

SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 23 – BOARD COMMITTEE REPORT

COMMITTEE: General Affairs DATE: February 6, 2008

ACTING CHAIRPERSON: R. Cacchioni STAFF CONTACT: M. Roberts, Superintendent

In attendance:

Trustee R. Cacchioni, Acting Chairperson
Trustee Horning
Trustee S. Nicholl
Trustee G. Scanlan
Trustee C. Wiebe
Absent: Trustee M. Baxter
Trustee A. Hunt-Binkley
Staff:
M. Roberts, Superintendent of Schools
M. Stolze, Executive Assistant (Recorder)

Partner Group Representation:

COPAC	Deb Butler
COTA	Tom Potts
COPVPA	Des Sjoquist
CUPE	Bill Zeman
DSC	Not available

Item 1. Action: Confidential Disclosure Policy

During the 2007 financial audit, the District Auditors had recommended creation of a ‘confidential disclosure’ policy for the School District. Opportunities for partner group input to the concept were provided through the Finance and Legal Committee, the General Affairs Committee, through direct invitation from the Superintendent, and at a Board meeting.

On October 10, 2007, the Board provided two directions to the Superintendent:

“Draft a ‘Confidential Disclosure/Whistleblower’ Policy and Regulations regarding financial matters, which would include a one year trial period, an end report, and recommendations. The Superintendent shall consult with partner groups and bring forward the drafts to the December 5, 2007 General Affairs Committee.”

“Prepare a report respecting the advisability of expanding the Confidential Disclosure/Whistleblower Policy to include matters beyond ‘financial’ and report to the General Affairs Committee.”

The Superintendent confirmed that his report and recommendation to the Committee takes into account the opinions provided from all our partner groups. He emphasized that his preference is to make use of existing mechanisms as opposed to contracting a ‘whistleblower’ service provider, and added that he would implement a low-key internal awareness campaign.

The Committee Chairperson invited each of the partner groups to speak to their position on expanding the policy to “matters beyond financial.” COTA and COPVPA were opposed; both groups believe that there is no evidence to suggest implementation of a broad-based policy is needed. CUPE members are concerned about confidentiality and protection from repercussion. COPAC supports the concern for protection, particularly for parents who are without association support, and is in favour of the policy including matters beyond financial.

Trustees considered the comments from partner groups and discussed the matter. The Superintendent responded to questions on existing and proposed processes, including confidentiality, and protection from repercussion for the accuser and for a person wrongfully accused. He explained that there are no general answers.

The Superintendent confirmed that the policy guidelines indicate the purpose of the Confidential Disclosure policy is to remind employees of their responsibility to bring forward concerns about the inappropriate or illegal actions of others. The guidelines also state that the policy must provide protection from unfair retribution or reprisal. The question posed to the General Affairs Committee only relates to the expansion of the policy beyond financial matters.

After further discussion, the majority of Trustees were in agreement regarding a recommendation.

Motion: The General Affairs Committee recommends:
THAT: The new Confidential Disclosure policy includes financial matters only, and that it operates within existing reporting mechanisms.

Outcome: The Committee requests placement of this recommendation on the public agenda of the Board meeting on February 27, 2008.

Future General Affairs Committee Meeting Topics: None Listed

Next scheduled Committee Meeting: April 2, 2008

Questions: Please Contact:

Rolli Cacchioni, Acting Chairperson Phone: 250 765-3419 e-mail: rcacchio@sd23.bc.ca
or

Mike Roberts, Superintendent Phone: 250 470-4356 e-mail: mroberts@sd23.bc.ca

Rolli Cacchioni, Acting Committee Chairperson