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SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS/L'ASSOCIATION
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ADMINISTRATRICES SCOLAIRES

Inside this issue:

Message From The Executive Director 2

Our New President: A Feature Interview With Jim Gibbons 3

In The Presence Of Greatness: Stephen Lewis Shares His Passion With Us In Winnipeg 5

The Importance Of Public Education In Canada 6

Public Education: A Position Paper 7

Faces In The Crowd 8

Contact CASA 10

Our Mission and Our Beliefs 10

Upcoming CASA Events

- Summer Leadership Academy, July 2007, Whitehorse

Details on CASA events will be posted at www.casa-acas.ca.

Message From The President: Standing Up For Public Education

It is clear to me that public education is at the root of our democracy—it is one of the pillars that defines us as a free and democratic country. When we see this word “public,” whether it is health care, education or recreation facilities, descriptors such as inclusiveness, diversity and equity come to mind. We think of organizations and facilities that are welcoming to all, no matter race, religion, colour, gender or socio-economic status. Indeed, public education is clear in its mandate to welcome everyone, to celebrate diversity and to help each child to learn and grow.

One only needs to examine the history of my province, Alberta, to discover how public education shaped our culture. It was in 1881, in the hamlet of Edmonton in the North West Territories, that a group of residents gathered to establish the first “free” school. History records “that it was to be open to every child, including native children and the chil-



Jim Gibbons
CASA president

dren of indigents.” The group elected trustees and decided that each resident of the hamlet would make a financial contribution. A one-room school was built, a teacher was hired and classes, for all children, commenced. This was done before the territorial government endorsed it or created regulations to operate it. The fact that it was the first major public institution in the hamlet of Edmonton, even before a hospital, demonstrates the importance that our forefathers placed upon public education.

Public education is such a part of our heritage and culture that we sometimes take it for granted, or worse, begin to view it as second rate. To do so would be a mistake and we, as leaders in public education, need to stand up for this pillar of our democracy. It has often been said that it takes a whole village to raise a child. Public education is the only village that takes responsibility for each and every child.

Getting To Know Our New President

Jim Gibbons is the superintendent for Chinook’s Edge School Division, which encompasses rural central Alberta from Carstairs north to Red Deer. He recently served as president of the College of Alberta School Superintendents as well as the western director for CASA. Read more about Jim in our feature interview on page 3.

Message From The Executive Director: A National Discussion On The Value of Public Education

In Winnipeg in mid-October, CASA delegates met for three days to focus on “The Value of Public Education.” What an appropriate theme for national discussion!

We heard from **Stephen Lewis** with his global perspective on social justice in education; **Eugene White**, president of AASA, who asked us to “Stand Up, Step Up and Speak Up for public schools”; **Strini Reddy** who told us that in his personal life he was “rescued from obscurity by public education”; **Peter Bjornson**, Manitoba Minister of Education, who talked about provincial initiatives meeting the variety of community needs; **Bruce Beairsto** who made us think about the complexity of dilemmas and problem solving for administrators; **Ken Thurston** who distributed the CASA position paper on public education and held discussions for input on this key priority; a panel representing administration, trustees and business who dialogued on enhancing support for public education; and **Paul Houston**, executive director of AASA, who stated that “public education creates the public that we know.” We closed with sessions focusing on the inclusive nature of the public institution and specific concerns of refugees and Aboriginal peoples.

These were great sessions looking at so many dimensions of what we do as educators serving a diverse public across Canada. There was discussion of the need to recognize the problems in public education and there were solutions offered.

Everyone took home some things to try at the local level and noted some names for future contact.

There was consensus from this gathering: the need for diverse curriculum, the need to recognize the many cultures that make up the public education system and react to the values and beliefs of those cultures, the need to assist minorities in benefiting from public education, the need to develop the collective leadership skills of the school staff and the surrounding community through a partnership with schools and parents so that all are working for a strong positive image of public education.

One dominant message from these discussions was that public education is the core of our society and it impacts our future, our children. We, as educators, need to engage all participants in public education to raise achievement, boost support and create learning that serves all members of our communities.



