies are not achieving the expected results.

Directors of Education in both the provincial education system and First Nations education systems take on leadership for specific outcomes and priorities. This represents a significant shift from the past where all action was focused within the school division. It has required directors of education and board members to begin to "think and act as one".

While the ESSP has been in operation for only two school years, good results have been achieved on one of the key priorities – improving reading at Grade 3. Since the initiation of the ESSP, all 28 school divisions are participating in Saskatchewan Reads and the percentage of students reading at grade level in Grade 3 has increased from 65 per cent in 2013 to 74 per cent in June 2016.

A second priority – Following Their Voices – an initiative that has been designed to improve First Nations, Métis and Inuit student outcomes, has been in full operation in 17 schools for only one full school year and is beginning to demonstrate small gains in student attendance, credit completion, on-time graduation and final marks in English language arts and math.

Recent conversations with board of education members from across the province demonstrate strong commitment to the ESSP, recognizing the value of working together toward a small number of key outcomes.

# Why Examine Saskatchewan's Education Governance and Structure?

Restructuring and changes to taxation and funding have impacted the role of boards of education and the role of the Minister in Saskatchewan's education system. With the restructuring, boards now operate larger, more sophisticated enterprises that offer a full range of services, manage budgets up to $250 million and employ staff up to 2,500. They have responsibility for decisions that impact the quality of education for their students.

The structural changes of 2006 have been fully realized. What the system has not yet accommodated are implications of the changes to taxation.

Government's decision to set education property tax mill rates also changed the relationship between boards of education and government from a Public Sector Accounting Board perspective. The change meant, according

to accounting standards, that there was sufficient evidence of government control to require that government consolidate the financial information of school divisions within its summary financial statements.  Since the school division financial statements must now be consolidated, the Provincial Auditor also now has a responsibility to review school division financial statements.  As a result, government became fiscally vulnerable to decisions legislatively delegated to locally-elected boards of education concerning expenditures, deficits and operational choices.  Deficits and debt incurred by school boards are now reflected as part of the provincial government's summary financial results.

Prior to 2009, there was a shared responsibility for how education was funded in that school boards could access the property tax base and set mill rates.  As identified earlier, this is no longer the situation in that the province is now responsible for this and, as such, through the funding model, is responsible for how education is funded. Notwithstanding this change, the relationship between the government and the boards has maintained the concepts of board unconditionality and autonomy.  This creates an ongoing tension whereby the Minister is held accountable to the public for overall spending and results, while boards of education control the human and financial resources within their school divisions.  In turn, the legislation, which was proclaimed in 1995, still supports school divisions' authority over expenditures.

Complicating this situation is the current financial situation in which the education sector is being asked to examine expenditures.  There is a need to examine the balance between local and provincial interests, within the context of improving results and containing costs province wide.

**Key Challenges:**

The following are some of the key challenges that bring to light the need to consider the legislation, structure and governance of Saskatchewan's K-12 education system:

## The K-12 Education System is Challenged to Achieve Broad-based Improvement in Student Achievement:

The Minister of Education has the authority to publish goals and objectives for the system but cannot directly impact the achievement of students.  The Minister must rely on the efforts of teachers, principals and administrators who are employed by boards of education to effect change.  Michael Fullan, in discussing whole system reform, speaks to the need for vertical and lateral accountability where direction concerning core goals comes from the centre and there is a partnership with the sector in pursuit of the goals.  Transparency of results and practice, monitoring and non-judgmental intervention are seen as essential to vertical accountability.  Capacity building, engagement and trust building across schools and regions, openness of sharing results in mutual allegiance and collaborative competition are seen as essential to lateral or horizontal accountability (*Fullan 2011*).

The implementation of the ESSP in 2014 brought school divisions together toward a common strategic direction and set of outcomes, targets and actions to achieve the Plan for Growth targets.  While every board has signed on to the ESSP and recent discussions with boards indicate commitment to the Plan, some boards and their administrators struggle with what they see as competing accountabilities.  They are accountable to the province to achieve outcomes, which requires common action and thinking as one system rather than 28 individual systems.  At the same time, boards see themselves as accountable to their electorate and their administrators see themselves as accountable to their employer (their board).  There is nothing in the legislation or regulations that mandates boards and their administrators to support other boards and their administrators in the achievement of collective results.  While the Minister has the authority to prepare and publish goals and objectives, the legislation does not clearly outline a duty or power to establish standards of performance or to assess the extent to which outcomes are achieved and standards are met.

Saskatchewan's performance on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) continues to lag behind other Canadian provinces.

PISA 2015:
- Science: Saskatchewan ranked last among the provinces.
- Reading: Saskatchewan ranked last among the provinces.
- Math: Saskatchewan ranked last among the provinces.

PCAP 2013:
- Science: Saskatchewan ranked 7th among the provinces.
- Reading: Saskatchewan ranked 8th among the provinces.
- Math: Saskatchewan ranked 6th among the provinces

In addition, Saskatchewan's three-year graduation rates[2] have plateaued, remaining between 73 and 75 per cent for the past 10 years.

## Each School Division has Broad Authority to Determine How to Allocate Resources to its Priorities:

Funding to school divisions is distributed in accordance with the PreK-12 Funding Distribution Model formula. The majority of the funding, with a few small exceptions, is provided unconditionally to boards. The formula is a means to distribute available funding but does not dictate to boards of education how it must be spent.

Specifically this means that boards make decisions on where to spend money and where to make reductions. The areas that they control include:

- Human Resources:
    o   Assignment of teachers;
    o   Compensation of out-of scope staff;
    o   Staffing levels and job descriptions;
    o   Absence management;
    o   Locally-negotiated teacher benefits; and,
    o   Locally-negotiated employment contracts.

- Administration:
    o   Procurement arrangements;
    o   Contracted services;
    o   Payroll administration;
    o   Accounts payable;
    o   Financial and audit services; and,
    o   Tuition fees and agreements.

