



PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' COUNCIL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS APRIL 2025

Date: April 14, 2025
From: Troy Tait, Executive Director and CEO
To: PSBC Representatives, Alternates and Board Chairs
Copy: Board of Directors, Superintendents

Re: April 9 – 11, 2025 – Government MLA Reception / PD and Public School Boards' Council Meeting

The Public School Boards' Council met from April 9 – 11, 2025. We are pleased to offer the following highlights from the Government MLA Reception, the Professional Development and the Council Meeting.

Government MLA Reception – April 9, 2025

On Wednesday, April 9, 2025, the Public School Boards' Association of Alberta (PSBAA) hosted its Government MLA Reception.

We extend our sincere thanks to all who participated. The event was a great success, providing an important opportunity for Ministers and MLAs to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges facing public schools.

Professional Development – April 10, 2025

Our Thursday professional learning day included the following presenters:

1. Angela Baron, Director of Communications for Prairie Rose Public Schools spoke on *'What is Sharenting and why should it matter to school divisions?'*

Angela spoke about:

- The definition of sharenting: Anything a trusted adult does with a child's private digital information. The term typically refers to parents and what they share on social media, but extends to adults who share the information of minors on any digital platform.
- The dangers of posting photos online and a look at where they can end up permanently.
- Angela talked about the future consequences of sharenting to the individual who did not have a choice when they were younger. New policies are being implemented in multiple countries and she explained the potential legal ramifications parents are facing.
- Taking a look at the process of data collection, social media, and how to remove the footprint.
- Angela showed the boards how to change privacy settings and how difficult it can be to go through the steps.
- What can divisions do to manage the risks? Boards were shown strategies and risk evaluation. Divisions can look as negligent in protecting student information and face reputational harm.
- Noncompliance with Privacy Laws.

2. Melanie Reed-Zukowski, Linda Morey, and Scott Brandt (Superintendent) from Grasslands Public Schools provided a presentation on ***'Governing a Unique Rur-ban School District!'***

They spoke on:

- A general overview of the community and the demographic that live in the area.
- They broke down the dynamic of the division and the programs they have. Including; extensive EAL programming, newcomer supports, walking school bus, newcomer parent gatherings, and a partnership with the University of Calgary.
- They broke down their Division-Wide Governance Plan that balances urban & rural needs. This includes; budgeting & resource allocation, career pathways & dual credit, division-wide equity & efficiency and calendar planning.
- A discussion around how to incorporate multiple cultures, celebrations, and navigating the barriers newcomer families face entering a new school.
- Diversity can look different. Tackling declining populations, and limitations as to what can be offered. Staff collaboration is difficult for rural schools. Siksika First Nation funds education services for 73 students at Bassano school. Managing high numbers of German Mennonite students at several county schools, and ensuring all students receive quality education for all.

3. Julie Hrdlicka, Former Trustee with the Calgary School Board presented on ***'Shifting from Compromise and Winning, to Conversation and Possibility'***

Julie spoke about the relationship between democracy and polarization, redefining conflict to strengthen democracy, and recentering democracy in ourselves and the boardroom.

- She gave tips on how to shift from destructive to productive interactions.
- She looked into the two types of Polarization: Political polarization is the **ideological distance between opposed parties**. If the differences are large, it can produce logjams, standoffs, and inflexibility. VS Belief polarization, or group polarization. Which occurs when people engage only with those who share their views, reinforcing and intensifying their beliefs. Over time, differences in opinion shift from policy disagreements to rigid, deeply entrenched divisions, making people more hostile toward those who see things differently.
- She discussed how Polarization Is Part of Democracy.
- Political parties and policies exist because people have different views on what's best for society. Democracy thrives on these competing ideas. **It encourages debate** – Democracy is built on discussion, disagreement, and argument. If everyone agreed, that is actually anti-democratic.
- The challenge is not to eliminate polarization—because it's a natural part of democracy—but to prevent it from turning into disengagement, hostility, or political deadlock. True democracy thrives when people can disagree, stay at the table, and work through conflict, rather than walking away.
- FEAR is a major component in polarization- fear of not belonging, fear of being called out or cancelled being publicly shamed and blamed. Ultimately people want to belong.