Frank Kelly
CASA executive director

A Feature Interview With Jim Gibbons, continued

(Continued from page 4)

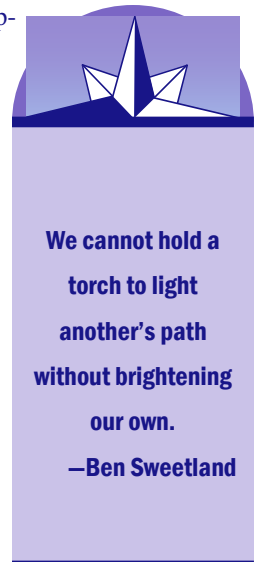
no matter what. I stepped off to lead him ahead and when I took one step forward, I sank to my waist in what was muskeg. I knew why he had refused. I suggested that we go the long way round and Bob said “no, let the reins loose and give him his head.” I did and we crossed the muskeg; the colt jumping from willow clump to willow clump, bringing me to the other side. I knew, at this point, the enduring promise of relationships built upon trust.

What do you hope to see accomplished during your term as CASA president?

Although education is a provincial matter, CASA members find that we face similar issues across this country and we can learn a great deal from each other. I wish to continue the work of others, to engage in dialogue about what matters most. We have begun a path

that has our organization leading the development of papers on pan-Canadian issues in education, such as public education and Aboriginal education, followed by theme-based conferences where we can dialogue on these important issues.

However, to be the truly national voice of senior educators, we need to ensure that all provinces of the country are able to provide a voice. To this end, we need to engage in a purposeful national forum on education and invite leaders to participate. The executive will be considering a plan to do this in the new year. We also need to engage deputy ministers of each province in the debate and have them use the strength of our organization to initiate action on national issues.



We cannot hold a
torch to light
another's path
without brightening
our own.

—Ben Sweetland

Our New President: A Feature Interview With Jim Gibbons

Jim Gibbons is CASA's new president, taking over from **Bob Mills** at the 2006 Annual Conference in Winnipeg. He has served in a variety of educational leadership positions, including teacher, principal, deputy superintendent and superintendent. He was recently appointed by the Alberta Minister of Learning to a three-year term as chair of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards and also to the senate of the University of Calgary.

Jim has served as site leader/instructor for both the San Diego State and Royal Roads universities' master's programs. As a co-researcher with the U of C, he received an Imperial Oil foundation grant to study the topic "Distributed Learning and the MT Programs." He is a trainer/facilitator for **Franklin Covey's** 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, the Four Roles of Leadership and One Smart World 4Di profiling. Jim has served on many provincial committees including Pan Canadian Students Choice Awards, Alberta Infrastructure Symposium Steering Committee, Alberta Learning's Program Assessment, Year of Learning Committee and the Community Learning Campus Steering Committee. Over the years, Jim has presented at many conferences including CASS Orientation and CASS/Alberta Learning Annual Conference.

To contact Jim, phone (403) 227-7070, email jgibbons@chinooksedge.ab.ca or write care of Chinook's Edge School Division No. 73, 4904-50th Street, Innisfail, Alberta, T4G 1W4.

Why did you decide to go into the field of education? What sparked your interest?

Actually, I did a BSc degree from the U of Calgary majoring in math/geophysics and worked for two years as a geophysicist in the oil industry in Calgary, with a focus on interpretation of digital exploration data. During a downturn, which would have seen me transferred to Houston, Texas, I returned to U of C to do a degree in education and began teaching the same year my eldest daughter was born, 1976.

Two of my summers in university had been spent as a leader/foreman in the junior forest ranger program and it was here that I think that the spark was ignited to be involved in the growth and development of children and youth. I also knew that I wanted to raise my family in a small town/rural environment away from some of the issues of big cities.

How has education changed the most since you first entered the field?

The knowledge and research that guides learning is the largest change. What we know now about brain function, learning styles, engagement of learners and identification of special needs students is significant. Also, we tend not to isolate students with unique learning needs and challenges into "special" classrooms, but to include them in regular classrooms and use differentiated instruction to address their particular needs. The rapid growth of knowledge through the development of technology and the internet has also moved the educator from the position of the information expert and impartor of knowledge to one of coach, guide and facilitator of learning.

What has remained essentially the same?

That education is the key to a healthy and productive society. That nothing happens in education until it happens to a child and that the teacher/child relationship is key to learning. Also, the debate as to the purpose of education, its funding or lack thereof, and is it working continues.

What are some of your board's most notable achievements in recent years? For example, CESD was named one of the province's top four performing divisions for improved student achievement.

Certainly you have identified one of our division's successes, but along with student achievement, we have seen steady gains over the past five years in student, parent and staff satisfaction and high school completion rates. Our board was a finalist for the Premier's Award for School Board Excellence for its district-wide character education initiative.

