

Educational Governance Advisory Panel Review

Kindergarten to Grade 12

Prepared by the Educational Governance Advisory Panel
March 2017



Letter of Transmittal

March 20, 2017

Dear Minister Morgan:

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you as members of the Educational Governance Advisory Panel. Each of us approached this role with interest and some trepidation. We were aware of the magnitude of the responsibility we had been given – to authentically engage Saskatchewan people on a topic that is deeply rooted in the history of our province. We appreciated your assurances that this was an authentic process and that there was no pre-determined outcome. We took to heart your instruction that we were to “act independently of any stakeholder organization, to listen objectively to input on the information and options provided in the *Educational Governance Review Report* prepared by Dan Perrins,” and to report our findings to you.

We have been overwhelmed by the passion of Saskatchewan people for education. It is clear that Saskatchewan people want the very best for all of our children. It is also clear that, while there are many ways we can improve our education system, the current structure of elected boards of education is favoured over any model that would move decision making further from families, schools and their communities.

Dan Perrins’ Report and this consultation process have created an opportunity. It is an opportunity where we can choose to dwell on what is wrong or choose to move toward an even better education system. From listening to boards of education, stakeholder organizations and educators, and hearing from parents, school community councils (SCCs), students and the public through their online submissions, we recognize that our education sector is at varying levels of performance in governance, administration, operations and in achieving student outcomes. Moving forward and becoming a high performing sector will require some significant shifts. These shifts may not require radical change in the number of boards or in the way they are selected but in governance practices, roles, relationships and accountability.

We heard strong commitment to a number of shifts that we believe will serve to move the sector forward:

- Build upon the momentum created by the Education Sector Strategic Plan, ensuring a Student First focus on improved outcomes, increased cooperation, mutual accountability and increased effectiveness and efficiency;
- Clarify roles and responsibilities of the Minister, ministry, boards, administrators, SCCs and principals through new legislation, regulations, policy and improved communications to provide stronger direction to the sector for change in current practices and culture;

- Move all boards of education to a level of size and effectiveness that is commensurate with their responsibility for governing complex, multi-million dollar operations while focusing on both local and provincial priorities;
- Strengthen the education sector by identifying excellence and effective practices and ensuring continuous improvement throughout the system;
- Continue to pursue efficiencies with a view to improving services, ensuring value and controlling costs, while minimizing the impact on teaching and learning;
- Improve consistency and equity across the province by examining policies, procedures, costs and agreements;
- Examine school division boundaries in northern Saskatchewan and in other areas of the province with boards of education and communities. Appreciation for the cultural complexities of the north must be considered when reviewing boundaries; a “southern solution” may not be as successful; and,
- Explore with First Nations and Métis people and organizations ways to engage with them while respecting jurisdiction and their ways of governance and education.

We would be remiss not to mention the significant level of concern within the sector regarding potential amalgamation of school divisions. Although this review was about governance rather than boundary changes, the two concepts were difficult to separate. Some participants suggested to the Panel that the review itself was distracting the sector from its day-to-day operations and from forward planning. We would encourage government to come to a decision as soon as possible to assist the sector to move forward proactively.

We have also heard tremendous will to work toward a better education system for Saskatchewan. Achieving this will require leadership throughout the sector to take the opportunity presented and build upon the momentum that exists to create the education system our students deserve.

Respectfully,



Ray Morrison, Chair



Duane Favel



Janet Foord



Ben Grebinski



Doug Moen



Leanne White

Educational Governance Advisory Panel Members

Contents

- Mandate and Process 1**
- What We Heard4**
 - Key Themes..... 4
 - Shifts in Governance 13
 - Response to the Options in the Educational Governance Review Report21
 - Other Considerations and Complexity23
- Concluding Comments26**
- Moving Forward27**
- Appendix A: Summary of the Input from the Online Portal30**
 - Online Portal30
 - Online Respondents.....31
 - Content of the Online Submissions.....36
- Appendix B: Consultation with Groups and Organizations43**

Mandate and Process

On December 21, 2016, the Honourable Don Morgan, Minister of Education, announced a six person Educational Governance Advisory Panel (the Panel) to consult on the *Educational Governance Review Report* prepared by Dan Perrins (the Perrins Report). The Panel members came from a broad range of backgrounds and a cross-section of experience in education governance and administration as well as government. They brought urban, rural, northern and Indigenous perspectives, and provided an objective independent view:

- Ray Morrison (Chair) – Board Chair of the Saskatoon Public School Division;
- Duane Favel – Board Chair of the Ile-a-la-Crosse School Division, Mayor of Île-à-la-Crosse and Chair of the Aboriginal Council of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA);
- Janet Foord – Past President of the Canadian School Boards Association (CSBA), Past President of the SSBA and past member of the Southeast Cornerstone School Division Board of Education;
- Ben Grebinski – Director of Education, Prairie Valley School Division;
- Doug Moen – Executive-in-Residence at Johnson Shoyama School of Public Policy, former Deputy Minister to the Premier of Saskatchewan, and former Deputy Minister of Justice and Deputy Attorney General; and,
- Leanne White – Senior Administrative Staff Member of the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation (STF).

The mandate of the Panel was to engage stakeholder organizations in face-to-face dialogue and to invite students, parents, teachers, administrators and the public to participate through an online engagement process, providing input to the options identified in the Perrins Report. The report is found at publications.gov.sk.ca/documents/11/96975-Perrins-Governance-Review-Report.pdf. The role of the Panel was to act independently of any stakeholder organization, to listen objectively to input on the information and options provided in the Perrins Report and to provide the Honourable Don Morgan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Education, with a written account of their findings.

The Panel was guided by the considerations described in the Perrins Report, including:

- Constitutional and legal considerations;
- Elements of governance, including the following principles of good governance;
 - strategic direction;
 - effectiveness and efficiency;
 - accountability;
 - transparency;
 - participation; and,
 - equity;



- Complexity and cost of achieving change;
- Geographic size and sparsity; and,
- Means of selecting board members (Elected or Appointed) (Perrins, p. 17-20).

Process and Timelines

The provincial government provided an online portal for submissions at saskatchewan.ca from December 21, 2016 to January 23, 2017. Saskatchewan people responded with significant interest to the online portal with 3,879 submissions provided by the public, parents, educators, school community council (SCC) members and others. Among these submissions were 31 formal submissions from boards of education, provincial education organizations and other stakeholder organizations. The breakdown of the respondents by role was as follows:

- Public (no role identified) – 2,434 (63 per cent);
- Parents/SCCs – 1,001 (26 per cent);
- Teachers/Employees/Board Members (including school division submissions) – 397 (10 per cent); and,
- Other – 47 (1 per cent).

Because the Panel continued to meet with organizations after the online portal closed on January 23, 2017, those organizations were permitted to submit documents after the closure of the portal. This allowed a fair process for all organizations. Appendix A provides an overview of the input received online.

Face-to-Face Meetings

The Panel invited boards of education, provincial education organizations, First Nations organizations, Métis education representatives and other stakeholder groups to participate in face-to-face meetings from January 5 to 26, 2017. The format of the meetings generally included a response by the organization(s) to the Perrins Report and a dialogue between the Panel and the organization(s) or individual(s). The Panel clarified its role in each meeting as independent, objective and impartial, making it clear that the members did not represent any organization. In order to ensure understanding and clarity, the Panel asked several questions on a range of topics. Most sessions resulted in an open and frank dialogue related to the Perrins Report and other concerns regarding the structure and governance of education.

Between January 5 and January 26, 2017 the Panel met with more than 45 organizations, involving more than 300 people. A full listing of the organizations is provided in Appendix B. The Panel met with representatives of all 28 boards of education. Boards were usually accompanied by administrative staff, sometimes SCC members, in one case by a student and in some cases by locally-elected municipal officials. The Panel also had the opportunity to meet with provincial education organizations, organized labour groups, provincial business and municipal stakeholders, the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina, and other interested groups and organizations. While there were no formal consultations with First Nations, the Panel heard from representatives of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) and some tribal councils that if any changes to the education system would affect First Nations, further consultation would be needed.

What We Heard

This section outlines the input provided through both the face-to-face meetings and the online submissions. The key themes provide a summary of the input received. In addition to these key themes, this section also provides an overview of reaction to the Shifts in Governance and the Options described in the Perrins Report. Finally, it outlines some additional considerations brought forward by participants through the process of consultation.

Key Themes

The following themes emerged both in meetings and from the online submissions:

- Students are the heart of education.
- Continue to focus on the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) to achieve the 2020 targets, including those outlined in the *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth*.
- Local voice matters – there is strong support for elected boards of education.
- SCCs have an important role at the school level.
- Minority Faith and Minority Language Education are key considerations.
- There is significant support for the Shifts in Governance described on pages 20 and 21 of the Perrins Report.
- First Nations and Métis voices in education must be strengthened and engagement with First Nations and Métis communities must be respectful of their ways of knowing.
- A further dialogue with northern communities is needed.

Students are the Heart of Education

The Panel heard in every meeting and from many who participated online that students are the heart of the education system and should be the key focus of board members, staff and the ministry. Support for a student education focus was found in approximately 63 per cent of the online submissions and was the second most common response. In the consultation meetings, stakeholders emphasized that any changes to the education system in Saskatchewan should focus on improving student outcomes.



"I do not believe that further amalgamations of school divisions would enhance the education of our children. Would they increase reading and math proficiencies? Would they improve graduation rates? I believe not." – Business Owner

Participants defined teaching and learning as the important work of the education system. It was clear that boards of education highly value the commitment and knowledge of their professional staff. Board members also described their own personal commitment to understanding the needs of students in their communities and their efforts to make policy and financial decisions in the best interest of students.

Some boards provided examples of the key indicators and outcomes that are monitored at the board table. These outcomes and indicators give a picture of how the school division is performing and provide information about where resources are needed to support improved student outcomes and success. Boards expressed concern that the focus on the needs of students might be lost if school divisions were to become larger. They also expressed concern that changes to the education sector might further intensify the workload of teachers and other staff who have a direct role in working with students.

Further to this, there was general agreement that if the key focus of education is teaching and learning, the greatest area for achieving efficiencies (whether through centralized or local efforts) should be in operational savings. Any savings found through greater efficiencies must not impact the classroom, where teaching and learning is paramount.

"The value of a good education cannot be counted in dollars and cents, it can only be counted in the bright young minds that graduate from our schools." – Teacher

Continue to Focus on the ESSP to Achieve the 2020 Targets in the *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth*

The ESSP goals are unanimously supported by boards of education, their staff and several other stakeholders. The ESSP is seen by many as transformational change that is already underway. The Panel heard repeatedly that the adoption of the ESSP marks the first time that the ministry, directors of education, school board members and First Nations education organizations have come together around a plan with key targets and outcomes. This collaborative work toward common goals is seen as making a difference. Many administrators spoke of the value of “holding each other accountable” and of sharing effective practices through the Provincial Leadership Team (PLT)¹. Indeed some stakeholders, including the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation (STF), expressed a desire to become more involved in the ongoing process of planning and implementation of the ESSP. It was generally agreed that board members need to support and understand the ESSP but the work is most appropriately completed by the professional staff.