- Transportation:
    o   Busing Policies;
    o   Bus procurement and maintenance;
    o   Fleet Services; and,
    o   Contracted services.

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[2] The three year graduation rate is the percentage of students that graduated within 3 years of becoming part of a Grade 10 cohort. Ministry of Education Student Data System.

- Schools:
  - o Grades and programs offered (e.g., K-12, split grades, French immersion, magnet programs, practical and applied arts, etc.);
  - o Student Services (speech language pathology, counselling, education psychologist, education assistants, etc.); and,
  - o Facility utilization policies.

Twenty-eight boards of education apply their judgement to the above categories with minimal provincial direction. As a result, decisions made by boards can result in students in one school division having a different educational experience from the students in the next school division depending upon the staffing decisions, the programs offered and the supports provided.

## The K-12 Education System is Challenged to Achieve Broad-based Efficiencies:

The provincial government has set an objective to ensure its programs and services are being delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible and are aligned to the government's priorities. Funding in 2016-17 for K to 12 education (operating and capital) accounts for approximately 16.5 per cent of government spending. Therefore, it is essential that the ministry work with the sector to achieve efficiencies. Through the ESSP, the sector determined it would implement a sector-wide approach to find efficiencies and increase value-add in order for the sector to be responsive to the challenges of student needs. The PLT set an efficiency target of $5 million (less than 0.3 per cent of spending) in accumulated savings by August 31, 2017. The November 9, 2016 wall walk results by school divisions show that the $5 million target has been surpassed with school divisions noting that $8 million in efficiencies were achieved by August 31, 2016. On November 22, 2016 the Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA) reported that school divisions have identified approximately $9 million in accumulated savings for the 2015-16 school year as well $6.4 million in planned reductions in FTE/positions and vacancy management during the school year.

In its Sector-wide Efficiencies Outcome Framework Document (April 2016), the PLT set out a plan to achieve the ESSP target for efficiency, noting that savings would be achieved through efficiency, shared services and continuous improvement initiatives. The framework states the intention of the outcome is "to identify and implement province-wide efficiency initiatives which will generate savings that can be retained by and redeployed by each school division." Efficiencies and shared services are expected to: lower the cost curve; create enhanced value in the system; and, improve services to students.

In the Framework, Directors of Education have collectively identified a number of priorities for province-wide efforts and used a heat map (below) to rank those that can be implemented quickly, with little effort and potentially less impact and those that will be more difficult and take longer to implement but have high impact.

# Efficiency Priority Heat Map
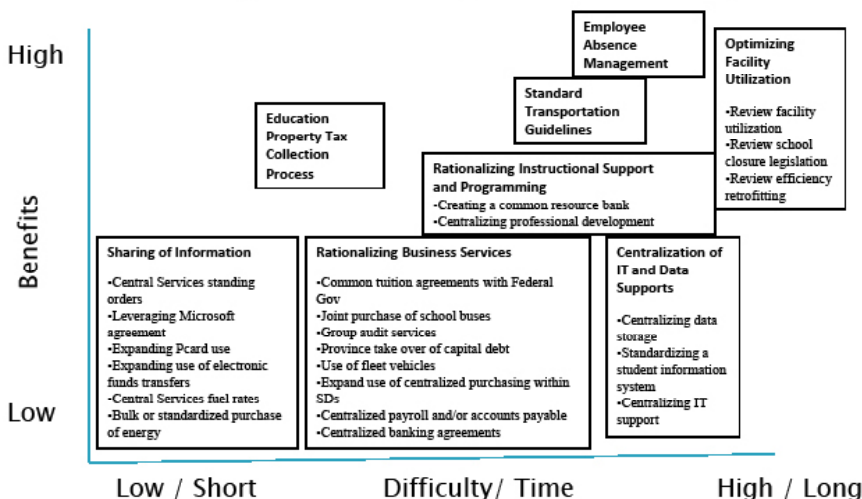


*Prepared by PLT Efficiency Outcome Leadership Team*

To date, only one province-wide efficiency has been achieved, which was the purchase of instructional software for math. Two province-wide initiatives were selected by the PLT – purchase cards (PCard) and absence management. For PCard, while most boards are participating, there are opportunities for broader use and higher rebates. The absence management project is in the development stages. There is scope for improved efficiency, particularly province-wide efficiencies, and recent conversations with boards indicate strong commitment to seeking efficiencies.

## Costs of Board Governance Are Determined Locally:

The education funding formula provides for the costs of governance, $11.3 million, or 0.6 per cent of total operational funding.

The cost of governance is driven by a number of factors determined both provincially and locally. The following are determined provincially:
- **Number of boards** – currently 28 – 18 public (determined by government), 9 separate and 1 francophone. Any change in the number of separate boards must be agreed to by the boards; and,
- **Number of board members** – prescribed by the Minister in keeping with the limits set by legislation (5 to 10) per board, currently 252 province-wide.

The following costs are determined by board policy and decision making:
- **Board remuneration and expenses** – determined by board policy;
- **Number of meetings** – *The Education Act, 1995* sets a minimum number of meetings; there is no maximum. Board policy and processes determine the number of meetings, which will vary greatly depending on the nature of the board, the efficiency of the decision-making processes and the issues the board is facing. Depending upon the formula for compensation (daily rate or annual allocation), the number of meetings can increase the cost of governance.
- **Role of the board members** – some board members make a number of school visitations and attend numerous school community council meetings, other boards have set requirements for the number of visits and processes for bringing school community council members and board members together in larger forums. Engagement with school community councils is key; however, the number of visits can increase governance costs in some cases.
- **Professional development** – boards make decisions to allocate resources to board development based on their policies or other rationale.
- **Supports to school community councils** – boards determine the level of financial and developmental support provided to school community councils.
- **Payments to the Saskatchewan School Boards Association** – these costs are determined by the budget set by the association and calculated using a formula based on student enrolment.