Most recently, our Community Learning Campus (CLC) that is a partnership between Chinook's Edge and Olds College that will see us relocate our high school in Olds into a combined \$57 million campus project is significant. Students will be able to begin apprenticeship, college or university in their senior years, at the same time they are completing high school. The CLC is due to open in

(Continued on page 4)



Remember that our nation's first great leaders were also our first great scholars.

—John F. Kennedy

A Feature Interview With Jim Gibbons, continued

(Continued from page 3)

the fall of 2008 and has already won a major international design award.

What sort of challenges has the board faced lately, and how is it meeting them?

Although our student numbers are growing slightly, in general rural populations are declining and our schools away from the Calgary-Edmonton corridor are facing viability issues. We are using technologies such as digital learning and video-conferencing to support learning in our smaller schools. Also, with the hot Alberta economy we are finding that some students are choosing to leave before completing high school, to take well-paying jobs. This demand for labour and the ability of private industry to pay more is resulting in pressures to retain positions such as journeymen, bus drivers, accounting and payroll staff, and others. We have recently found the need to implement bonuses to both recognize excellence and to encourage staff to remain.

What do you feel are some of your own personal achievements in the field of education?

My work as CASS president representing our organization to Alberta's Commission on Learning was most important as this commission has shaped the blueprint for change in education through its recommendations. During my tenure on the CASS executive, I was able to work with the Alberta School Boards Association to implement a Supplementary Pension Plan for superintendents and secretary-treasurers. Although this may not be of great benefit personally, it will really help those now entering central office by providing enhanced pension benefits.

My work over the past three years as chair of the Council on Alberta Teaching Standards (COATS) has enabled me to provide advice, on behalf of our stakeholder representative council, to the Minister on such matters as the Teaching Quality Standard, teacher preparation and the recognition of teaching excellence through Excellence in Teaching Awards. Chairing the recent CASA conference on public education in Winnipeg, as president, has been very rewarding as it was an excellent conference put together and supported by many across this country.

What are you most proud of when it comes to your work as someone in education?

My proudest moment will always be the fact that I was able, as their principal, to hand to each of my two daughters their high school diplomas. To be part of their lives through their high school years was important to me and them. I'm proud of the way our school division has continued to grow and improve over the last nine years under my leadership, and

of our Board of Trustees, my team in central office, our principals, teachers and entire staff who have worked so hard to live by our motto "Where Students Come First." I'm proud of my work with CASS and CASA and the close relationships that I have developed through these organizations.

Outside of your work in education, what is your greatest achievement or most proud moment, and why?

My greatest achievement is, with my wife and partner of 32 years (Judy), raising our daughters Sarah and Kate (27 and 30). We are so proud of each of them. We own a ranch (300 acres) in the foothills northwest of Calgary and it is here that they learned at a young age to ride, to herd cattle and to be as one with the environment.

It was a thrill also, in 2004, to be part of Alberta's Canada Games winning hockey team (for old guys) in Whitehorse, when we defeated Ontario in the finals.

What is the greatest lesson you have learned as a teacher/education administrator? How did you learn it, or who or what taught you this lesson?

I've learned that one can learn something from each person and situation that we encounter. I've learned to listen more than I talk. I've learned that each one of us wants the best for children.

I've learned so much about relationships from working with animals, particularly horses. I've learned about patience and kindness and about trust and being trustworthy—do you think that a 1,000 pound animal would let you get on his back without this? My father-in-law was the original horse whisperer—he caught wild horses in the mountains and had them tamed within days. He has passed away now but his influence continues. He once said in his wise way, when working with wild horses, "You can choose to break their spirit or to earn their trust: One will last a lifetime and be a lot easier on your body."

I knew what he meant one day when we were riding in the mountains and I was riding a colt whose mother was a "wildy." We came upon a meadow that was flat and green as could be, with only a few willow clumps every now and then. I was ahead when my horse propped and wouldn't go on,

(Continued on page 2)



**Pick battles big
enough to matter,
small enough to win.**

**—Jonathan Kozol,
On Being A Teacher**

In The Presence Of Greatness: Stephen Lewis Shares His Passion With Us In Winnipeg

By Ed Wittchen
CASA PD director

You know when you are in the presence of greatness. That sums up my feelings as I listened to **Stephen Lewis**. From the moment he got off the hotel elevator you knew there was something different about him. There was no “I’m someone important—look after me” to his style. Instead, he politely asked if he could leave his coat and briefcase somewhere convenient as he had a presentation to make to the group in the room next door. Quiet, unassuming, friendly—that was my first impression.