The key message to the Panel was that the ESSP is working well and that the system needs to give it a chance to do what it is intended to do. It was commonly noted that, although there has been some improvement in outcomes, the ESSP has been underway for only 30 months. The general consensus was that additional time is needed for implementation of the ESSP before any structural changes to the system are contemplated. Invariably, both online and in meetings with stakeholders, the Panel heard concern that any large-scale change would take the focus off the ESSP, resulting in a loss of momentum and potentially stalling progress. Many were concerned that a loss of focus would put the 2020 targets of the *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth* and the ESSP at risk.

“How will we meet the goals by 2020 if we are disrupted so completely in the near future?” – Parent & Teacher

Most school divisions provided the Panel with information about their progress on the ESSP outcomes, such as reading rates and graduation rates. Many commented positively about the initiatives in the ESSP, such as Following Their Voices, Saskatchewan Reads, the Invitational Shared Services Initiative and other initiatives that are in the early stages of development. There was significant advocacy for government to lift the pause on curriculum development and implementation.

¹ The PLT includes directors of education from all school divisions and representatives of the First Nations and Métis education organizations.

Local Voice Matters – Strong Support for Elected Boards of Education

The Panel heard from many stakeholders about the long history of elected boards of education in Saskatchewan. A significant majority of individuals and organizations expressed strong support for retaining locally-elected boards of education as the means of governing education. This was the most commonly occurring theme expressed online, found in 71 per cent of all submissions. Participants stated that communities expect a voice in education and that democratically-elected local trustees provide that voice. Participants expressed concern about any changes that would move decision making further from their communities as they felt it would result in a disconnection between the community and the education system. This was heard across the province but particularly from northern and rural residents.

“Locally-elected school boards protect the specific interests of their division. The further away they are from the front line, the greater the issues become and all will suffer.” – Teacher

Some boards described ways in which they engage local voice – through SCCs, students, parents and community members – in providing input to policy and planning. Not all school divisions, however, described the need for local voice in ways that were consistent with governance. Often board members described their connection to the community as a channel to receive and forward complaints from parents and community members to the larger board or to school administration to resolve. It was clear that while some boards have developed sophisticated governance processes, others still believe they have a significant role in management.

During the face-to-face consultations, the Panel asked a number of questions to further understand the commitment to locally-elected boards. Participants expressed the value of locally-elected boards as having:

- Trust, good relationships, local knowledge and the ability to connect with their community;
- Relationships and engagement with other parties, including other elected and non-elected governance bodies such as other boards, municipal councils, Crown Corporations, First Nations and Métis organizations, police, health and social service providers. These relationships were seen as important in developing formal and informal partnerships and agreements;
- Connections with SCCs and the community at large, which inform board members about local issues, needs and concerns. Board members can then bring these concerns forward to the board for discussion in the context of the school division as a whole;
- Providing a point of appeal for parents who would otherwise be directed toward other elected officials, including MLAs and government; and,

- Direct opportunities to hear student voice. Some boards and administrators provided examples of listening to and responding to issues raised by students. Boards spoke of gathering student voice in a variety of ways, including through student representatives on SCCs and boards of education, student senates and annual meetings with students. One board brought a student representative to its presentation to the Panel.

In the context of discussing the value of locally-elected boards, many representatives described important differences between the health and education systems, beyond the basic difference in how they are selected, (i.e., health boards being appointed and boards of education being elected). They described the difference in terms of the extended time of contact with the education system (13 years) for students; the importance of community context when educating children; and the need for students to receive education services close to home.

"...we truly appreciate our access to our elected members when we have suggestions and/or concerns. Our feeling is that as boards (elected or appointed) get larger, our voice will become but a whisper." – SCC

In summary, the Panel heard that local voice matters and board members speak for their constituents as they are mandated to do. There was very little discussion of any value in appointed boards and a worry of partisan appointments on non-elected boards.

SCCs have an Important Role at the School Level

All of the boards spoke of the important role SCCs play at the school level. Several SCCs attended Panel meetings with their boards and many submitted their perspectives online. The Panel heard that many volunteer SCC members are passionate about and embrace their current role, but noted there was little interest in an increased governance role for SCCs.

"Our SCC currently works very closely with our school in order to reach our goals in terms of reading, math and sense of belonging. We are able to do this by focusing our efforts solely on these items. We also have great support from our local board in terms of assisting us with our operating concerns and questions. Amalgamations will result in a decreased efficiency of our SCC." – SCC

It was clear that the role and activities of SCCs vary both within school divisions and from one school division to the next. School principals (and vice-principals) play a strong role in supporting SCCs. It was evident where SCCs are strong that these administrators support SCCs with the delivery of their mandate. Some SCCs engage in school-level planning to align their school plan with the ESSP; others support their school plan with community events and learning opportunities; and some focus on fundraising activities to support students' learning. SCCs believe they make a positive difference in students' success. The Panel also heard that SCCs provide an additional avenue to enable diverse voices to be heard, particularly the voices of the most vulnerable families and students.

Minority Faith and Minority Language Education are Key Considerations

The fact that Saskatchewan's education system has three publicly-funded types of school divisions – public, separate (minority faith) and francophone (minority language) – was a subject of much discussion in meetings with stakeholders and in online submissions. There was strong support for minority faith education systems from the people affiliated with those school divisions (i.e., parents/guardians, staff or board members). In addition, all of the minority faith boards of education expressed support for the continued existence of locally-elected boards of education in public, separate and francophone school divisions. At the same time, the Panel heard questions about the inefficiency and cost of competition among publicly-funded public, separate, francophone and independent schools.

"A separate, Catholic school system is important to my family. More than ever it is essential to raise our children in a faith-centred atmosphere where children are encouraged to deflect society's 'me first' culture." – Parent

Public school division stakeholders raised significant concerns regarding the potential inequity that could arise if the governance or structure of public school divisions was changed while the separate and francophone school divisions remained the same. For example, participants found the following scenarios troubling:

- If the public system moved to appointed boards but the separate system continued to have elected boards; or,
- If there was one provincial board for all public schools and no change in the number of separate boards of education.

The Panel heard examples of both cooperation and competition between public and separate education systems. Some presenters provided examples of partnerships that involved shared educational service delivery, transportation and purchasing. While some of these partnerships arose from the necessity of serving a small number of students, others were implemented to find efficiencies and improve services. The Panel also heard concerns about the inefficiency, inconsistency of services and rivalry that can exist between school divisions that compete to recruit students within the same community or area.

“The high cost of administration must be controlled but the general public may not see the costs involved in maintaining a minimum of three public education systems in our province while this report addresses only one, the public system.” – Parent

Canada’s *Constitution Act (1867; 1982)* and *The Saskatchewan Act (1905)* provide for members of the minority faith in a particular school district (whether Protestant or Roman Catholic) to petition the Government of Saskatchewan to establish a separate school. Several stakeholders cautioned the Panel that there is potential for the formation of additional minority faith school boards if changes are made in the governance and/or structure of the public school divisions. Concerns were also raised about families potentially migrating from public systems toward separate or francophone education systems, regardless of their own personal faith or language, to ensure their children are educated within a system that is governed by a locally-elected board. Since 2005, there has been an ongoing case in the Saskatchewan court system which, when a ruling is made, could have implications for attendance at minority faith schools.

There is Significant Support for Shifts in Governance

The Panel heard significant support for the Shifts in Governance outlined on pages 20 and 21 of the Perrins Report². A number of boards, administrators and other participants indicated that implementing the Shifts in Governance would have greater impact on addressing the key issues outlined in the Perrins Report than would amalgamation of school divisions or other large-scale changes to the system. As well, they expressed that while some of the Shifts in Governance would require significant upfront investment, overall these shifts could achieve significant efficiencies with less cost and upheaval than major structural change. Several groups mentioned that implementation of these changes should be carefully considered and, where possible, should be based on improving student outcomes or increasing value. The response to the Shifts in Governance is more fully articulated later in this document.

“The first place to look for efficiencies is in the current structure. It is less disruptive and less costly than inventing a new system and will yield the quickest results.” – Parent

In addition to general support for the Shifts in Governance, strong support was expressed for clarifying the roles and the authority of the Minister, ministry, boards, administrators, SCCs and principals through legislation and regulations. It was generally agreed that *The Education Act, 1995* (the Act) is out of date and requires a complete overhaul. Many organizations expressed the need to be future-oriented and look at least 10 years forward when reviewing the legislation, roles and responsibilities. Many viewed the Shifts in Governance and review of the Act as an opportunity to enhance the system to meet future expectations.

² See <http://publications.gov.sk.ca/documents/11/96975-Perrins-Governance-Review-Report.pdf>

The SSBA noted “Boards of education are willing to work in collaboration to make changes and strengthen the system to ensure the best outcomes for students” and supported focusing on the ESSP and on the Shifts in Governance outlined in the Perrins Report. Saskatchewan’s 28 directors of education collaborated and offered a detailed list of actions that could be pursued to create efficiencies and clarify the roles of the school division administration and the ministry. The STF asked for an enhanced role in providing supports for teaching and learning and for a leadership role as part of a proposed new provincial leadership quality council (with responsibility for policy development and strategic planning). The Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials (SASBO), which represents the professionals employed in business operations and management within school divisions, offered suggestions in the areas of enhancing business and operational efficiencies (payroll, human resources (HR), finance, information technology (IT), facilities, procurement, transportation and communications).

First Nations and Métis Voice in Education Must be Strengthened

The Panel invited First Nations and Métis representatives to present their perspectives to the Panel. The Panel heard unanimous support for strengthening the voice of First Nations and Métis people in education from all school divisions and other organizations.

The Panel heard from First Nations, Métis and non-Aboriginal board members that it is important for First Nations and Métis members to be elected and not appointed. There was concern that appointments would diminish credibility. In meetings with the Aboriginal Council of the SSBA and with the northern school divisions, the Panel learned that the number of First Nations and Métis board members is growing across the province. The Panel also heard that moving governance further from communities would likely reduce the number of First Nations and Métis board members who would be involved in education.

In addition to elected board members, the Panel heard of other ways that boards currently engage the voice of First Nations and Métis people, such as through Elders’ Councils, partnerships and co-governance relationships with First Nations education organizations. Local relationships and building trust are critical to these partnerships.

“I would like to see more advancement with First Nations and their education system. Cutting school divisions cannot help that.” – SCC

First Nations participants in various meetings spoke of the need for the federal government to recognize Treaty obligations, the need for First Nations control of First Nations education and the importance of self-determination. Many participants noted the need to listen to the Calls to Action put forward by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)³. There were cautions that government must recognize First Nations and Métis ways of knowing and doing in terms of education governance, curriculum, teaching and learning. Trust and respectful relationships must be built between government and First Nations and Métis people, recognizing that there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution that will work for every community.