Below is a chart of remuneration for the education sector board members compared to other sectors.

**Samples of Governance Remuneration**

| | Annual Rate (range) | Daily / Meeting (range) |
|---|---|---|
| School Boards[3]<br>• Chair<br>• Member | <br>$25,549 – $31,000<br>$22,915 – $25,556 | <br>$235 - $361<br>$200 - $260 |
| Regional college[4]<br>• Chair<br>• Member | | <br>$155 - $264<br>$110 - $264 |
| Sask. Crowns (Tier 1)<br>• Chair<br>• Member | <br>$40,000<br>$25,000 | <br>$750 |
| Sask. Crowns (Tier 2)<br>• Chair<br>• Member | <br>$20,000<br>$14,000 | <br>$650 |
| Regional Health Authority<br>• Chair<br>• Member | <br>$9,960 | <br>$300<br>$200 |
| City Councillor[5]<br>• Councillor | <br>$17,756 - $54,886 | |
| Government of Saskatchewan Boards, Commissions and Committees<br>• High Responsibility Chair<br>• High Responsibility Member | | <br><br><br>$235<br>$155 |

## The Role and Capacity of Boards Is Not Consistent:

Despite a common set of duties and powers in *The Education Act, 1995*, recent discussions with boards of education indicate that the role boards articulate for themselves in relation to the role of their administrators varies with some boards taking a more strategic focus and others maintaining a more direct role in management of the school division. A survey by the Provincial Auditor in 2013 found that most boards discuss strategic matters. Most (93 per cent) indicated they discuss the goals and mandate of the school division on a regular basis and 82 per cent are able to focus on what really matters in improving education outcomes. At the same time, it appears that a number of the board members rely on the recommendations of their administrators when making decisions. For example, 31 per cent of board members and 51 per cent of executives indicated the board approves the strategic plan presented by management with few changes. Only 43 per cent of board members and 40 per cent of executives indicated that they think their board often challenges assumptions and rationale behind recommendations being made by management. About half of board members (47 per cent) and executives (56 per cent) think their board almost always agrees with management's recommendations. Regardless, overall, boards appeared satisfied with the level and detail of information received in order to make decisions, although there was an interest in more time to discuss financial and budget issues (*Provincial Auditor Saskatchewan 2013*).

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[3] Data from 8 school boards in Saskatchewan
[4] Data from 2 regional colleges in Saskatchewan
[5] Data from 4 cities in Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan's Provincial Auditor comments on the importance for boards to have a "sufficient level of knowledge and competencies in order to govern effectively." The auditor indicates boards must "understand their roles, responsibilities and the environment within which they operate". The competencies identified by the auditor include: leadership skills, board experience, education sector experience and financial expertise. While members who are elected to boards of education will typically possess a number of these skills, the auditor indicated that it is important to identify and address knowledge and competency gaps in order to govern effectively (*Provincial Auditor Saskatchewan 2015*).

To date, requirements for knowledge and competency of board members have not been prescribed by the province and the identification of board competency and skill gaps is left to the individual board. According to the Provincial Auditor's November 2013 survey of board members, almost all board members receive orientation to their role (*Provincial Auditor Saskatchewan 2013*).

## Relationships Between Boards of Education and School Community Councils Differ:

School community councils provide a critical opportunity at the school level for parents and community members to have a voice. Recent conversations suggest that boards have different relationships with their school community councils. This is supported by school division annual reports, which demonstrate varying levels of participation of school community councils in school level and division level planning. Several divisions outlined a process whereby school community councils play a role from the beginning stages of plan development, identifying priorities and actions, reviewing drafts and participating in year-end assessment. In some school divisions, the school level plan is presented to the school community council for review and feedback only, while in others the school community council is provided with the plan and develops parallel learning improvement goals and action plans or strategies to support the school plan. One division noted that its board invited school community councils to participate in a planning and feedback session leading to development of the division's three-year strategic direction.

The above analysis is not meant to be exhaustive but whichever option is adopted needs to address these key challenges.

# Considerations for Developing and Analyzing Options

In developing and analyzing options for governance and structure, consideration must be given to:
- Constitutional and Legal Considerations;
- Elements of Governance;
- Complexity and Cost of Achieving Change;
- Geographic Size and Sparsity; and,
- Means of Selecting Board Members (Elected or Appointed).

## Constitutional and Legal Considerations:

With the establishment of Saskatchewan as a province in 1905, the *1901 School Ordinances of the North-west Territories*, which set out the rights and privileges of religious minorities with respect to separate schools, were preserved. These provisions limit the authority of the province to make laws that might interfere with these rights and privileges. The religious minority may be Catholic or Protestant, depending upon the make-up of the population in a given area.

The francophone education system in Saskatchewan was developed in keeping with the rights of the linguistic minority included in section 23 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Constitutional provisions with respect to linguistic and religious minorities will need to be respected in any consideration of boundaries and structure.

Provision of education services in Lloydminster is negotiated with the Province of Alberta in *The Lloydminster Charter*. The affairs of the current Lloydminster public and Catholic school divisions (no matter which side of the border

the schools are located) are governed according to Saskatchewan's education legislation, regulations, policies and directives. Nothing in the *Charter* prohibits amalgamation of school divisions or revision of the boundaries of the Lloydminster school divisions; however, Alberta would not be responsible for any costs associated with those lands.

## Elements of Governance:

According to Saskatchewan's Provincial Auditor, "governance determines who has power, who makes decisions, how other players make their voices heard and how account is rendered. It refers to the structures and processes that direct, control and hold an organization to account. Management of an organization on the other hand, deals with the day-to-day operations of an organization within the directives established by the governing body (e.g., management implements board decisions, policies and strategies)" (*Provincial Auditor Saskatchewan 2015*).

According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "the governance system sets the parameters under which management and administrative systems will operate. Governance is about how power is distributed and shared, how policies are formulated, priorities set and stakeholders made accountable. It is separate from the management functions that run an organization in line with the broad goals and direction set by the governing body, i.e., it implements the decisions."