When he took the microphone, his passion for the bigger global society issues held the audience in awed silence for 90 minutes. This man transcends his Canadian roots in social justice as he hammers home point after point about the plight of children and women in country after country.

I saw stunned looks as he described the atrocities that women and children face in so-called civilized countries as well as underdeveloped third world and war-torn countries. When he talks about poverty he adds a dimension that we can only imagine. He has been there, seen their faces, heard their stories, walked in their villages time after time.



CASA member **Greig Christian** had the opportunity to meet Stephen at the 2006 Annual Conference in Winnipeg.

He asks “What is wrong with our world? How did all this happen? How can we allow it to continue?”

He told us of a school visit in Swaziland where 250 of the 350 students in an impoverished outdoor school are or-

phans. What do these kids want from life? They want to learn, to go to school. He told us of visiting a village where the majority of the children had AIDS, then going back months later and they were all dead. What did they want? A chance to learn.

It is the same everywhere he goes. It is the same in war-torn Afghanistan, in the poorest African villages, in every corner of the globe. It is present and that is the greatest social justice question the world has ever seen. It is the moral issue of the day. Canada has reduced its foreign aid contribution for several years.

Stephen Lewis told us it is legitimate to say that we in the West are spending \$10 billion a month on two wars that the majority of our citizens don’t understand and would prefer that we not be involved in, but we can’t find that amount per year for the fight against childhood poverty, AIDS and gender equity issues. He said that gender equity is the biggest challenge humanity has ever faced, and it will take generations to resolve.


When he finished speaking, there were seconds of stunned silence, followed by a well-deserved standing ovation; he had moved the souls of everyone in the room.

We had just seen greatness and he is Canadian and the world is better for that. Colleagues from across the country want to know what we as individuals can do to help.

I encourage our members to check out the Stephen Lewis Foundation at www.stephenlewisfoundation.org to see what you, your staff and your students can do.



Stephen Lewis



Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

—Nelson Mandela

The Importance Of Public Education In Canada

Ken Thurston, coordinating superintendent of education for the York Region District School Board, delivered a speech on the importance of public education in Canada at this year's Summer Leadership Academy in Toronto.

In this issue of *Leaders & Learners*, we are pleased to share a condensed version of his presentation as well as CASA's position paper, "Public Education—The Pillar of Canadian Society" (see page 7).

Public education is fundamental to who we are individually and collectively in every community, province and territory.

Most Canadians share this understanding of the importance of public education to greater or lesser degrees. We must not, however, be overly confident on this point. All too often public education and its contributions to Canadian youth and to Canadian society are taken for granted.

An additional challenge for public education is to clarify the important and varied roles played by leaders in public education. School and system administrators are often invisible until times of crisis or conflict. Similarly, locally accountable political masters, the trustees of public education, are all too often undervalued or at the very least, not well understood.

Canadians, including political decision makers, must be reminded of the value of public education so that funding and governance decisions do not undermine

this defining Canadian institution. CASA has set as one of its priorities the development of common messages about the importance of public education. A position paper—targeted initially at informing and influencing the decision making of the Council of Ministers of Education—has been developed through extensive dialogue and review of relevant research.

At the 2004 CASA leadership academy, David King, executive director of the Public School Boards' Association of Alberta, set the stage for the development of this position paper by challenging the widely held belief that school systems must focus solely on students and their achievement.

He argued that, "Education is the means by which we continue the community, and we engage in education for the benefit of the community as much as for the benefit of the student."



Ken Thurston

Many studies have examined and concluded that public education contributes to the health and prosperity of its communities and the nation—as well as student achievement. Certainly, it is the contribution of public education to student learning that is of primary importance. While attending to the knowledge and skill development of our students, all those involved in public education simultaneously attend to the present and future well being of our local, national and international communities. Public education ensures that students acquire commonly held values and are the equitable beneficiaries of public resources and expertise.

The CASA position paper references both the conditions within Canadian society that are requisite for a strong

public education system as well as the defining attributes of successful systems. As noted in the paper, special attention must be made to ensure that all Canadian

Education is our core business. But, it's the "public" in public education that defines us.

— Ken Thurston, July 2006

children and their communities benefit from a strong public education system including members of First Nations, new Canadians and those whose progress might otherwise be challenged if adequate resources and supports are not in place.

