

The Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association (ACSTA) commends Alberta Education and the Alberta Government for the work they have done in drafting Bill 18: The Education Act. We are confident that this legislation will include a number of positive features that will enhance education in Alberta and work towards creating a system that is able to meet the needs of students in the 21st Century. The ACSTA, after reviewing the proposed Bill 18, has prepared the following key messages:

1. Eligibility of Separate School Residents to Vote or Run for Public School Trustee (s. 71 & s. 132(4))

While we acknowledge that this grants additional rights to separate school electors, this was not an issue that we lobbied for and we anticipate that the granting of this right will cause dissension in the community among public school electors. As such, we do not wish separate school electors to have this additional right.

2. Establishment of New Separate School Districts (s. 106 – 119)

We recognize that much work has gone into the creation of the new model for establishment of school districts (the “flower petal” formation), and we believe that it is an innovative and interesting provision. However, we are of the opinion that in addition to this new model of formation, we must have the traditional 4 x 4 method of establishment written into the legislation (to safeguard the process of establishment if the “flower petal” formation is challenged).

3. Shared Facilities (s. 188(3))

The ACSTA supports facilities remaining distinct to each board and does not support shared facilities. Catholic schools in Alberta are unique faith environments. The school environment, in its entirety, is filled with the Catholic faith. This has made our schools distinct from all other schools in the province.

4. Religious Instruction and Exercises (s. 55)

This clause allows parents to request that a student be excluded from religious instruction. We would ask for the government to consider an exemption for Catholic schools, where the Catholic faith permeates the school in its entirety.

5. Appointment of Trustees (s. 79 & 81)

We believe that if the Minister appoints trustees to a Catholic board, they must be Catholic.

6. School Divisions Consisting of Public School Districts, Separate School Districts and School Divisions (s. 95(1))

The ACSTA supports an amendment of this section to make distinct that a separate school division may only be comprised of separate school districts or separate school divisions, this distinction would occur along denominational lines. The ACSTA supports stand alone boards.

7. Naming of School Divisions (s. 255(10) & s.74(2))

New school divisions should include the word “Catholic” in their naming, so their names would read “The _____ Catholic Separate School Division”.

8. Regulations

The ACSTA has found it fruitful to work with the Alberta Education and the Alberta Government in their continued development of Bill 18: The Education Act and appreciates being invited to work on the development of regulations after the passing of the legislation.