The OECD defines the key elements of good governance to be accountability, transparency and participation. The United Nations Development Program describes "good governance" as having eight characteristics that are referenced broadly in current literature – participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability and strategic vision.

### Principles of Good Governance for Assessing Options:

The following principles of good governance have been derived from a review of several frameworks of good governance in education and other sectors and provide some initial criteria for assessing the current state and options for change:

- **Strategic Direction:**
    - o    Clear vision of what is needed to achieve the goals of society and understanding the complexity involved in achieving the vision.

- **Effectiveness and Efficiency:**
    - o    Effectiveness is the capacity to achieve results; efficiency is the best use of resources.
    - o    Effectiveness of a board is dependent upon its capacity to act in accordance with the principles of good governance. Saskatchewan's Provincial Auditor notes the role and purpose, membership, structure, board culture, decision-making processes, knowledge and training opportunities, and internal and external relationships of boards will impact their effectiveness.

- **Accountability:**
    - o    The practice of accountability requires a clear understanding of the decision-making authority and who is accountable to whom and for what. This requires a clear articulation of roles and responsibilities, expectations and reporting requirements for results, effectiveness and efficiency.

- **Transparency:**
    - o    Transparency means that decision making processes and the rationale for decisions are accessible to those who are concerned with the decisions.

- **Participation:**
    - o    People who are impacted by decisions have an opportunity to have input either directly or through legitimate organizations or individuals that represent them.

- **Equity:**
  - o All have equitable access to services and derive equitable benefit from the expenditure of public funds on education.

## Complexity and Cost of Achieving Change:

The work of restructuring a large system, such as Saskatchewan's education system, is significant. Board members and their administrators report that, following the 2006 amalgamation of school divisions, administrative changes took from two to three years. More significantly, the process of creating the culture in the new divisions took four to five years. This challenge was also articulated in a research report by Jackie Kirk (2008) entitled An Examination of School Division Restructuring in Saskatchewan. It spoke of the difficulty in building a new culture and new relationships among old and new diverse school divisions and in achieving equity among employees and schools in the new school divisions. Respondents noted the importance of strong local leadership and the need for time and change management.

With the growth in the size of the school divisions, both board members and administrators noted they had to work at creating connections to schools and communities.

Given every school division has a number of locally negotiated employment contracts, a process to understand and review those contracts is a critical part of implementation for any changes.

In developing options, consideration needs to be given to how to mitigate the impact of restructuring, through effective change management and attention to the principles of good governance.

The focus of major changes in Saskatchewan's education system has been on improving equity both in terms of taxation and students' access to a full range of services and programs. There are costs associated with major restructuring in a system that must be borne before efficiencies or improvements are seen. For example, changes to the number of boards or board members can result in out-of-cycle school board elections (if the members are elected). It takes time to consolidate programs, services, contracts and agreements. Options will need to be assessed for the cost of implementation and the potential savings.

## Geographic Size and Sparsity:

Saskatchewan has a large land mass. Different areas of the province have different challenges in sparsity. For example, Chinook School Division covers 42,739 km$^2$ and serves 5,835 students. Northern Lights School Division covers 322,197 km$^2$ (close to half the province) and serves 4,206 students. Both geographic size and student enrolment must be considered when considering options for structures and boundaries.

## Means of Selecting Board Members (Elected or Appointed?):

When boards are elected, the public has a direct voice in their selection, which can lead to heightened civic engagement around issues. Elected members are accountable to the local community who voted for them to represent their constituency's values and interests. They are independent from the administration, which gives them a degree of freedom for their actions. Local control can be high and government direction setting is reduced. If the electorate is not satisfied with the performance of the board, they can replace the board at the next election. In conversations with boards, there was unanimous support for elected boards. Board of education members are elected every four years either at-large or by sub-division.

Elections for boards of education took place on October 26, 2016, voter turn out is not yet known. However, of the 252 board members in the province: 121 (48 per cent) were elected, 129 (51 per cent) were acclaimed and two positions (1 per cent) remained vacant. Of the elected members 52 (43 per cent) were newly elected and 69 (57 per cent) re-elected. Of the acclaimed members 27 (21 per cent) were newly acclaimed and 102 (79 per cent) were returning. The cost of elections in 2016 was approximately $1.4 million.

Given approximately half of board members are acclaimed, the issue of acclamation was raised with board members in recent discussions. Their response was generally that once they had put their name forward to run, if people were generally satisfied with the job they were doing, there was little interest among others to run for the position. The number of returning acclaimed members in 2016 provides some support for this position.

In conversations with board members, many identify a personal sense of commitment to children and schools. They note that, by running for a position, they have publicly stated that commitment and that the public has supported them by voting for them. They also note that if the public is dissatisfied with the job they have done, they can be removed at the next election. Even those who are acclaimed note that the process of putting their name forward to run, while not knowing whether others will run against them, demonstrates a public commitment to serve students. In board elections, the public choose the member and assess their skill, as they do in civic, provincial and federal elections.

Appointments allow for the application of a skills matrix and can ensure members have diverse backgrounds and a range of expertise such as knowledge of strategic planning, financial management, administration, human resources and programs and services. With appointed boards, local voice is diminished and government authority is increased. The appointed board is accountable to government. Their direction can be set more readily to align with the interests and values of the appointers. They can be relieved of their role if they do not fulfil their mandate or do not achieve desired results.

If appointment is considered, processes can be implemented to reach as broad and representative a public as possible. For example, the British Columbia government has implemented the Board Resourcing and Development Office, which is responsible for establishing guidelines and ensuring provincial appointments are made on the basis of merit following an open and transparent process.