Public education is important in addressing both the individual and the collective. All those involved in public education must continue to be aware of, and communicate, its importance to student success as well as the future wellbeing of our communities, our nation and the world.



Education: a debt due from present to future generations.

—George Peabody

Public Education—The Pillar Of Canadian Society: A CASA Position Paper

Background: Public education that is publicly funded, publicly accessible and publicly governed has been available to students across Canada throughout our country's history. It has been a fundamental right and an asset from which Canadian students and Canadian communities have benefited. As leaders in public education, the members of CASA believe that this right must not only be celebrated but continuously protected and enhanced in order for our youth to continue to excel and our country to maintain its character and leadership as a nation.

Public education is often the invisible asset within our society and as such may be undervalued or not well understood. As a result, confidence in public education may be weakened—leading to the erosion of political support in dollars and policy or the departure from public education by students and their families (both to private schools and as school dropouts).

Public education contributes in many and varied ways to the wellbeing of individual students, school communities and Canadian society. First, public education delivers on its core business of providing equitable, accessible and effective education for all school-age learners. Secondly, as a responsive democratic institution, it works along with other public and private institutions within the communities of Canada to provide healthy, stable and supportive environments for all to live and work. And, public education models and instils the importance of an open, equitable, democratic and tolerant Canadian society. All three contributions are fundamental to the future of the students in Canada's schools and the future of Canadian society.

The contributions made by both political and administrative leaders of public education are also sometimes not well understood by students, families and communities. The contributions and value added by trustees and educational leaders must be visible and valued in order for confidence in public education to be maintained or enhanced.

Principles of Public Education: CASA believes that a strong public education system must be:

1. universally accessible and relevant to all Canadian children and youth up to at least 18 years of age
2. respectful of both the common and unique historical traditions and societal needs of all Canadian communities and provinces
3. sensitive to the unique traditions and historical rights of all Canadian children, their families and their cultures—

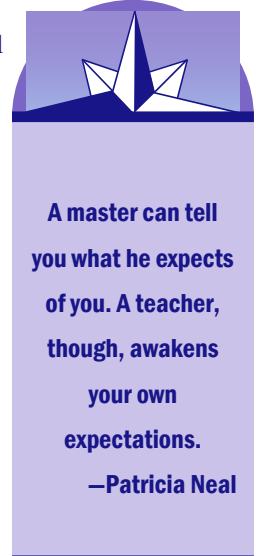
including but not limited to First Nations, new Canadians and members of minority language and minority religious groups

4. built upon a solid foundation of early childhood care provided in caring, stimulating and universally accessible homes or institutions
5. supported by a full range of accessible and high quality services that address the medical, social and mental health needs of all children, youth and their families
6. safe, inviting and engaging for all students, their families and their communities
7. focused on academic learning as well as the development of skills and character attributes essential for participation in, and contribution to, Canadian society
8. future focused—acknowledging and addressing the need for students to be lifelong learners who are technologically savvy, motivated to inquire and prepared to adapt to life in an ever-changing world community
9. guided by standards and expectations set at the local, provincial and, where appropriate, the national level
10. governed by publicly elected trustees who are responsive to the priorities of their school communities and who are appropriately compensated for their invaluable contributions to public education
11. led by educators who hold relevant teaching and academic qualifications and who have demonstrated excellence in their careers in public education
12. adequately and equitably funded in order that students in all schools, school districts and provinces benefit from a high quality public education that is not dependent upon or impacted by the varying financial resources of individual families or local communities

Recommendations: CASA therefore recommends to the Council of Ministers of Education that the following actions be taken in order to ensure the preservation and enhancement of strong public education in all provinces, territories and educational jurisdictions in Canada:

1. That funding benchmarks be established which reflect the real costs of delivering quality public education.

(Continued on page 10)



CASA PEOPLE: Faces In The Crowd



Bruce Beairsto
British Columbia

Bruce set out to be a physicist, but abandoned that career path after he earned his master's degree when he decided that people were both more interesting and more important than projectiles. He has subsequently taught secondary math and science, and held a variety of administrative positions while completing an MA in curriculum and a PhD in educational leadership. He is superintendent of the Richmond School District.

Married 33 years, he and his wife have twin daughters, age 24. One daughter started teaching grades 6 and 7 this year, while the other studies physiotherapy at Dalhousie.

Bruce is president of the Metro Chapter of the BC School Superintendents' Association, a member of the board of governors for Science World in Vancouver and an adjunct professor at Simon Fraser University.



