

Date of release: January 19, 2017

Prairie Spirit provides response to Perrins Report

Prairie Spirit has submitted its response to the recently released *Educational Governance Review Report*, prepared for the Government of Saskatchewan by Dan Perrins. Prairie Spirit's response to the Perrins Report focuses on improving student learning and preserving democratic processes. The Prairie Spirit Board of Education and senior administration made a formal presentation to the Perrins panel on January 11.

Prairie Spirit believes a strong focus on improving student learning must not be negatively impacted by organizational restructuring.

"Deep and meaningful student learning and ongoing adult learning must remain the priority for education and guide any governance or organizational restructuring," said Larry Pavloff, Prairie Spirit Board Chair. He pointed out that the report does not provide details of how system-wide student learning improvement would be supported following major organizational change.

The Perrins Report provides four options for education governance structure, with changes including reducing the number of school divisions in the province and re-drawing school division boundaries. Prairie Spirit would be affected by all four of the options if they were implemented as detailed in the report. The four options do not include any such changes for separate school divisions.

The Perrins Report seems to identify improving effectiveness and efficiencies as the reason for restructuring education governance and school divisions. "Prairie Spirit is achieving high effectiveness and efficiencies and is the fourth largest school division in the province with over 10,000 students," said Pavloff. "I think it's important that the Ministry and the public are reminded that Prairie Spirit made significant budget reductions over the past four years totaling well over \$11 million," he added.

According to the Ministry of Education's own statistics, Prairie Spirit is one of the most efficient and effective school divisions in the province. Prairie Spirit has low governance and administration costs and is one of the highest performing school divisions. The graduation rate for Prairie Spirit students—both aboriginal and non-aboriginal—is well above the provincial average.

The Perrins Report identifies the strengths of the current governance model, including local accountability, communication, strong local voice and a local culture of learning. The Prairie Spirit Board of Education believes that these strengths would be strikingly absent in the proposed governance models presented in the report.

The Perrins Report introduces the concept of moving from democratically elected Boards of Education to appointed Boards. The Prairie Spirit response focuses on the importance of preserving a democratic process that includes elected trustees to represent communities at the board table. "High levels of accountability are already embedded in the current governance structure," said Pavloff. Boards are accountable to government and their communities. In addition, Boards hold their administration accountable to ensure the school division operates effectively and efficiently.

In its presentation to the panel and in its formal submission, the Board said that government could meet its goals for greater accountability in education by changing regulations and legislation, avoiding large scale changes to school division structure. The amalgamation of school divisions is not cost effective and is disruptive to the learning improvement initiatives for students.

The Board's presentation to the panel voiced concern that the proposed changes include only public school divisions. If the goal is to improve efficiencies within the education sector, all school divisions—including separate school divisions—should be included in the restructuring process as described in each of the options.

-30-

Prairie Spirit School Division serves over 10,000 students in 45 schools and 28 communities surrounding the City of Saskatoon.

For more information, please contact:

Brenda Erickson

Communications Consultant

(306) 683-2800

brenda.erickson@spiritsd.ca