# Options and Analysis

## Shifts in Governance:

To address the key challenges articulated earlier, and regardless of the structural option selected from those described below, the following shifts in governance should occur for the system as a whole (public, separate and francophone) to address the key challenges:

- **Strategic Direction and Accountability:**
    - o redefine the roles of the Minister in the legislation and regulations to enhance the ability to provide direction in relation to outcomes and standards and to assess the extent to which they are achieved;
    - o examine the number of members per board for public and separate systems;
    - o standardize expectations of boards in relation to required competencies of board members; require mandatory board training.

- **Effectiveness:**
    - o renew and strengthen the emphasis on education outcomes through an ongoing focus on the ESSP and consideration of an Education Quality Council with responsibility for monitoring system performance.

- **Efficiency:**
    - o enhance the focus on lowering the cost curve, creating enhanced value in the system, and improving services to students through efficiency, shared services and continuous improvement initiatives in keeping with the work already underway in the PLT (centralize business functions such as central IT, financial, HR, payroll, procurement and purchasing).

- **Consistency/Standardization:**
    - o  standardize governance costs, including remuneration rates, annual maximum remuneration for board members and rates for travel and sustenance (taking into account northern areas), professional development, and maximum number of board meetings;
    - o  standardize administrative costs, including consideration of a provincial pay grid for out-of-scope positions and standards for the number of central office staff in relation to school-based staff;  and,
    - o  consider additional standardization of locally-bargained terms and conditions.

- **Participation:**
    - o  reinforce the value of school community councils; and,
    - o  enable First Nation representation on boards.

These shifts in governance will require amendments to legislation, regulations and ministry policy.

## Options

The following options are directed to public school divisions although voluntary consolidations could be considered by the separate school divisions to align more closely with the public system.  All of the options presented will have the effect of shifting the balance of government direction and community input.  Each will require substantial change, with some requiring more change than others.  In each of the options presented below, the board could be either elected or appointed.

### Option 1:  Provincial Model

Consolidate 18 existing public boards of education into a single provincial public school board with responsibility for management of all 606 of the public schools in the province.  The public board would report to the Minister of Education.

Implement a provincial advisory body to the Minister of Education comprised of members of the public, Catholic, Francophone education systems and First Nations and Métis representatives (and North).

Implement an Education Quality Council reporting to the Deputy Minister of Education.  The Council would focus on measurement of education system performance, including student outcomes, to monitor progress of the ESSP toward the Plan for Growth 2020 targets.

Implement an entity to drive sector-wide operational efficiencies, something similar to 3SHealth.

The public board of education would have members with competencies and expertise as identified by the Provincial Auditor including leadership skills, board experience, education sector experience and financial.  These competencies could be acquired by application of a skills matrix and provision of board training.

The board would hire a CEO to manage the education and business functions.  Four to six regional service areas would be established to provide support to the board of education through the CEO.  They could align with health services and with current school division boundaries to the extent possible.  The regional structures would:
- report to the CEO;
- be led by a regional director of education and include a financial manager, superintendents and other education professionals;
- establish procedures for the management and supervision of schools within the regions;
- develop a human resource plan to determine policies for staffing, including the number of teachers and other staff (administration, superintendents, educational supports and consultants, operational supports);
- develop administrative procedures for operation and administration of schools, programs, transportation and facilities;

- maintain schools, equipment and facilities; and,
- oversee data collection and provide reports to the Education Quality Council.

In accordance with provincial standards and policies, the role of the board of education would be to:
- Support the goals and align with the ESSP;
- Prepare and administer a budget;
- Oversee determination of staffing levels;
- Determine program and service levels to respond to community needs and interests;
- Oversee maintenance of facilities;
- Oversee provision of transportation services in keeping with provincial standards;
- Publicly report on expenditures and performance in relation to provincially determined outcomes and objectives;
- Support school community councils; and,
- Report regularly to the Minister of Education.

## Benefits and Challenges:

The key benefits of this model are strategic direction, effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and transparency. The key challenge is that this model has not been implemented in an education system of this size (geography and number of schools); as such, there is no precedent.  Note: While Prince Edward Island has gone in this direction, as a province, it is smaller in geography, enrolment and number of schools than most public school divisions in Saskatchewan.  In addition, significant challenges will be found in concerns about equity, cost and complexity, and participation.

| Benefits | Challenges |
|---|---|
| **Strategic Direction:**<br>• Strategic direction and provincial standardization would be streamlined and unified after the transition period is complete. | **Strategic Direction:**<br>• During the transition period, a focus on restructuring may compromise the focus on student outcomes in the Plan for Growth and ESSP.<br>• Engagement of 606 schools and school community councils in the development of the strategic plan. |
| **Effectiveness:**<br>• There is greater opportunity for sharing and implementing effective practices and results from one regional service area to another.<br>• Once in place, implementation of future direction or change would be simplified.<br>• Health services can be considered when developing regional service areas for education.<br>• There is a greater opportunity for recruitment, retention and succession planning in a provincial model. | **Effectiveness:**<br>• The time and energy required to accomplish the change will impact effectiveness in the shorter term. |
| **Efficiency:**<br>• Over time, this option is likely to improve efficiency, although the extent of efficiencies and the effectiveness is difficult to pre-judge.<br>• Governance and senior administrative costs would decrease. | **Efficiency:**<br>• To maximize the sector-wide efficiencies while working through the governance and administrative changes. |