The northern and First Nations participants expressed the need for an authentic consultation process for any changes in the education system that will impact them. In more than one meeting, the Panel heard the need for consideration of the Daniels Decision⁴ and the potential impact it may have on Métis rights to education.

A Dialogue is Needed with Northern Communities

The Panel heard from all three northern school divisions (Northern Lights School Division, Île-à-la-Crosse School Division, and Creighton School Division) and representatives of La Loche. Northern Lights School Division described the significant challenges in governing a large geographic area. All three school divisions addressed housing, isolation, staffing, English as an Additional Language and social issues as significant challenges. The Panel heard about the value of community-based education governance in Creighton and Ile-a-la-Crosse and the concern of communities such as La Loche that feel far removed from the governance of education.

“How can one population of board members make decisions that affect northern communities like La Loche and urban centres like Regina?” – Teacher

People in the north see any amalgamation of boards of education as a loss of local control and a significant step back for their communities. The Panel also heard that amalgamation and creation of larger school divisions in the north or south would reduce the Indigenous voice and would be contrary to the objective to gain representation from First Nations and Métis people. It was strongly expressed that amalgamation of northern areas with southern school divisions would not work for the north. Conversations need to happen among northern communities. There are some success stories, such as Île-à-la-Crosse.

“Being a northern person and of Cree descent, I feel that our current school division helps our people by understanding the issues that our students face living in the north. The school division we have helps our people by giving them a voice.” – Teacher

³ See http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf.

⁴ The Daniels Decision is a Supreme Court decision which determined that Métis and non status Indians are “Indians” under s. 91(24) of the Constitution Act, 1867. See <https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/15858/index.do>.

While student outcomes differ from one area to the next, all of the northern boards of education spoke positively of the effect the ESSP has had in focusing the sector on improved learning outcomes. These school divisions recognized that, while the ESSP tracks graduation outcomes for students from grades 10 to 12, they are losing students prior to Grade 10 and must track students earlier. Like many school divisions, they know their students benefit from the opportunity to have additional time to graduate. They also spoke of the need for education to be relevant to their communities and their students.

Both Île-à-la-Crosse and Northern Lights school divisions own housing units. The Panel heard of innovative partnerships that provide training and housing for local residents through the construction and renovation of housing units.

Further dialogue on the matter of education governance is needed with northern communities to understand the unique circumstances and needs. A solution created in the south, for the south, cannot automatically be applied to the north. Any processes used to create solutions for the north must be sensitive to community dynamics and the cultural and jurisdictional contexts of northern Saskatchewan. There is an opportunity for First Nations, and federal and provincial governments to work together to move forward on the TRC's Calls to Action for the good of all children in the north.

Shifts in Governance

In general, there was significant support from the education sector stakeholders for the Shifts in Governance described on pages 20 and 21 of the Perrins Report, with the caveat that further examination would be needed to ensure the impacts (intended and unintended) of their implementation are clearly understood.

Strategic Direction and Accountability

There was broad support to “redefine the roles of the Minister in 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” (Perrins, p. 20).

Many stakeholders were open to clarifying the role of the Minister, ministry, boards, administrators, SCCs and principals. Stakeholders supported giving the Minister appropriate power to direct the system and to get involved where circumstances dictate, using legislation, regulations and policy as needed. The Minister could direct school boards to do certain things, such as set ceilings for expenditures (financial controls and management), set standards for education outcomes and provide expectations for board competencies.

“The keys to improved outcomes are safety, attendance, reading, engagement and a focus on learning. Families, students, demographics and society have changed much since 1975 and 1995. The Education Act has very little power to enforce these five areas. Give our leaders the tools to enforce best practices in our schools, students and families and outcomes will increase.” – Public Participant

There was openness to enhanced and reciprocal accountability at all levels of the system that would result from the clarification of roles and accountabilities. It was noted that the ministry will need to provide the right supports to ensure school boards fulfil their roles.

There were questions about performance assessment and whether the Minister should have authority to assess the performance of boards or to ensure that boards would be assessed by someone, whether in the ministry or elsewhere. Currently, there is no reporting or accountability to the Minister for the performance of boards and no process for governance review. Some mentioned there should be more ability for the Minister to remove a board if required and to take control when a critical situation arises.

There was openness to “examine the number of board members per board” for public and separate systems (Perrins, p. 20).

Some school divisions are already looking at the size of their boards and many believe the number of board members could be reduced. Nonetheless, they suggest at least five members are needed to provide effective governance. Some boards felt a maximum of seven or nine board members could be workable. There was general agreement that geography and population are necessary factors in determining the number of board members and that equity in distribution of representation, while taking into account both sparsity and density, is important. There is a need to be more inclusive of First Nations and Métis representatives on boards and to ensure there are mechanisms in place to make First Nations and Métis people part of decision-making processes.

There was interest in standardizing “expectations of [elected] boards in relation to required competencies of board members” and requiring “mandatory board training” (Perrins, p. 20).

Many boards are responsible for complex, multi-million dollar enterprises and require a high level of sophistication in governance. Many participants expressed support for the principles of good governance provided in the Perrins Report but it was evident to the Panel that board members and boards are at different stages of understanding, practicing and implementing these principles. The Panel heard that training for board members is inconsistent from one school division to the next and that there was openness to consistent (but not necessarily mandatory) training. There was general support among boards that a skills matrix would

be beneficial and that there could be a customized curriculum of board development that would provide the opportunity for all boards to develop these skills.

“On a smaller note, as someone who has served on boards and also worked for boards, I applaud the suggestion for mandatory board training. Board members are well-meaning but do not always have the same level of knowledge of the education system or experience on other boards to understand processes and responsibilities.” – Public Participant

While a common understanding of processes and general knowledge of governance was identified as important, there was no interest for any pre-election/pre-appointment requirement for specific competencies. Several boards currently assess the skills and knowledge of their members either after election or through annual evaluation to identify training needs. Some boards have board development plans, while others do not. Some boards set aside specific training budgets based on their development plans. Others noted the cost and public perception of spending money on board development is a limiting factor. As a result, some boards, when faced with a choice, may choose to spend professional development money on other priorities based on local preferences.

With regard to the skills and knowledge required by boards:

- Many boards described the variety of skill sets that already exist among their members. They expressed the belief that a variety of skills and knowledge lead to healthy debate and innovation at the board table.
- Board members and administrators discussed the requirement for boards to have the skills to manage large corporate enterprises.
- Board members and administrators spoke of the significant value of board members’ knowledge and understanding of local community. This serves them well in making decisions to ensure students’ needs are met and to provide the best education possible.
- While knowledge of the education sector is of value for board members, there was general agreement that a “cooling off” period may be needed for former employees of the board. Some suggested a period of two years between ceasing employment and being eligible to sit on a board.

Overall, the Panel heard inconsistency across the province in both the use of and rationale for board development. The Panel surmised board development aligned with a skills matrix can be prudent.

Effectiveness

There was strong support to “renew and strengthen the emphasis on education outcomes through an ongoing focus on the ESSP” (Perrins, p. 20).

As indicated above, participants in the consultation articulated strong support for the ESSP and many noted how it supports the *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth*. Boards and administrators believe more time is needed to reach the ESSP targets before any large-scale change is undertaken. There is strong belief in the potential of the ESSP to lead to improved outcomes for learners. There is general agreement that the current priority areas, such as reading and enhancing First Nations and Métis learner outcomes, are the right ones. Indeed, some noted the outcomes could be expanded over time. There is pride that the ESSP was built in partnership as a province-wide plan, through the leadership of the PLT. The STF, as a partner in education, expressed a desire to bring the teachers' professional voice more fully into the ESSP process.

"The ESSP will be at a standstill if an amalgamation takes place for the next few years which is a huge cost to student learning in our province. In our school alone we have seen great progress in the students' reading levels in the past year since engaging in Fountas and Pinnell reading programs." – Teacher

It was obvious from meetings with boards of education that many struggle with taking a provincial perspective. Nevertheless, this provincial focus will be necessary to achieve the province-wide goals of the ESSP. Boards made it clear that their mandate within the legislation and their need to be accountable to their electors partially accounts for their inward focus on their school division. It was also evident that a history and culture of autonomy keeps boards thinking and acting locally and independently. The Panel sees this inward focus as a problem. When boards look only at their own school division, they may fail to see opportunities to learn from or support other school divisions. Province-wide improvement requires school divisions to look both within and across school divisions. Boards noted the ministry has increased expectations for province-wide consistency and acknowledged there is a need to create more consistency from one school division to the next.

"I don't like any of the four options in their entirety but there are excellent suggestions in this report that I hope you will take seriously. I like the idea of a Provincial Advisory Body and an Education Quality Council to try to unify the province as mentioned in Options 1 and 2." – Parent

There was some openness to Perrins' suggestion for the "consideration of an Education Quality Council (EQC) with responsibility for monitoring system performance," but support was limited due to the need for more information on what the EQC might constitute and look like. Some said there could be value in providing the Minister, ministry and the sector with data to inform the PLT. Others saw the EQC as another bureaucratic layer. Some thought the EQC would be useful to improve planning with improved data on the education system. Many believed that more research should be carried out to look at other models for monitoring quality control and innovation.

There was a strong desire to see the pause on curriculum development in Saskatchewan lifted and for curriculum to be renewed and refreshed on an ongoing basis. Some believe that the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)⁵ scores measure what is learned in curriculum and Saskatchewan's scores may increase with a modernized curriculum.

The Panel often heard of the need for coordination of service delivery with health, social services and justice (i.e., Hub model⁶). Local leadership, relationships and partnerships are seen as essential to arrangements that address student diversity, help immigrants settle and generally support the most vulnerable families and their children.

Efficiency

The Perrins Report highlighted the need “to 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 up with the work already underway in the PLT (centralize business functions such as central IT, financial, HR, payroll procurement and purchasing)” (Perrins, p. 20).

“Greater efficiencies may be gained if greater controls and instructions are given to boards to ensure, for example, a common standard of materials and equipment.” – Public Participant

The Panel heard strong support for creating efficiencies but only if there is enhanced value, a strong business case and no negative impact on the classroom (teaching and learning). The concept of creating and demonstrating enhanced value (not simply cost savings) was seen as important. Most boards and administrators are open to the ministry setting overall targets for efficiencies, but boards preferred to have flexibility on how those targets are met. It seemed evident from directors of education, some boards of education, SASBO and the STF that there was more room for province-wide efficiencies. There was support for regionalization of some services and some agreed with the need for centralized IT, a unified student information system and procurement where it makes sense.

Some presenters noted that increased centralization would require investment. If the ministry was to operate any centralized services, there would be a need to upgrade systems and to ensure the ministry had sufficient capacity and resources to support these initiatives. It was also noted that involvement of people from the

⁵ PISA is an international survey that aims to evaluate education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students. See <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/aboutpisa/>.