Susan Tipper
New Brunswick

Susan was appointed superintendent of School District 8 (Saint John) in 2003. She has 26 years experience as a teacher and school administrator.

Although she was born in Truro (and remains a proud Bluenoser), she has lived in the Saint John area for many years. She now lives in nearby Rothesay. Susan graduated from Acadia University and the University of New Brunswick. She has served and continues to serve on a number of local and provincial educational committees; she has even travelled to China to consult with the Beijing Concor College.

Susan is a Rotarian and a member of the city's Recreation Interim Committee. She is active in golf, skiing, skating and music, and has received awards for flute, voice and piano. Her pride and joy, however, is her daughter Jennifer.



Sylvia Terpstra
Ontario

Sylvia has held a number of key superintendent appointments in her five years with the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board. Most recently, she was appointed director of education in December 2004. She seeks to build upon the collaborative, open and positive relationships with parents, school councils and staff that have been the hallmark of her tenure as a supervisory officer.

She comes to Kawartha after a successful 26-year career with the York Region District School Board. Beginning in 1975 as a co-op education math teacher from the University of Waterloo, Sylvia has held numerous teaching and administrative positions: teacher, department head, vice-principal and principal. An innovative and passionate educator, she holds bachelor's degrees in education and math and a master's degree in business administration.

CASA PEOPLE: Faces In The Crowd At CASA's Annual Conference



From left to right, **Michael Fisher** and **Linda Lucas** of Xerox Canada pose with 2006 EXL Award nominees **Metro Huculak** (NWT), **Pat Dorney** (CASS), **Ron Canuel** (ADGESBQ), **Garry Saunders** (AAESQ) and **Edie Wilde** (MASS, 2005 winner). Ron Canuel was presented with the national award during this year's annual conference in Winnipeg.



(Above) **Strini Reddy** delivers the opening keynote address "Social Justice Issues in Education."



(Right, above) **Frank Kelly** congratulates **John Orr** on receiving CASA's Distinguished Service Award. (Right) American Association of School Administrators president **Eugene White** presents "Show Up, Stand Up, Step Up and Speak up."



Photos by Ed Wittchen

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Our Mission:

CASA will advance quality public education and excellence in system level leadership through advocacy and national collaboration.



Our Beliefs:

CASA believes that:

- Cultural diversity is a unique strength that enriches our nation.
- Communication and collaboration with parents and other partners is integral to successful student learning.
- Quality public education provides the best opportunity for a nation to enhance the lives of all its citizens.
- Effective system, provincial and national level leadership enables and supports excellence in teaching and learning.
- A comprehensive education, equitable and accessible to all, is the key to meeting the diverse needs and securing a successful future for our youth.

Specific strategies to advance the mission:

- Establish position papers on specific topics as they relate to the beliefs and interests of the association.
- Recruit new people.
- Establish a national representation.
- Establish a three-tier public relations and publications strategy.
- Establish a funding team to create an operating budget.

Public Education—The Pillar Of Canadian Society: A CASA Position Paper, continued

(Continued from page 7)

2. That funding mechanisms be implemented in all provinces to ensure equitable access and service to students in all schools and school districts.
3. That effective practices in serving the needs of traditionally disadvantaged students and their families—including students from First Nations and new Canadian families—be identified, shared and supported.
4. That the value of public education to Canadian society and the roles of trustees, educators, educational support workers and educational leaders be documented and communicated to the Canadian public.
5. That trustees be compensated comparably with other publicly elected officials in recognition of their contributions to Canadian education and society.
6. That the historical rights of minority language and religious groups be protected.
7. That funding of education from dollars raised through taxation be used exclusively to support public education.
8. That public education systems be given the authority

and resources to diversify their services to address the needs of all students, families and communities including those who may have traditionally opted for private schools and systems.

9. That the academic and educational qualifications of educational leaders continue to include teacher qualifications except in the case of senior business officials.

10. That adequate resources be allocated to early childhood care and to services which support the medical, social and mental health wellbeing of students and their families.

11. That the technological infrastructure throughout Canada be enhanced to support high speed, broad band communication in all schools, homes and communities—linking our students with the world.

Conclusion: Public education is the fundamental pillar of Canadian society. Leaders in public education play a critical role in protecting and enhancing the delivery of quality public education throughout Canada. Adequate support for must be provided in order to preserve and enhance this critical Canadian institution.