| Benefits | Challenges |
|---|---|
| **Accountability:**<br>• Accountability and reporting processes would be simplified.<br>• More accountable to government.<br>• Continued accountability to the community is through the school community council. | **Accountability:**<br>• Reduced local accountability given provincial focus of the board.<br>• Loss of independence of board members if they are appointed. |
| **Transparency:**<br>• One entity provides for improved transparency through greater consistency and standardization of policies and procedures. | **Transparency:**<br>• Reduced communication between the board and community.<br>• The public's access to the decision makers would be reduced. |
| **Equity:**<br>• The funding distribution model is designed to provide equity in resources across the system. | **Equity:**<br>• The public system would be very different from the separate school divisions in terms of size, capacity and structure.<br>• Demonstrating equity between urban and rural schools will be difficult with one board.<br>• A number of minority faith divisions could be constituted in an attempt to maintain their local voice. |
| **Participation:**<br>• Centrality of school community councils. More direct link of school community councils to decision makers results from the flatter organization structure.<br>• Board knowledge and expertise will need to reflect urban, rural and northern needs and interests. | **Participation:**<br>• With just one board, the public is more likely to seek redress from MLAs and government.<br>• Participation in governance will be a challenge and parents and families in the public system would have different access to board members than in the separate and francophone system.<br>• A plan will be needed for First Nations representation.<br>• The board will be significantly removed from the community and school.<br>• It would be difficult to elect a board at the provincial level. |
| **Cost and Complexity:**<br>• Once it is operational, the 'one board' model is less costly and less complex than the current state. | **Cost and Complexity:**<br>• The cumulative effect of the change described above in a year where budget constraint is expected.<br>• Implementation costs for human resource implications will be significant , particularly in relation to combining negotiated agreements without substantial costs.<br>• A plan will need to be developed to ensure negotiation of agreements with First Nations while respecting First Nations control of education on-reserve.<br>• Numerous agreements with other entities will need to be renegotiated.<br>• It will take significant time and energy to fully implement this option.<br>• During the transition phase, the anxiety created by this level of change will impede functioning at all levels. |

## Option 2:  Regional Model

Another option is to establish four regional public boards of education, accountable to the Minister of Education. Regional boundaries would be established by the Minister following consultation and could consider health services to the extent possible.

Each board would represent a geographic area, and would be responsible to:
- Hire a CEO (director of education);
- Support the goals and align with the ESSP;
- Prepare and administer a budget;
- Oversee determination of staffing levels;
- Determine program and service levels to respond to community needs and interests;
- Oversee maintenance of facilities;
- Oversee provision of transportation services in keeping with provincial standards;
- Publicly report on expenditures and performance in relation to provincially determined outcomes and objectives;
- Support school community councils; and,
- Report regularly to the Minister of Education.

Similar to Option 1, there would be an Advisory Committee to the Minister, an Education Quality Council and an entity for coordination of sector-wide efficiencies, shared services and continuous improvement.

## Benefits and Challenges:

This option would have many of the benefits and challenges assigned to the provincial model.  The key benefits of the regional model, in comparison, would be improved participation and opportunity for community/regional input, greater transparency through improved communication between communities and boards, and enhanced local accountability.  The challenges would be comparable and would include some increase in governance and administrative costs relative to Option 1.

## Option 3:  Division Model

These division model options present less disruption to the system than Options 1 and 2, and provide an opportunity for choice in the way boards are selected and still result in some of the benefits of the provincial and regional model.

## Option 3A: Restructuring Public School Divisions

The current school division boundaries were determined more than ten years ago.  With changing demographics, changes to legislation and taxation, and with a view to the future, a review of the current structure is appropriate.  If more school divisions than in Options 1 and 2 are to be maintained, the shifts in governance described on page 20 are critical to this option achieving efficiencies and improved student outcomes.

This option is an evolution of the thinking/the track the province has been on since 1996 where small school divisions were consolidated in order to improve access to services and supports for students.

Critical to this option succeeding is the implementation of an entity to drive sector-wide operational efficiencies, something similar to 3SHealth, with mandated school division participation.

Create new boundaries for between eight and 14 public school divisions using the following criteria as a guide:
- A balanced number of students served within each school division with a minimum of 5,000 students, except where the geographic size exceeds 43,000 km$^2$.  Population projections should be taken into consideration.
- All existing public school division boundaries will be considered for potential realignment.
- Existing attendance areas will be taken into account.  Where possible, attendance areas for each school come into the new school division "whole".
- School divisions would be structured for effectiveness and efficiency to ensure students receive maximum benefit.
- Transportation routes and natural barriers will be considered.   It is important to consider all weather transportation routes within the school division for each student based on their residence.  It is also important to consider if the boundary changes result in increased traffic and access risks with new transportation routes. Bridge accesses, park boundaries, lakes and other natural barriers cannot result in school division staff or

students requiring transport to another division to access their school.
- Community trading patterns, communities of interest and health-care seeking patterns will be considered.
- Partnership agreements will be preserved (e.g., partnerships with First Nations education organizations, industry, justice and health facilities and community based organizations).
- School community councils will continue as the mechanism to ensure a local voice in the school learning program.

**Benefits and Challenges:**

| Benefits | Challenges |
|---|---|
| **Strategic Direction:**<br>• When combined with the shifts in governance outlined on page 20, there will be an increase in government capacity to direct change. | **Strategic Direction:**<br>• Will require more time to facilitate cooperation and achieve consensus among the number of partners. |
| **Effectiveness:**<br>• When combined with the shifts in governance outlined on page 20, there will be a greater opportunity to achieve outcomes.<br>• Boundary configuration can take health services into consideration. | **Effectiveness:**<br>• Will require more time to facilitate cooperation and achieve consensus among the number of partners. |
| **Efficiency:**<br>• Efficiencies in governance and administration will be achieved; however, it will take time to complete the transition of administrative changes before any efficiency can be achieved.<br>• Current boards of education understand the need for change to create enhanced efficiencies and have expressed willingness to make modifications to current business practices (at least in transition). | **Efficiency:**<br>• While boards understand the need for change and are currently willing to make those changes, there is a risk that the willingness will diminish if government does not implement the shifts in governance on page 20 and does not establish an entity to manage sector-wide efficiencies, shared services and continuous improvement. |
| **Accountability:**<br>• Retains local accountability.<br>• Board oversight of management would be greater than in Option 1 or 2. | **Accountability:**<br>• The tension between accountability to local electors and accountability to government for outcomes will remain, although will be mitigated by shifts in governance outlined on page 20. |
| **Transparency:**<br>• Better communication between the board and communities.<br>• Access to the decision makers is better than in Options 1 and 2.<br>• Standardization of policies and procedures will improve transparency. | **Transparency:**<br>• Much like the current state, this option has the risk of insufficient information at the provincial level. |
| **Participation:**<br>• Local voice will be stronger in this option than in either 1 or 2. | **Participation:**<br>• Communities may still feel their voice has been diminished. |
| **Equity:**<br>• The funding distribution model is designed to provide equity in resources across the system.<br>• All public school divisions would have more capacity.<br>• The public system would be similar to the separate school divisions in terms of size, capacity and structure. | **Equity:**<br>• Demonstrating equity between urban and rural schools will be similar to the current state. |