⁶ Human service providers from multiple sectors collaborate to develop an immediate, coordinated and integrated response to specific situations where people may be facing elevated levels of risk.

sector who have technical expertise would be essential to the development of any plan or mechanism for centralized efficiencies.

SASBO offered a list of potential benefits and challenges of moving to some form of shared services in each operational area: payroll, HR, finance, IT, procurement, facilities, transportation and communications. In addition, SASBO identified some possibilities that might warrant investigation and analysis, including:

- purchasing extended benefits coverage for education employees and the public sector;
- recruiting staff together with the public sector;
- inviting partnerships with First Nations in busing operations;
- pursuing provincial guidelines for transportation; and,
- pursuing common curricula, materials and delivery for staff professional development.

Consistency/Standardization

There was general agreement to “standardize governance costs, including remuneration rates, annual maximum remuneration for board members and rates for travel and sustenance (taking into account northern areas) and professional development ...” (Perrins, p. 21).

“I think that board members invest significant hours into their role, and as such, I am in favour of remuneration. However, it seems that a rationalization of the amounts paid is necessary, especially in a time where funding for core operations is strained.” – Public Participant

Remuneration and expenses are set locally and vary across the province. Some boards set a monthly or annual salary, while others pay board members per meeting. Board members recognized that there is little consistency in terms of remuneration and payment of expenses and are open to general guidelines. Some suggest a provincial grid or formula in the funding model with recognition for local circumstances such as geography, sparsity, density, partnerships and other factors.

There was no consensus on the “maximum number of board meetings” (Perrins, p. 21).

Board members identified the need for flexibility on the number of meetings due to local circumstances and unexpected events.

There was openness to “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” (Perrins, p. 21).

There was openness to a formula or pay grid being developed with built-in factors such as experience, education and job complexity, recognizing there may be existing models that could be adapted or explored. Overall, there was agreement that salaries and benefits should be equitable, while recognizing there is some need for flexibility in areas where it is difficult to recruit and retain staff. Any standards respecting the number of out-of-scope positions in a school division would need to respect provisions in the 2013-17 Provincial Collective Bargaining Agreement (section 9.1.2.).

There was broad-based consensus for the need to “consider additional standardization of locally-bargained terms and conditions” (Perrins, p. 21).

There was significant support from boards, SSBA, directors of education and the STF to look at how a number of locally-negotiated items could be addressed. There were several suggestions as to how this could be accomplished, including provincial bargaining of specific items currently in local agreements, a per person formula (cap per person) or a percentage of payroll. Many believed there was still a need for local context to ensure equity, and still others thought equity could be accomplished through a combination of local and provincial bargaining. It was noted that the differences staff currently experience are not all found in bargained items and thus there is a need to also look at standardization of policies and practices. Notwithstanding the general agreement that changes to provincial or local collective bargaining structures and processes are possible, stakeholders emphasized that changes to local agreements require consultation with the affected parties as well as negotiation.

Participation

The Perrins Report commented on the need to “reinforce the value of SCCs” (Perrins, p. 21). There was consensus that SCCs are a valuable part of the education governance system at the school level and that the role of SCCs should be maintained.

The Panel spoke to and heard from committed volunteer community and parent members of SCCs who are passionate about their role as advocates for the children in their schools. They spoke of their role in resolving issues and addressing concerns to ensure that all children in the school have a positive learning experience and achieve success. They especially noted the need to ensure that the most vulnerable children receive appropriate supports. It was clear that many members of SCCs volunteer long hours in activities such as reading programs, sports activities and math nights, in addition to fundraising to supplement resources for the school.

There was consensus that there is significant value in the role of SCCs at the school level. A few SCC members are interested in a broader perspective, beyond their individual school improvement plan, but most seem comfortable with their current role. Many indicated they would not want to be more involved in governance, to have enhanced responsibilities or to be a replacement for existing school boards.

It was clear from the meetings with school divisions that the involvement of SCCs in school and division planning varies within and among school divisions. Some engage deeply in the development of the local school learning/strategic plan and provide significant input to board priorities and policy. Other SCCs are less focused on the goals or plans of the school and division and more focused on meeting the needs of students in the school.

There was broad support to “enable First Nations representation on boards” (Perrins, p. 21).

There was a consistent view from participants in the process, whether First Nations, Métis or non-Indigenous, that First Nations and Métis representatives at the board table should be elected rather than appointed. There was also the view that First Nations and Métis people should have greater voice as partners. There was interest from some participants in further exploring co-governance in the education system. There was general support that these discussions must be government to government. A number of participants described the various mechanisms they have in place to ensure First Nations and Métis voices are heard in the absence of an elected board member.

“We have in this province a moral, an historical and an economic imperative to improve outcomes for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students but appointments to boards undermine the democratic process. I would suggest instead school divisions establish advisory panels to help them move forward in a positive way.” – Teacher

There are some good examples in the province where First Nations are represented on a school board. As an example, Horizon School Division has 14 board members and four are First Nations members representing First Nations communities.

Response to the Options in the Educational Governance Review Report

“The document options clearly acknowledge that changes to the current system may compromise student outcomes, reduce accountability, reduce community communication and access to decision makers, put more work on SCCs and disrupt our schools. The negatives far outweigh the positives.” – Teacher

Options 1, 2 and 3A

The Panel heard almost unanimous opposition to the first three options described in the Perrins Report:

- Option 1: Provincial Model;
- Option 2: Regional Model; and,
- Option 3A: Divisional Model – Restructuring Public School Divisions.

In 2006, the provincial education system changed from 82 to 28 school divisions each with a board (18 public, nine separate and one francophone). The Panel noted there was a strong commitment to the status quo and lack of interest in looking at radically new structures or ways of governing. There was concern about loss of tradition without consideration of the possibilities inherent in potential change. Of the online submissions, 25 per cent explicitly indicated support for the status quo or opposition to amalgamation. Only seven per cent of submissions supported the changes proposed in Options 1 and 2.

In both the meetings with stakeholders and the online submissions, the notion of governance was tied to a range of concerns that were not necessarily related to governance. For example, boards and administrators equated any conversation on changes in governance to their experience of amalgamation in 2006. Most parents and others who participated online linked any consideration of change in governance to a perceived potential for school closures or loss of local voice. There seemed to be little consideration given to any organization of governance and administration that differed from the current structure in which each administrative unit (school division) is governed by one board of education.

The Panel heard from school administrators that their present concern about sweeping change is largely due to the impacts of the amalgamation of school divisions in 2006. The boundary changes led to the need for both public and separate school divisions to reorganize and develop new relationships, partnerships and cultures. In some cases, sufficient attention was not given to transportation routes or trading patterns. Urban and rural school divisions were blended, some schools were closed and many staffs were reorganized. Many of the stakeholders that were part of the 2006 restructuring mentioned that it took nearly five years for the effects to settle. There were unintended financial costs that were not fully considered or planned for. One school division provided an example where the cost of changing the bus signs totaled over \$18,000. Some also mentioned that the impacts were felt throughout the school system, not just at the top; if administrative staff were impacted, teachers were also affected.

“A move toward a larger provincial model is terrifying in these small communities that already often feel forgotten by the world around them and is very intimidating for the specialists supporting these communities who already feel there is not enough time to support our students in rural communities.” – Teacher

Conversely, the Panel heard from school divisions, which had previously experienced restructuring, that the creation of larger service areas in 2006 had benefited students by creating full-service areas and enhancing access to both universal and specialized supports. The overall belief was that these restructured school divisions were now “right-sized” and that further expansion would not improve services. In fact, many spoke of having reached a threshold beyond which further expansion might actually impede service delivery. Organized labour expressed anxiety about the potential for more job losses if further amalgamation took place.

“I support the idea of fewer school divisions, with the caveat that power and control should be shifted downward toward the teachers and principals and that any larger board should allow for flexibility in any policies they attempt to implement.” – Teacher

Based on past experience, many boards and staff described the types of interference that would result from any large scale change to the system, including:

- uncertainty for staff;
- consolidation of agreements;
- development and implementation of new procedures;
- creation of a culture in a new organization;
- realignment of systems (IT, accounting, HR, etc.); and,
- development of common goals, objectives and transfer of title.

Option 3B – Division Model – Realigning Boundaries

While most participants preferred no change, most felt that if any change was required, 3B was the least disruptive of the options (although it was recognized that for the affected communities, the disruption would be significant). Some participants noted that there were areas where the 2006 boundaries might require tweaking and spoke of this as “course correction” rather than restructuring or amalgamation. Others spoke of the need for any changes to be voluntary. Some felt that if bigger changes were to be made, consideration should be given to consolidation of school divisions or assimilation of lands along the borders of existing school divisions while keeping the core of the school divisions intact.

“I would strongly suggest Option 3B. Coming from a small community with a small but very vital school I feel that this is the only option that gives our school a fighting chance.” – Parent

Some participants suggested the need for a boundaries commission if boundary changes are to be considered. Any consideration of boundary changes will need a risk assessment, informed by local conversations, to identify both intended and unintended consequences. Technical teams of experts could be formed to review and provide advice to any proposed changes.

In summary, it was clear that some school divisions were open to working together to look at areas where boundary shifts could be made in consultation with the affected parties.

Other Considerations and Complexity

Stakeholders brought attention to the potential impact changes to governance might have on a number of unique circumstances within the education system.

Hutterian Schools

Saskatchewan has 69 Hutterian schools and a long history of cooperation to provide education for students living on Hutterite colonies. Online submissions and presentations by school divisions noted satisfaction with the current governance and administrative arrangements for the education of Hutterite students within school divisions. Respondents to the online portal from one Hutterite colony praised the relationship with their board of education and administration, noting the value of ensuring high quality education for their students and

understanding for Hutterite communities and their culture. The Panel heard from school divisions and from Hutterite communities that there is a need to provide assurances to Hutterite communities that any changes in governance would not impact their schools.

“Our Board, Director and Superintendents have taken the time to get to know and understand the HUTTERITE culture and specifically our communities, our leaders, our needs and our strengths. Provincially appointed board members will not be as accessible, nor will they know their communities’ needs.” – SCC

Education in the City of Lloydminster

Lloydminster is unique in Canada as the only city positioned on a border between two provinces. Through the provisions of *The Lloydminster Charter* education in the city has been governed under Saskatchewan’s education legislation for the past 84 years. While *The Lloydminster Charter* does not prohibit the Lloydminster school divisions from amalgamating with other school divisions in the province⁷, there are complexities to consider. These complexities stem from the challenges of providing an equitable system of educating students within the city while receiving funding through two different systems of funding and taxation. Additional complications can be found in the integration of services, such as health services, from two provinces.

“Having local administration and a local elected school board that understand the complexities and needs of a bi-provincial city has also been invaluable. Navigating the complexities of being part of two provinces is very difficult and requires an expertise that not many people have.” – Teacher

⁷ For example, the Lloydminster Roman Catholic Separate School Division could amalgamate with another separate Roman Catholic school division and the Lloydminster Public School Division could amalgamate with another public school division.