4. Brian Bittorf, Retired Aspen View Principal and Darlene Reimer presented on the topic ***'Don't Meth with Us'***

Brian's key takeaways were:

- Drug abuse can affect anyone at any age.
- Addiction is not simply “a lot of drug abuse” but a diagnosable medical disorder in which a person's compulsive drug use dominates every aspect of life. The compulsive craving for meth causes addicts to do almost *anything* to obtain it.
- They looked into what methamphetamine contains and why it is so dangerous to communities.
- The presentation has been broadened to other drugs including, cocaine, fentanyl, and heroin.
- Brian and Darlene explain how they present this information to grade 5 students and how it is typically received by the age group.

5. Dinner speaker - Graham Thompson, Commentator

Graham presented on the current political landscape in the province and federally. He discussed issues and “scandals” in the healthcare and education sectors. Graham held space for questions and an open discussion at the end of his presentation for members to engage.

PSBC Meeting April 11, 2025

Board of Directors Reports

All Board of Directors provided written reports, included in the agenda packages, as well as verbal updates.

Executive Director and CEO's Report

The Executive Director and CEO provided a written report, included in the agenda package, and a verbal update was also provided.

Environmental Scan / Board Sharing

An environmental scan was presented by each attending Board representative. Each Board was requested to share on the following questions:

1. How has the change in transportation eligibility from 1.6 - 1.0 km affected your division?
2. Does your Board collect data on the number of suspensions, expulsions, and hearings related to student behaviour and conduct in your division? If so, are you seeing trends? Increased numbers? Younger children? Specifically for grades 5 to 7.
And, the second part, what governance strategies is your division engaging in to address these issues? (Board Policy, Advocacy, Funding for preventive measures)
3. What is your Board doing to rebuild relationships and trust in your Division and community as a result of recent labour action?

Bylaw Amendments

Following the discussion at the February PSBC meeting, we began reviewing the Bylaws to identify the necessary amendments required to eliminate the Second Vice-President position and introduce an additional Director role. This review also included outlining the transitional requirements related to the election process.

Upon completing these initial revisions, we conducted a further review of the Bylaws and identified an additional necessary amendment concerning the title of our Executive Director and CEO. In alignment with a broader trend among our Fraternal Partners, there is a move toward standardizing this role under the singular title of Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Our current incumbent was appointed with both titles; adopting the sole title of CEO would align our association with our other counterparts and eliminate any potential confusion regarding the dual designation.

These bylaw amendments were approved in principle by the members during the April PSBC meeting. These amendments will be proposed at the Annual General Meeting in November.

Janet Brown Polling Highlights

The embargoed polling results have been distributed to each board for review. Members are encouraged to attend the polling discussion webinar with Janet Brown, scheduled for April 25 at 2:30 p.m.

Click here to register:

<https://public-schools.ab.ca/event/webinar-psbaa-polling-survey-briefing/>

Budget 2025

The Chair of the Budget Committee gave a current report on the budget and the preliminary outlook on the budget for 2026. As a member driven organization, we would like your input into developing our budget for 2026. We're currently in a strong financial position thanks to effective management and increased interest income. However, future planning requires your feedback.

Four potential options are being considered:

1. Status Quo
2. A slight membership fee increase
3. Increase event revenue
4. Use reserve funds

After a thorough discussion on these 4 options, it was agreed that the budget video will provide two options, a 3% increase and a 5% increase to the budget and shared with the members. Members will discuss the proposed budgets with their Boards and a decision will be made at the August PSBC to determine the appropriate course of action regarding the proposed increases.

Call to Action

Here are your Calls to Action:

- Register for the polling results review on April 25
- Discuss with your boards whether they would prefer a 3% or 5% to the budget and be prepared for the August PSBC meeting.
- Inform your Boards of the proposed Bylaw amendments that will be presented at the Annual General Meeting.
- Register for the Spring General Assembly and have the EA's release any extra rooms they may have booked that are not needed.
- Register for the August PSBC meeting in Red Deer (being hosted by Red Deer and Wolf Creek).

The next PSBC meeting will be held August 6 – 8, 2025 in Red Deer.

Click here to register or for more information: <https://public-schools.ab.ca/event/2025-august-psbc/>

Online Evaluation

The Board of Directors invites your feedback about the April 2025 PSBC meeting. Your comments, suggestions and insights inform the Association's professional development planning, programs and meeting format. If you haven't already done so, please provide your feedback by clicking on the following links:

Professional Learning and PSBC Meeting Survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WGP5M6H>

or SCAN the QR Code:



As always, if you have any questions about the April 2025 meeting summary or the PSBC Meeting, please feel free to contact me at 780.479.8080 or by email at executivedirector@public-schools.ab.ca.

Troy Tait

Executive Director and CEO