| Benefits | Challenges |
|---|---|
| **Complexity and Cost:**<br>• This option will be more acceptable to education stakeholders than Options 1 or 2.<br>• There will be less disruption to the system than in Options 1 or 2; however, more than Option 3B. | **Complexity and Cost:**<br>• There will be disruption at the school division and local community and school level through organizational changes, although fewer communities may be affected than in Options 1 or 2. Previous amalgamations demonstrated an extended period is required for full transition.<br>• This option does not assume the boards will remain the same, particularly since there may be fewer members on the boards, fewer boards or appointed boards. |

## Option 3B: Realigning Boundaries

Implement boundary changes where realignment will support local community needs and interests. For example, traffic patterns, health care seeking patterns, single-school school divisions, areas surrounding Saskatoon and Regina and northern Saskatchewan could be considered. Shifts in governance and provincial standards as outlined on page 20 will be introduced. The new boundaries would be determined by government following consultation.

Implement an entity to drive sector-wide operational efficiencies, something similar to 3SHealth, with division participation mandated.

Similar to Option 3A, if more school divisions are to be maintained, the shifts in governance described on page 20 remain critical to these options.

**Benefits and Challenges:**

| Benefits | Challenges |
|---|---|
| **Strategic Direction:**<br>• When combined with the shifts in governance outlined on page 20, there will be an increase in government capacity to direct change. | **Strategic Direction:**<br>• Following completion of the transition, developing and implementing new practices will require more time to facilitate cooperation and achieve consensus among the number of partners.<br>• The transition period to implement the changes contemplated by this option will be shorter. |
| **Effectiveness:**<br>• When combined with the shifts in governance outlined on page 20, there will be a greater opportunity to achieve outcomes.<br>• Boundary configuration can take health services into consideration. | **Effectiveness:**<br>• Will require more time to facilitate cooperation and achieve consensus among the number of partners. |
| **Efficiency:**<br>• Current boards of education understand the need for change to create enhanced efficiencies and have expressed willingness to make modifications to current business practices (at least in transition). | **Efficiency:**<br>• While boards understand the need for change and are currently willing to make those changes, there is a risk that the willingness will diminish if government does not implement the shifts in governance on page 20 and does not establish an entity to manage sector-wide efficiencies, shared services and continuous improvement.<br>• Fewer efficiencies in governance and administration will be achieved. |

| Benefits | Challenges |
| --- | --- |
| **Accountability:**<br>• Retains local accountability.<br>• Board oversight of management would be greater than in Options 1, 2 or 3A. | **Accountability:**<br>• The tension between accountability to local electors and accountability to government for outcomes will remain, although will be mitigated by shifts in governance outlined on page 20. |
| **Transparency:**<br>• Better communication between the board and communities.<br>• Access to the decision makers is better than in Options 1, 2 and 3A.<br>• Standardization of policies and procedures will improve transparency. | **Transparency:**<br>• Much like the current state, this option has the risk of insufficient information at the provincial level. |
| **Participation:**<br>• Local voice will be strongest in this option. | **Participation:**<br>• Communities may still feel their voice has been diminished. |
| **Equity:**<br>• The funding distribution model is designed to provide equity in resources across the system.<br>• The public system would be similar to the separate school divisions in terms of size, capacity and structure. | **Equity:**<br>• Demonstrating equity between urban and rural schools will be similar to the current state. |
| **Complexity and Cost:**<br>• This option will be more acceptable to education stakeholders than Options 1, 2 or 3A.<br>• This will have the least disruption to the system. | **Complexity and Cost:**<br>• There will be disruption at the school division and local community and school level through organizational changes, although fewer communities may be affected than in Options 1, 2 or 3A. Previous amalgamations demonstrated an extended period is required for full transition.<br>• This option does not assume the boards will remain the same, particularly since there may be fewer members on the boards, fewer boards or appointed boards. |