Independent Schools

There was some concern that Qualified Independent Schools and Historical High Schools receive provincial funding but were not considered within the Perrins Report.

“... we question why the government funds boutique private schools to the tune of approximately \$31 million annually. Perhaps this ought to be reconsidered in an effort to achieve cost savings rather than dismantling our current school division structure.”– Parent

Home-Based Education

Home-based educators asked to be consulted about decisions that will impact them. They noted that school divisions have different processes and information requirements for registration and they would like to see additional accountability by school divisions for the money spent on home-based education.

“I would like to see the homeschool funding, reporting, access to programs, and information consistent for all homeschoolers across the province. I feel that a provincial model, with only one homeschooling department would simplify the paperwork for homeschoolers, and provide a level playing field.”– Parent

Concluding Comments

Throughout the consultation, the Panel heard strong attachment to the historic governance structure of Saskatchewan's education system coupled with recognition that the status quo is not sufficient.

There was strong support for the current system where one locally-elected board of education is responsible for each school division or administrative unit. As well, there was significant support for the current number and size of school divisions. This was true, regardless of the size of school division, even though there was recognition that students in larger school divisions were better off now than they were prior to the 2006 amalgamation. Much of the concern about larger governance units centered on questions of whether the impact of the change was worth the upheaval it might cause. There was little consideration of the opportunities that could be found in a new or different structure of governance and administration.

The Panel did not get the impression that there is a crisis in the education system. However, participants in the consultations recognized the need for renewal and a need to do better, particularly for First Nations and Métis students. There was also recognition that, in a time of economic restraint, there is a need to look for solutions and new ways of doing things. At the centre of every dialogue was the importance of doing the best we can for every student, from every community, in every corner of the province.

A theme that resounded in the consultations was a desire to have an education system that can be the envy of the world. While there were many opinions expressed about the content of the Perrins Report, there was no disagreement with the need to work together toward an education 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 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" (Perrins Report, p. 3).

Moving Forward

The Panel heard the will to move forward in the following ways in keeping with the principles of good governance outlined in the Perrins Report:

Strategic Direction

- Build upon the momentum created by the ESSP. This momentum was described in several ways, each of which needs to be strengthened:
 - Student First focus – continue and enhance the focus on students in the ESSP;
 - focus on common outcomes – the outcomes are seen as the “right outcomes”, recognizing others may be added over time;
 - cooperation and mutual accountability – participants noted that the ESSP requires them to look not only within their school division, but across school divisions to achieve improvement overall; and,
 - sharing and implementing effective practices – this has begun but can be strengthened.

Effectiveness

- Strengthen the education sector by identifying excellence and effective practices, and ensuring continuous improvement throughout the system:
 - Participants identified various structures that could accomplish this, including the PLT, an EQC or another entity.
- Move all boards of education to a level of size and effectiveness that is commensurate with their responsibility for governing complex, multi-million dollar operations while focusing on both local and provincial priorities:
 - There was support for establishing a set of competencies, skills and a common curriculum. This change will need to be coupled with the requirement for boards to demonstrate they have achieved that competency.
- Examine school division boundaries in northern Saskatchewan and in other areas of the province with boards of education and communities to make changes where needed. Appreciation for the cultural complexities of the north must be considered when reviewing boundaries. A “southern solution” may not be as successful.



Efficiency

- Continue to pursue efficiencies with a view to improving services, ensuring value and controlling costs. Efficiencies were seen as the greatest opportunity for savings within the education system and there were various views on how best to accomplish this. It was clear that:
 - There is openness to government setting more aggressive targets for efficiencies; and,
 - A mechanism is needed to develop business cases and to plan and implement province-wide efficiencies based on value, not simply lowest cost. This cannot be handled in an ad hoc, piecemeal manner.

Accountability

- Clarify roles, relationships and strategic direction through legislation, regulations, policy and improved communications to provide stronger direction:
 - It was clear that *The Education Act, 1995* has not kept pace with changes in funding, taxation and governance of the education sector and many felt there is a need for updated legislation;
 - The Act needs to support good governance, clearly outlining roles, responsibilities and accountabilities to avoid duplication, inconsistency and confusion; and,
 - Clarifying roles and accountabilities can strengthen relationships and respect at all levels of the education sector.
- The ESSP was seen as providing mutual accountability but several participants pointed to the need for enhanced processes of continuous improvement and accountability.

Transparency and Equity

- Improve consistency and equity across the province by examining policies, procedures, costs and agreements.

Participation

- Listen at all levels to the voices of students, parents, teachers and communities with an emphasis on including those voices that are not typically heard, such as First Nations, Métis, new Canadians and others:
 - There is opportunity for greater engagement with SCCs and students in planning and policy.
- Explore with First Nations and Métis people and organizations ways to engage with them while recognizing jurisdiction and their ways of governance and education.

To undertake this work, there is a need for strong leadership and a willingness throughout the sector to work together toward improvement. The Panel heard a strong will from boards, administrators and provincial education organizations to work together in new ways. Every person in the education sector has a choice either to be part of the change or to stand in the way of change. Moving forward will require strong leadership and cohesive effort. The status quo is not good enough for our students.

Appendix A: Summary of the Input from the Online Portal

On December 21, 2016, the Honourable Don Morgan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Education, received the Perrins Report and announced the appointment of a six-person Educational Governance Advisory Panel to lead consultations with the education sector and the public. The mandate of the Panel was to engage stakeholder organizations in face-to-face dialogue and invite students, parents, teachers, administrators and the public to participate through an online engagement process. The role of the Panel was to act independently of any stakeholder organization, to listen objectively and to gather feedback based on the information and options contained in the Perrins Report. The Panel was asked to provide the Minister with a written report of their findings.

Online Portal

The consultation website was launched on December 21, 2016, on saskatchewan.ca. The webpage provided background information, including the Perrins Report, an online submission form and an email address. Respondents were required to identify themselves and their organization/school division to ensure authenticity of their submission. An unlimited character, open-ended submission form was provided for respondents' feedback. The webpage indicated that submissions would be posted online following the closure of the consultations.

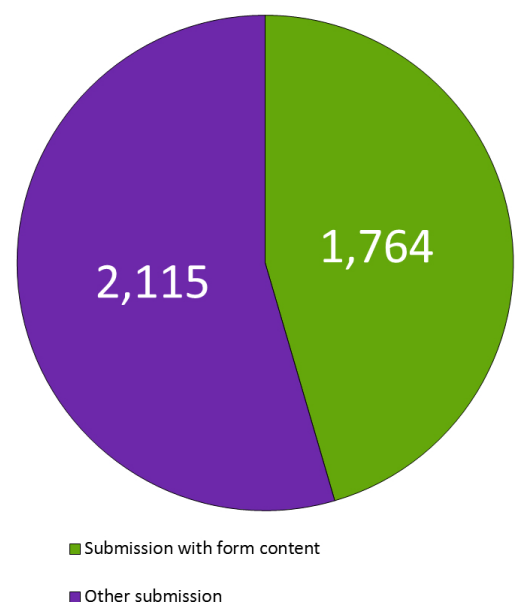
From December 21, 2016, to January 23, 2017, 3,879 responses were received. A number of organizations, including school divisions, SCCs, municipalities and others, encouraged submission of identical content or "form" letters. These types of submissions accounted for approximately 46 per cent (1,764) submissions.

Among the 3,879 submissions, the online portal received formal submissions from 31 of the organizations and school divisions that met with the Panel during the period from January 5 to January 26, 2017.

Total Submissions:
3,879

Submissions from
Organizations: **31**

Form (Standard
Content) Submissions:
1,764





Online Respondents

The portal received input from individuals, school divisions, SCCs, groups and organizations. The respondents have been grouped into the following roles:

Public

The majority of the submissions were from the public (i.e., respondents who did not identify a specific role or affiliation with an organization or school division). These accounted for 2,434 or 63 per cent of the submissions.

Parents/SCCs

These respondents included people who identified as parents or guardians, as well as individual and collective submissions from SCC members. This group accounted for 1,001 or 26 per cent of submissions.

Teachers/Employees/Board Members

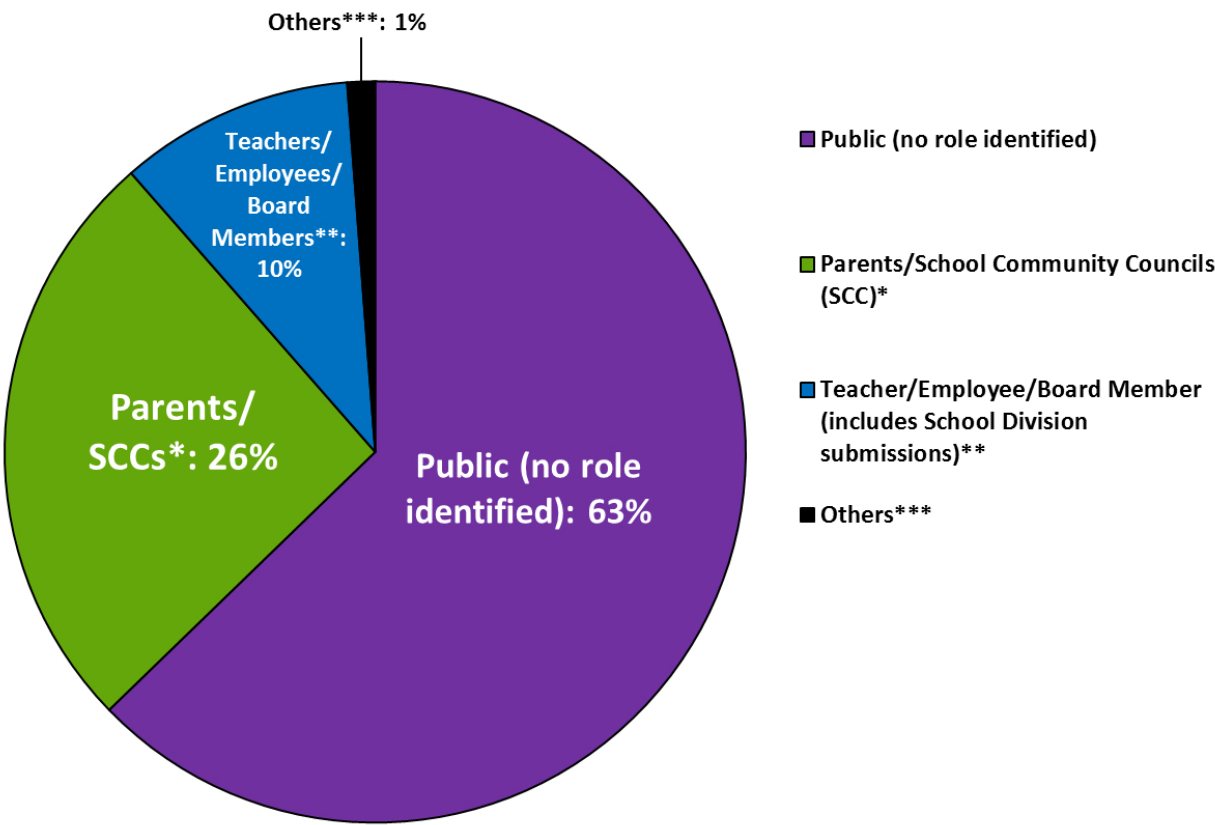
This group represents respondents identifying as teachers, employees and board members. It also includes the formal submissions from school divisions. This group accounted for 397 or 10 per cent of submissions.

