

**DATE:** June 6, 2017

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Trustee Michael Janz

**SUBJECT:** Motion re: Third Party Panel Study of Operational Services of School Jurisdictions

**REFERENCE:** [Trustees' Handbook – Section 5.2.2 – Notices of Motion](#)

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**ISSUE**

Notice of motion was served at the May 23, 2017, Board meeting.

**BACKGROUND**

The recommendation contemplates convening a blue ribbon panel with third party input of education and business experts to study efficiencies in operational services of school jurisdictions across the province in all educational spending to ensure that resources provided to the classroom are maximized and front line staff are protected.

The costs identified with this initiative would be covered by the board initiative fund and an initial estimate is \$10,000.

**Rationale:**

Education is the second largest provincial expenditure next to health care. The majority of that funding is allocated to 61 different school boards overlapping across Alberta. This motion provides an opportunity for our board to reaffirm the message to the provincial government and all other school jurisdictions that we are open for business and we are looking to collaborate.

The first step would be studying the issue—let's find ways to save money and bring experts together to shake the collective school piggy bank. If we can pool resources together to increase our purchasing power and find efficiencies in operational services, we could not only save money but improve the educational experience for our students.

The second step would depend on the outcomes highlighted in the report, but it could involve greater partnerships between school districts, one-off initiatives, or outcomes yet to be contemplated.

Minister Eggen recently said, "[I've been pushing hard for school boards to co-operate in regards to transportation and procurement, even physical buildings.](#)"

At the Edmonton Public Audit committee, the addition of external auditors has added great value to our board internal processes. It is helpful to have an external set of eyes review processes, ask questions and share ideas.

In our own District, one area I've been impressed with is the economies of scale that we can apply to 205 schools. Our Finance and Central staff team have been looking at various processes to make sure that we are always putting our core mandate first: education. For example, at Edmonton Public, shared purchasing of Chrome Books saved 25%. Shared waste management collection saved resources as

well. The contemplation of bulk purchasing graphing calculators for high school students through our District purchasing is another of the additional ideas that we could showcase. As a large district, we can take advantage of economies of scale and save dollars for all students.

Another example of collaboration that comes to mind is the shared transportation initiative with Edmonton Catholic Schools; the Edmonton Student Transportation Authority could save \$2.5 million and result in efficiencies annually.

Findings from our blue ribbon panel would be shared with other school districts and government funders. Millions could be redirected every single year back to classrooms across Alberta, school fees eliminated, and much more.

**Here are just a few Ideas that could be explored:**

- Technology purchasing
- Software licensing - investigate provincial or geographic software licenses and shared hardware for enterprise systems that can be used by a number of jurisdictions
- Regional student transportation departments
- Common purchasing arrangements - economies of scale across regions
- Infrastructure
- The sharing of business services (e.g., payroll, infrastructure project management, transportation, etc.)

**RECOMMENDATION**

- 1. That the Edmonton Public School Board initiates a blue ribbon, third party panel to study efficiencies in operational services of school jurisdictions across the province in all education spending to ensure that resources provided to the classroom are maximized and front line staff are protected.**
- 2. The Edmonton Public School Board allocates \$10,000 from the Board initiative fund to cover meeting expenses and incidentals of the panel.**

**NEXT STEPS**

If approved, this initiative would be delegated to the Board Audit Committee to determine logistics. The timeline could focus on specific areas and would be coordinated with input by our administration.

The outcomes identified would be brought forward to a future public Board meeting and shared with the provincial government.

MJ:mj