# Appendix A: Overview of Saskatchewan School Divisions (2014-15)

| School Division | Geographic Size (SQKm) | Number of Board Members | Audited Financial Statements | | Other Stats | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | Governance $ (net of amort and SCC costs) | Administration $ (net of amort) | Schools | Teachers | Enrolment | Other Ed staff |
| **PUBLIC** | | | | | | | | |
| Chinook | 42,739 | 10 | 388,244 | 3,095,103 | 61 | 475.3 | 5,938 | 292.6 |
| Creighton | 952 | 5 | 127,745 | 402,801 | 1 | 32.4 | 430 | 18.5 |
| Good Spirit | 23,826 | 11 | 477,568 | 2,694,658 | 29 | 424.6 | 6,146 | 161.1 |
| Horizon | 30,976 | 14 | 685,000 | 4,163,316 | 41 | 478.9 | 6,291 | 225.1 |
| Ile-a-la Crosse | 503 | 7 | 91,457 | 425,558 | 2 | 31.0 | 384 | 13.8 |
| Living Sky | 25,146 | 10 | 405,834 | 2,564,849 | 30 | 376.4 | 5,554 | 285.2 |
| Lloydminster | 42 | 7 | 198,998 | 2,035,051 | 10 | 269.7 | 3,986 | 113.3 |
| North East | 30,576 | 10 | 339,787 | 2,200,889 | 22 | 315.3 | 4,874 | 147.7 |
| Northern Lights | 322,197 | 9 | 648,077 | 3,061,808 | 20 | 318.1 | 4,182 | 202.9 |
| Northwest | 24,081 | 11 | 336,391 | 2,697,521 | 24 | 344.5 | 4,718 | 162.7 |
| Prairie South | 32,755 | 10 | 464,764 | 3,143,585 | 41 | 463.3 | 6,597 | 230.7 |
| Prairie Spirit | 15,510 | 12 | 566,506 | 3,664,770 | 45 | 649.1 | 10,395 | 324 |
| Prairie Valley | 23,605 | 11 | 630,341 | 3,745,095 | 39 | 552.2 | 8,090 | 263.7 |
| Regina | 182 | 7 | 447,050 | 6,066,564 | 54 | 1458.0 | 21,160 | 425.9 |
| Saskatchewan Rivers | 15,636 | 10 | 591,589 | 3,749,650 | 32 | 540.5 | 8,446 | 349.9 |
| Saskatoon | 217 | 10 | 741,120 | 6,330,347 | 58 | 1500.0 | 22,819 | 437.2 |
| South East Cornerstone | 29,383 | 10 | 482,705 | 3,375,591 | 39 | 544.4 | 8,043 | 300.3 |
| Sun West | 31,221 | 9 | 351,895 | 2,817,264 | 40 | 333 | 4,718 | 192 |
| **SEPARATE** | | | | | | | | |
| Christ the Teacher | 4,401 | 10 | 203,060 | 1,268,211 | 9 | 113.3 | 1,666 | 54.3 |
| Englefeld* | 268 | 5 | 17,445 | 91,589 | 1 | 8.6 | 103 | 2.5 |
| Holy Family | 6,612 | 10 | 160,557 | 1,106,307 | 5 | 74.8 | 1,218 | 38.1 |
| Holy Trinity | 157 | 8 | 230,640 | 1,476,873 | 9 | 145.2 | 2,030 | 63.8 |
| Light of Christ | 108 | 7 | 227,130 | 1,308,819 | 7 | 129.2 | 1,933 | 48.0 |
| Lloydminster | 42 | 7 | 185,616 | 1,403,477 | 6 | 141.8 | 2,468 | 81.3 |
| Prince Albert | 1,963 | 7 | 225,805 | 1,512,672 | 9 | 181.0 | 2,955 | 79.7 |
| Regina | 182 | 7 | 678,351 | 3,745,448 | 30 | 683.8 | 10,562 | 123.0 |
| St. Paul's | 4,243 | 10 | 831,960 | 6,062,661 | 45 | 1,013.5 | 16,193 | 422.6 |
| **FRANCOPHONE** | | | | | | | | |
| Conseil des Écoles Fransaskoises | 36,944 | 8 | 218,116 | 2,722,488 | 13 | 161.3 | 1,649 | 84.0 |
| **TOTAL** | 704,467 | 252 | 10,933,751 | 76,932,765 | 722 | 11758.7 | 173,548 | 5144.3 |

From Annual Reports of all Saskatchewan School Divisions.

| Province | Number of Boards | Student Population (2015-16, except where noted) | Taxation Authority | Composition |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **BC** | 60 total<br>• 59 public<br>• 1 francophone | 553,378<br>(in public and francophone schools) | Centralized | Board consists of 3, 5, 7 or 9 members as determined by order of the Minister.<br>Elected for a 4 year term. |
| **AB** | 63 total<br>• 42 public<br>• 17 separate<br>• 4 francophone | 635,187<br>454,577 public<br>182,552 separate<br>4,058 francophone | Centralized | The Minister specifies the number of members for each board; it cannot be less than three.<br>Elected for a 4 year term. |
| **SK** | 28 total<br>• 18 public<br>• 8 separate (Roman Catholic)<br>• 1 separate (Protestant)<br>• 1 francophone | 176,301<br>134,664 public<br>40,084 separate<br>1,605 francophone | Centralized | The Minister specifies the number of board members within the range of 5-10 members.<br>May be increased by 1 to include an elected representative of a First Nation that has an education services agreement.<br>Elected for a 4 year term. |
| **MB** | 37 total<br>• 36 public<br>• 1 francophone | 184,957<br>179,582 public<br>5,375 francophone | Decentralized | 5 to 9 members<br>Elected for a 4 year term. |
| **ON** | 75 total<br>• 37 public<br>• 38 separate (8 French)<br>• 11 additional school authorities manage special types of schools | 2,003,237<br>1,901,39 English<br>101,308 French<br>(2014-15) | Centralized | 5 to 22 members according to a formula in the regulations<br>Elected for a 4 year term. |
| **QC** | 72 total<br>• 60 French Education Councils<br>• 9 English<br>• 3 special status boards | 1,183,490<br>(private and English Schools) | Centralized | 8 to 18 commissioners<br>Elected for a 4 year term. |
| **NB** | 7 District Education Councils<br>• 4 anglophone<br>• 3 francophone | 97,912<br>69,046 English<br>28,866 French | Centralized | 7 to 13 members.<br>Elected for a 4 year term. |
| **NS** | 8 total<br>• 7 English Language School Board<br>• 1 French | 118,152 | Centralized | 5 to 18 Members<br>Elected for a 4 year term. |
| **PEI** | 1 French Language School Board<br>Public Schools Branch governed by Board of Directors administers English Language Schools | 19,691<br>18,942 English<br>349 French | Centralized | The French Language School Board has 9 members.<br>The Board of Directors for the Public Schools Branch has 10 members.<br>Elected for a 4 year term. |
| **NL** | 2 total<br>• 1 English<br>• 1 French | 64,413<br>64,064 English<br>348 French | Centralized | The English Language School Board has 14 members.<br>The French Language School Board has 3 directors.<br>Elected for a 4 year term. |

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