Other

This group of respondents includes businesses, business associations, media, lobby groups, unions and religious organizations and accounts for 19 submissions or one per cent. This group also includes those identifying themselves as attached to post-secondary institutions, which accounted for eight submissions or 0.5 per cent.

The following pie chart exhibits the percentage of respondents identifying with each of the roles. The largest group of respondents was public, with the next largest group being parents/guardians and SCC members, followed by people closely associated with the delivery of education (i.e., teachers, employees and board members).

Online Respondents to the K-12 Educational Governance Advisory Panel Consultations by Role



*Individual submitters identified as both Teacher/Employee/Board Member and Parents are included in this category.

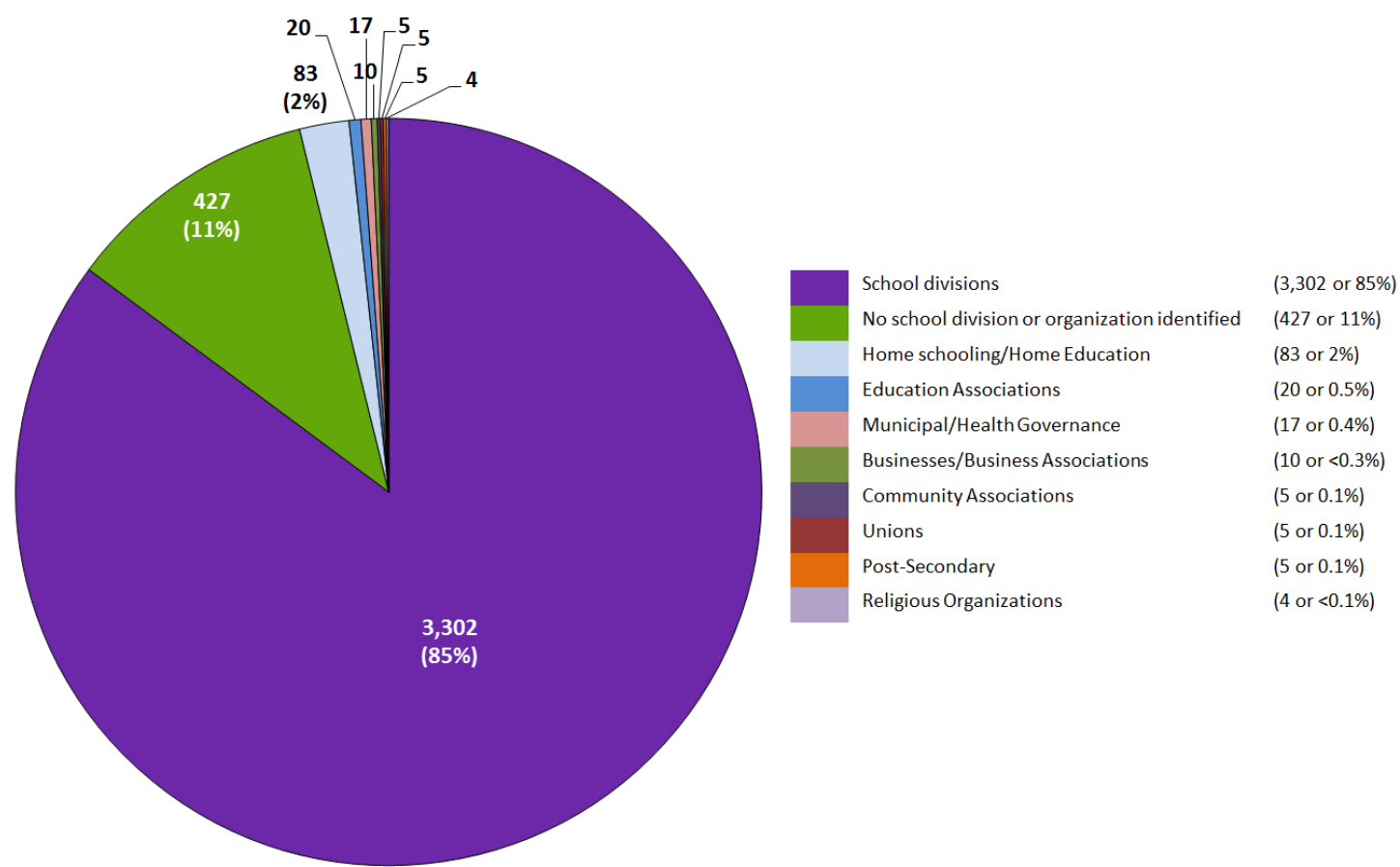
**Individual submitters identified as both Teacher/Employee/Board Member and Parents are counted in the Parents / SCCs category.

***Submissions from *Third Parties* (i.e. Businesses, Business Associations, Media, Lobby Groups, Unions & Religious organizations), *Education Organizations* (including Post-Secondary) and *Municipal Governance* (i.e., Mayors, Reeves, RM Councils, etc.) are included in this category.

In addition to the identification of roles, many respondents identified affiliation with an organization or school division. The following chart provides the percentage of submissions by organizational affiliation. The largest portion (85 per cent) were affiliated with a school division (i.e., they could be a parent, employee, board member, etc., but identified a particular school division in the submission). The remaining categories were significantly smaller, with the second largest category (11 per cent) not mentioning affiliation with any organization.

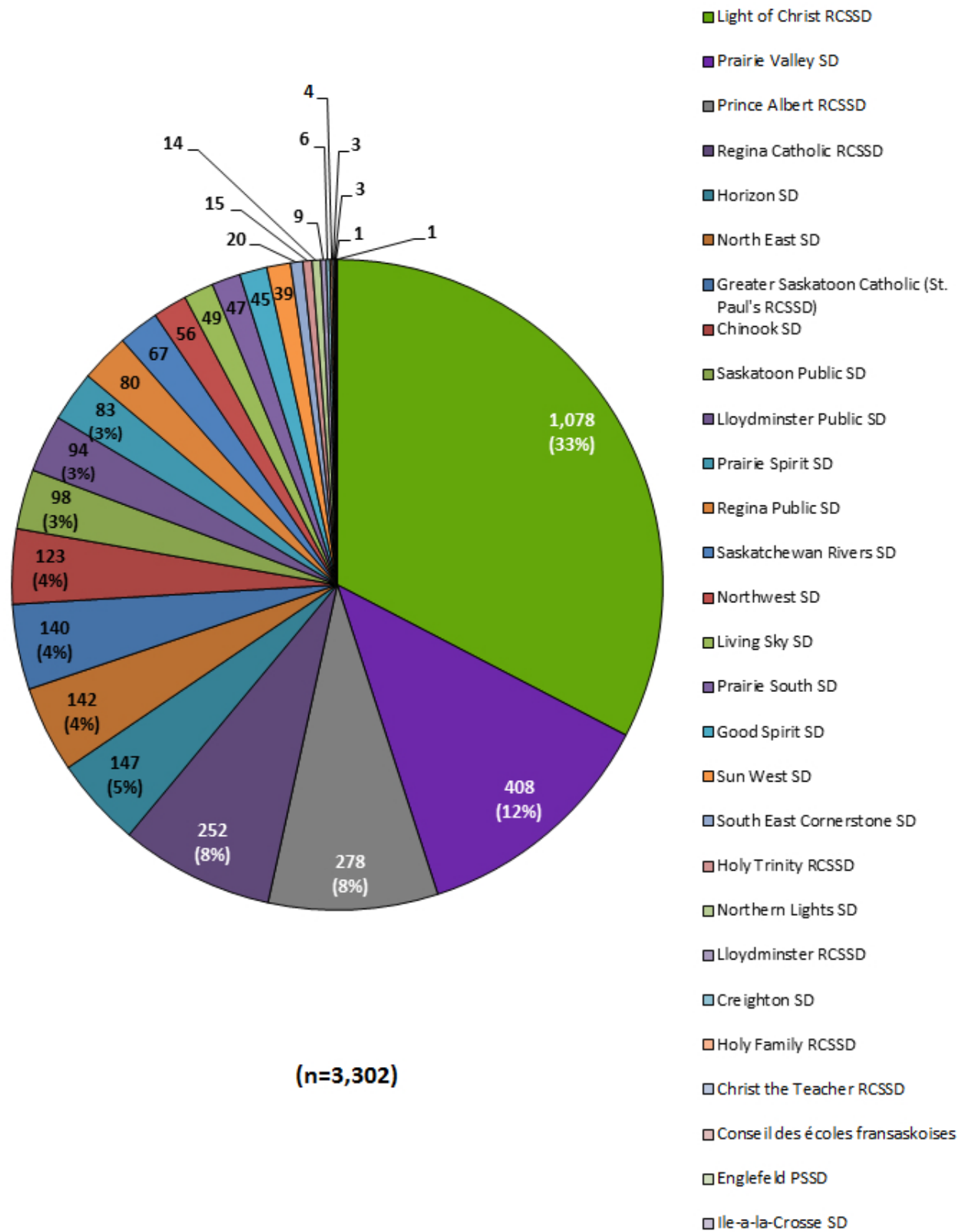
While the number of respondents from unions was relatively small, the Canadian Union of Public Employees had an online petition signed by 650 members.

