

A Message From Chinook School Division Trustees To All Residents of The Area We Share

Chinook Board members are joining with school divisions across the province, the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, (SSBA) and the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) to encourage our communities to continue their support of publicly funded, locally governed education.

When the Perrins' Report suggested the option of one single provincial public school board reporting to the Minister of Education, our residents and indeed the whole of Saskatchewan joined in an overwhelming condemnation of the option. The provincial government, to their credit, backed away from that option and we all gave a sigh of relief.

Unfortunately, when the recent provincial budget for education was introduced, so was a proposal to replace the current Education Act with one that reflected the recommendation in the Perrins' Report. In the simplest terms, the existence of boards is retained, but virtually every decision is at the pleasure of the Minister of Education and the bureaucracy of the Ministry. Further, to add concern to the already troubling direction, the government has proposed that virtually all rules except the added authority for the Minister would be moved to regulation instead of legislation. There are some major implications for the proposed changes to Bill 63. To quote Dr. Shawn Davidson, President of the SSBA:

"Bill 63, in essence, moves away the responsibilities of boards from law, which must be changed during the day in a legislative process, into regulations, which are essentially rules that can be changed in the dark".

Not only can regulations be changed in the dark but they can be put into effect before the lights are turned on, without any advance warning or consultation. School boards would be left with almost no authority in legislation. Here is an article that gives a fairly clear breakdown of what the proposed changes for Bill 63 will mean: <http://leaderpost.com/news/politics/a-closer-look-at-bill-63-the-controversial-education-act-amendment>

If these changes are implemented as presented, they could also be imposed on any other democratically governed institution, including our towns, cities, villages and RMs. Virtually all of our public institutions could be impacted using the same logic or methodology. It's important to remember that these powers, methods and systems will be handed to this and future governments. How will they choose to use them?

To the credit of the Minister of Education and the provincial government, they have shown that they want to hear from the public on such matters. Reinstating the funding of libraries shows they are concerned about the opinions, needs and wishes of their communities and constituents on whose behalf they govern.

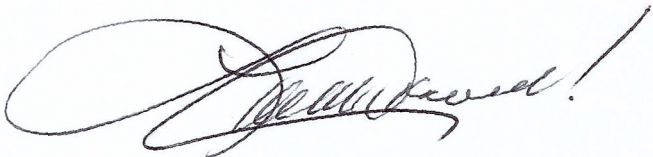
All residents of the southwest are encouraged to share messages on social media, and to send a letter or email to their local MLAs and senior government officials with their concerns. Contact information for all MLAs is available on the SSBA's website at this link: <http://saskschoolboards.ca/education-belongs-to-community/>

The major points that we feel are worthy of concern to us all:

- The new Education Act (Bill 63) removes all legislated powers of locally elected boards, and transfers them to the Minister and the Ministry of Education.
- Using regulation instead of legislation allows change without public knowledge, consultation, or notice to our residents.
- This type of centralization of power could be applied to any other local government.
- These powers will be passed on to every government as they take office, to use as they see fit. This is not just a short term concern!

For further information or discussion, please contact any of our board trustees directly or through our website: <https://www.chinooksd.ca/Board/Trustees>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry Caswell", with a large flourish at the end.

Larry Caswell, Board Chair

On behalf of all Chinook School Division Board Members