Online Respondents to the K-12 Educational Governance Advisory Panel by School Division/Organizational Affiliation



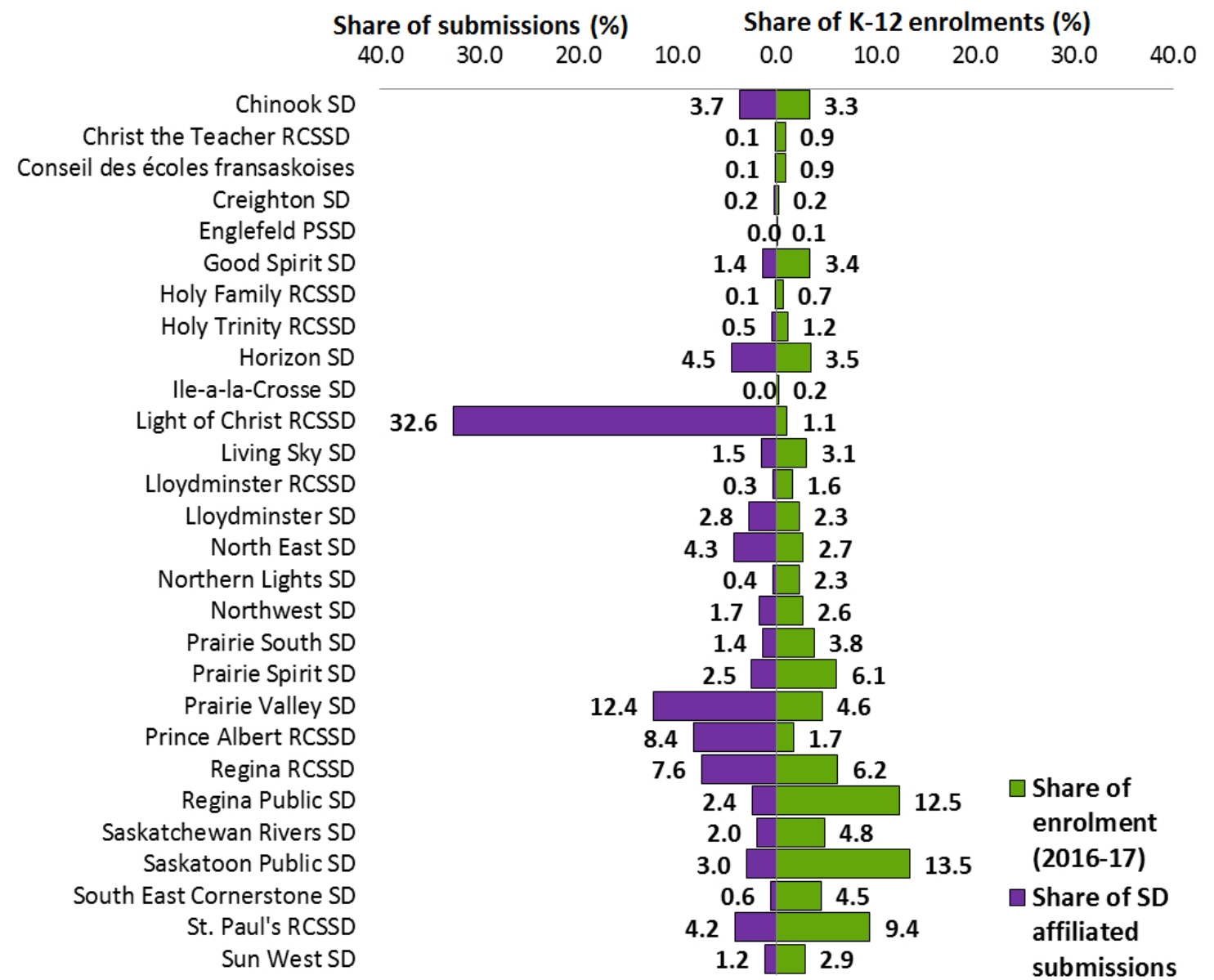
Of those respondents who identified an affiliation with a school division, there was a broad range in the number of people responding from each school division as illustrated in the chart on the next page.

Online Respondents to the K-12 Educational Governance Advisory Panel by School Division Affiliation



The following chart indicates the percentage of respondents by affiliated school division in comparison to the share of provincial K-12 enrolment for each school division. It shows that some school divisions are over-represented in submissions, while others are underrepresented. For example, while Light of Christ Roman Catholic Separate School Division accounts for less than two per cent of provincial K-12 enrolment, submissions from people within that school division account for one-third of all school division-affiliated submissions received. Similarly, Prairie Valley School Division accounts for about five per cent of provincial enrolments, yet its share of Panel submissions is at 12 per cent. On the other end of the spectrum, Regina Public School Division and Saskatoon Public School Division together account for more than one-quarter of all enrolment in the province (26 per cent) yet are represented by just five per cent of school division-affiliated Panel submissions.

Percentage of Respondents (n=3,302) by Affiliated School Division Compared to Provincial Share of Enrolment by School Division



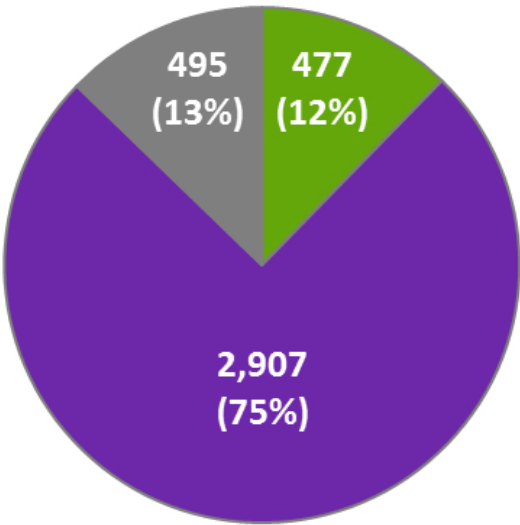
Content of the Online Submissions

The responses received from the online submissions and emails varied in length from one or two sentences to several pages. In addition to the feedback on the Perrins Report and opinions related to the governance and structure of education, respondents provided diverse perspectives and concerns regarding the Ministry of Education, the Government of Saskatchewan, specific school divisions, education in general and their individual interests in students’ education.

Each validated submission was initially categorized according to three high-level categories: *Supports Status Quo*, *Supports Some Change* and *Neutral/Other*. The following charts illustrate this analysis. The left chart includes identical content (form letter) submissions, the right does not. Together they illustrate that the largest proportion of submissions – whether identical content or not – supported the status quo.

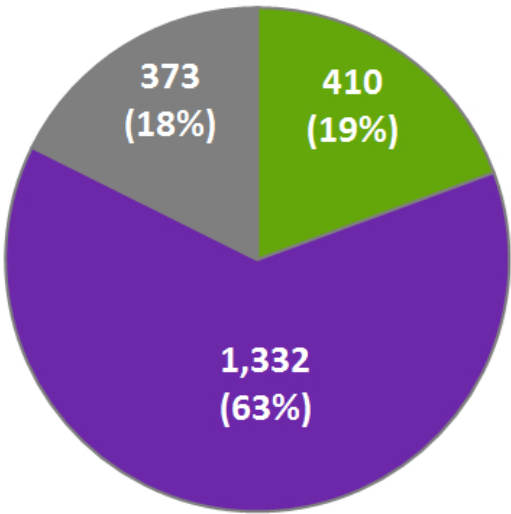
Submissions to the K-12 Educational Governance Advisory Panel by “Supports Some Change,” “Supports Status Quo” or “Neutral/Other”

All submissions (n=3,879)



- Supports Some Change
- Supports Status Quo
- Neutral/Other

Non-Form letter submissions (n=2,115)



- Supports Some Change
- Supports Status Quo
- Neutral/Other

Development of Themes

The content of each submission was further analyzed for more specific themes. Given the open-ended nature of the process, the themes were not pre-determined but were developed by identifying and grouping ideas from the submissions, resulting in 17 themes. While 17 is a relatively large number of themes, further grouping was difficult given the breadth and diversity of ideas covered in the submissions. The following provides an overview of the themes drawn from the online submissions, listed from most to least prevalent:

Supports Local Voice and Representation

These respondents stated the importance of having board members who represent local community voice. They also expressed commitment to having the choice to elect local board members who would best serve their school community, family, and their children's education. These respondents indicated that elected boards provide a visible, accountable voice to support and address student and community needs and interests in education decision making.

Student Education Focus

These respondents stated their support for ensuring a student focus. Respondents identified attention to Student First, student outcomes, student needs, student and teacher resources, support staff, student and parent voice, the ESSP and student success in relation to potential changes to governance.

Rural/Small School Community Concerns

These respondents stated their support, values and personal choices related to the importance of education in rural and smaller communities. Respondents expressed concerns about the potential impacts education governance decisions may have on students, schools and rural communities, including concerns about students, school closures, transportation, travel times, funding and resources.

Supports Status Quo/Against Amalgamation

These respondents stated a preference to remain with the status quo or that they were opposed to amalgamation or changes. Respondents stated that they were specifically against Option 1 or 2 or clearly identified they did not support any of the three options presented in the Perrins Report.

Supports Faith-based Choice

These respondents identified that they had chosen Catholic education for their children and that they valued the recognition of minority faith rights and the opportunity to make that choice.

Supports Amalgamation/Changes

These respondents identified support for amalgamation and/or changes. Most within this group indicated support for Option 3A or Option 3B in the Perrins Report as the best option(s). A few (less than one per cent) stated support for Options 1 and 2.

Consultation Process Concerns

These respondents stated concerns about the consultation process. The majority of concerns focused on insufficient information to make an informed decision, unanswered questions regarding the potential impacts of change, insufficient information about cost savings, and a short review timeline. Some cautioned or requested that an additional review should be conducted before any decision is made.

Supports Cost Efficiencies

These respondents noted support for cost efficiencies and more efficient systems within divisions. They identified opportunities for cost savings through processes, board salaries, administration costs, travel and transportation costs, materials, IT equipment, copier machines and other areas of spending.

Non-Governance/General Education Concerns

These respondents did not directly share thoughts regarding the Perrins Report, nor did they clearly refer to it. Respondents shared personal views and concerns about their children's education, curriculum, classrooms, teachers, funding cuts, transportation issues, student-teacher ratios, their personal education experience, or other information not specifically related to the Perrins Report.

Home-Based Education Concerns

These respondents stated the importance of support, recognition and inclusion for home-based education students and home educators. Respondents stated concerns that home-based education was not included in the Perrins Report. They requested equal funding and consideration of home-based educators as stakeholders if any potential changes are brought forth.

Lloydminster Community Concerns

These respondents commented specifically on the potential impacts changes to education governance and structure might have on the Lloydminster community. They spoke of concerns related to funding, provincial equality, dual accountability demands and the unique needs of Lloydminster as a separate entity. They expressed their concerns that amalgamation or any structural changes might disrupt the quality of education and services they currently enjoy.

Supports Reduction of Board Members

These respondents stated either support for a reduction in the number of board members or a general lack of support for current board members.

Supports Combining Public and Separate Systems

These respondents stated their support of, opinions on and suggestions for combining the public and separate school systems. Their rationale included cost savings as well as personal beliefs.

First Nation and Métis Education Focus

These respondents stated concerns with First Nations and Métis education outcomes and supported the importance and priority of student achievement. They noted the need for ongoing supports required to exceed current outcomes, increase success and increase graduation rates.

Supports Appointed Boards

These respondents stated they were in favour of appointed board members.

Northern Community and Schools Concerns

These respondents stated the importance and uniqueness of northern communities and offered concerns about the impact potential changes might have on students and families. Respondents stated the need for continued or additional supports for students in northern communities and schools.

Supports Francophone Education

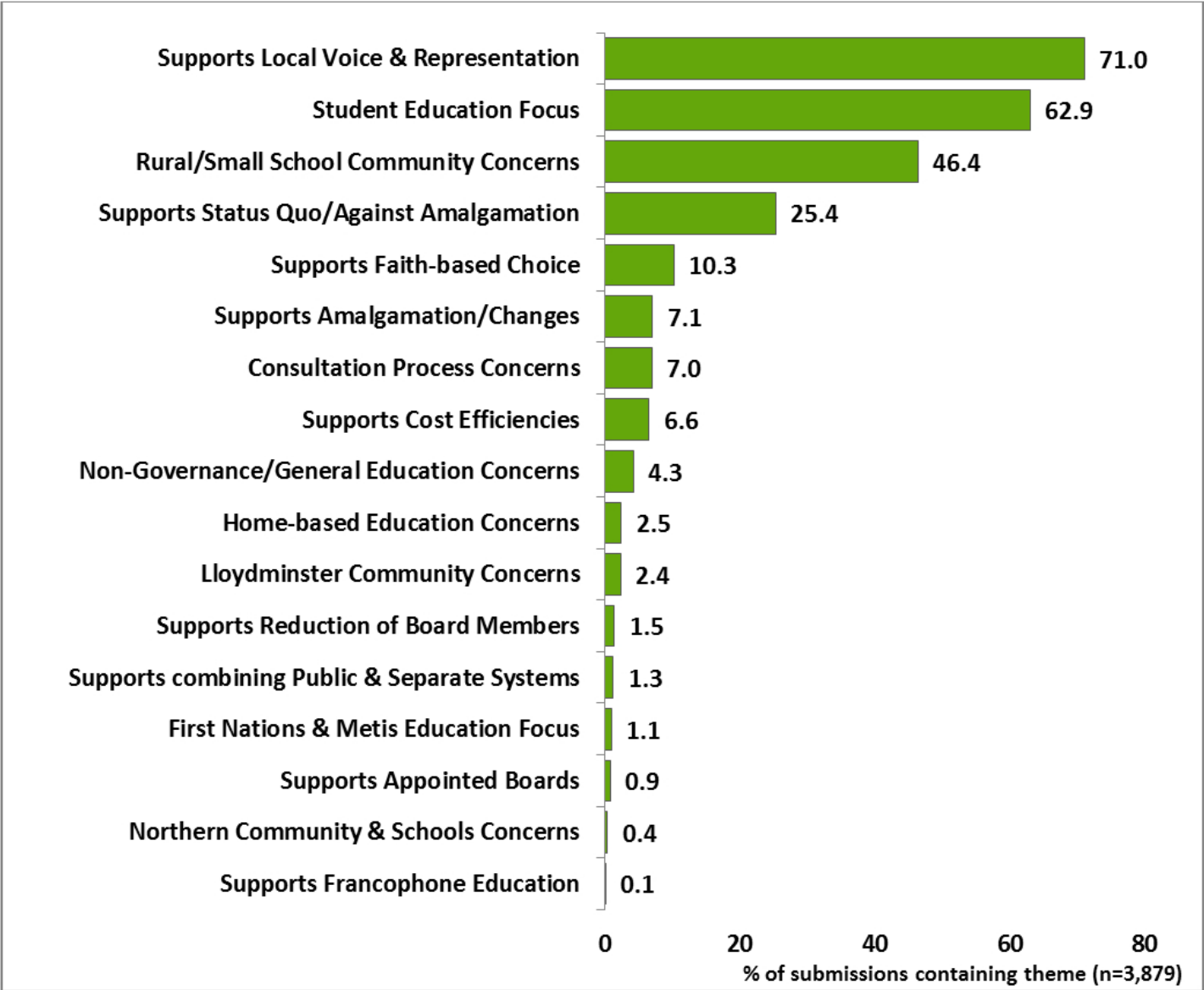
These respondents stated the importance of government support for francophone education and the francophone community.

Occurrence of Themes

In most instances, submissions contained more than one theme. All themes were identified but if there were many themes in a submission a maximum of three themes were included in the analysis.

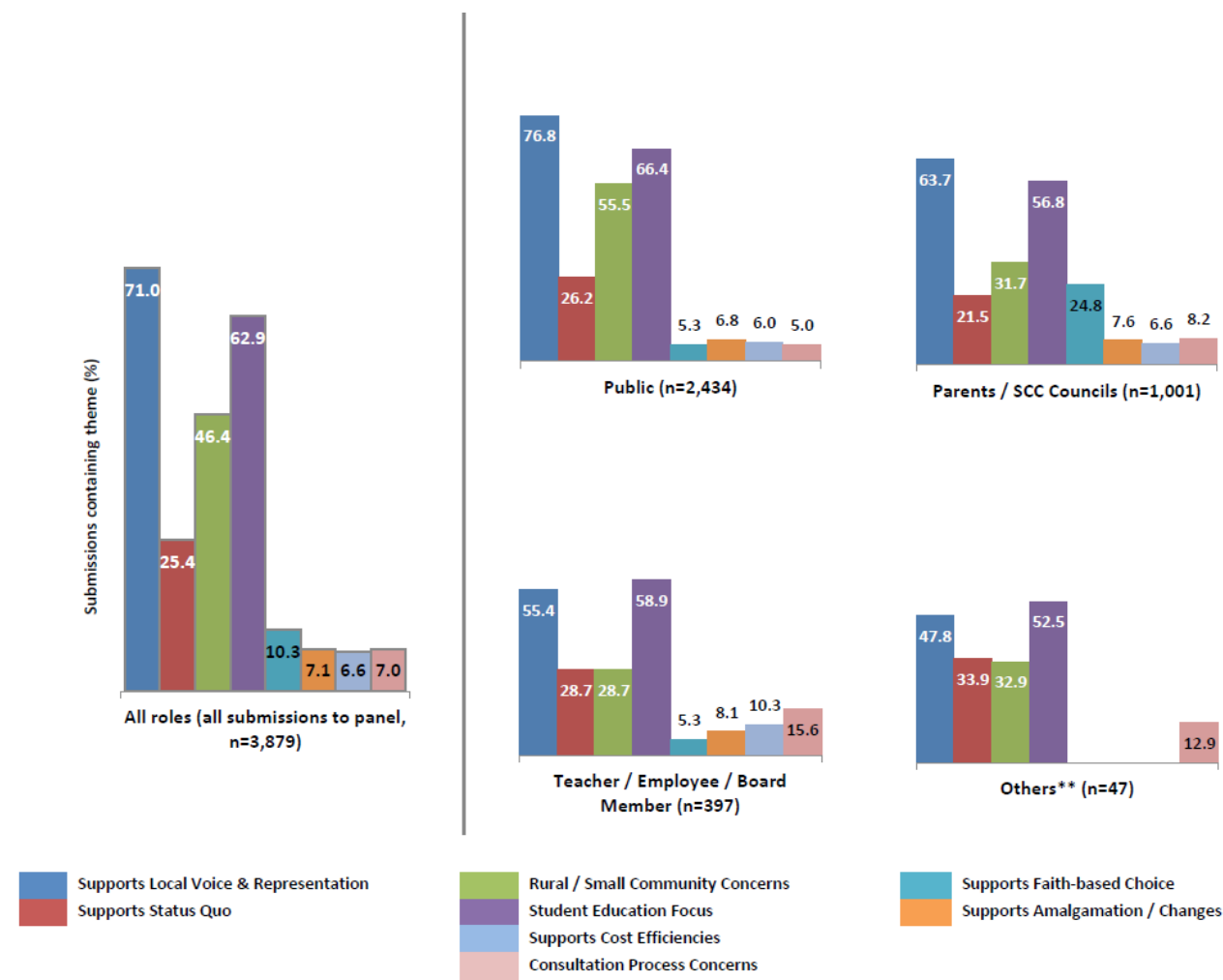
The following chart summarizes the percentage of submissions containing each of the themes.

Occurrence of Themes in All Submissions to the K-12 Educational Governance Advisory Panel



Further theme analysis was conducted by correlating themes with the roles of respondents. The following graph compares the eight most frequently occurring themes by role of the respondent⁸. The chart on the left provides the percentage of all submissions that contained the theme. The remaining graphs demonstrate the occurrence of the themes within each of the identified roles – Public, Parents/SCCs, Teacher/Employees/Board members and Other.

Occurrence of Themes by Role



**The 'Others' group includes submissions from Third Parties (19), Educational Organizations (8) & individuals or groups involved in Municipal Governance (20)

Consistently across all role groupings, the top four themes were: *Supports Local Voice and Representation*, *Student Education Focus*, *Rural/Small Community Concerns* and *Supports Status Quo/Against Amalgamation*.

⁸ The nine themes with the lowest frequency of occurrence in the above chart are not included in the following chart showing "Occurrence of Themes by Role".

For both the Public and Parents/SCCs, the most frequently occurring theme was Supports Local Voice and Representation; however, for the Teacher/Employees/Board member and Other groups, Student Education Focus was most frequent. Overall, these two themes were significantly more popular among all groups than any other theme. It is interesting that *Rural/Small Community Concerns* were prominent in submissions from the public (55 per cent of these submissions included this theme) and occurred less frequently (around 30 per cent) in the remaining role groupings. The percentage of submissions citing *Support for the Status Quo* ranged from a low of 21.5 per cent among Parents/SCCs to a high of 33 per cent within the Other grouping.

Supports Faith-based Choice occurred in 24.8 per cent of the submissions from Parents/SCCs, significantly higher than its occurrence in any other group.

Concerns about the consultation process were reported by all groups but were highest in the Teacher/Employee/Board Member group.

Appendix B: Consultation with Groups and Organizations

Boards of Education

Public School Divisions:

Chinook School Division

Creighton School Division

Good Spirit School Division*

Horizon School Division

Ile-a-la-Crosse School Division*

Living Sky School Division

Lloydminster School Division*

North East School Division*

Northern Lights School Division*

Northwest School Division*

Prairie South School Division*

Prairie Spirit School Division*

Prairie Valley School Division*

Regina Public School Division*

Saskatchewan Rivers School Division*

Saskatoon Public School Division*

South East Cornerstone School Division*

Sun West School Division*

Separate School Divisions:

Christ the Teacher Roman Catholic Separate School Division*

Englefeld Protestant Separate School Division

Holy Family Roman Catholic Separate School Division*

Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Separate School Division*

Light of Christ Roman Catholic Separate School Division*

Lloydminster Roman Catholic Separate School Division

Prince Albert Roman Catholic Separate School Division*

Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division*

St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division (Greater Saskatoon Catholic School Division)

Francophone School Division:

Conseil des écoles fransaskoises

Other Organizations:

Canadian Union of Public Employees*

Directors of Education*

La Loche School Community Council

League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents of Saskatchewan*

Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities*

Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials*

Saskatchewan Catholic School Boards Association*

Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce*

Saskatchewan Home Based Educators

Saskatchewan School Boards Association*

Saskatchewan School Boards Association – Aboriginal Council

Saskatchewan School Boards Association – Public Section*

Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation*

Service Employees International Union West*

University of Regina

University of Saskatchewan

3S Health

While the Panel met with representatives of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) and some tribal councils, the Panel was advised that these could not be considered as consultations.

*Denotes school divisions/organizations that provided formal submissions.

