

Twenty years ago in Newfoundland and Labrador, the summer was filled with recruitment and planning for the first non-religious denominational organization of public education in the province's history. It came into being at the stroke of midnight on January 1, 1997. Since then, there have been two subsequent province wide re-organizations of public education; the most recent was the 2014 renewal which created two provincial linguistic-based school boards for our K-Level III public system. Needless to say this was accompanied by a very lengthy list of personnel changes at the most senior levels of education leadership and administration throughout the province. New teachers replaced retiring teachers in bold numbers despite the declining level of our student population base. Each of these phenomena carried with it much challenge and sweeping change in both the organizational and pedagogical realities of our schools. It is no wonder that our report to you of 2015 centered on two words : Refocus and Renewal.

One of the realities of this parade of near constant educational change has been that even though the governance and administration has evolved for public education the essence of teaching and learning continues under the leadership of skilled teachers through the personal interaction they hold with their students. Despite the fiscal challenges of our provincial economy and the ever changing sociological realities of our schools and communities, much has been invested of a capital nature in public education over this time

At the school board level, the NLSBA was re-aligned to better suit the new two-school-board structure. Pending an election of new trustees, the association has been focused upon maintaining its CSBA membership and the important linkage it provides with our colleague school boards across Canada. In addition the association provides professional development and information to both Boards within its abilities, represents both school boards on various standing committees and generally awaits the directions of its two member school boards. Both the operational budget and the traditional program of activities have been prioritized to enable our continuation as such. During the early autumn of 2015 we were honoured to act as the site for the CSBA Board of Governors Meeting in St. John's.

The 2016 Annual General Meeting of the Association confirmed this status for the present. While the newly elected provincial government continues to promise an election of school board members; we have no definite plans about this to report. We firmly believe that a core justification of the role of a provincial school board organization in the governance of public education rests upon five imperatives :

FIVE IMPERATIVES FOR SCHOOL BOARD ORGANIZATIONS

1. School Board Trustees require a trustee driven professional development support program in order to ensure their long term effectiveness in the dispatch of their legislated responsibilities. Trustees themselves have a fundamental democratic responsibility to substantially input the objectives and nature of this support.
2. School Board Trustees constitute a province wide network of local representatives in the governance of public education. Beyond the ongoing corporate dialogue between School Boards and Government, and given the democratic traditions of Canada, it is necessary that an independent forum for the expression of the collective opinions and views of Trustees be maintained for the benefit or consideration of both society and the provincial government.
3. School Boards, while independent and autonomous within the sphere of powers granted to each under the provincial legislation, share various Governance responsibilities due to the Schools Act for school operations along with certain related employer and public accountability duties .. Therefore an objective means for these Boards to act and communicate jointly in these respects ,if they so wish, is required.
4. As employers at the local level throughout the province, both of the School Boards have much in common. It is logical that a means to facilitate dialogue and reflection with respect to employer issues be organized on an independent basis for their usage.
5. School Boards exist across Canada within a mosaic of public educational governance. They do not operate in provincial or regional vacuums. NL is no exception to this fact. Therefore, a means of both provincial and interprovincial sharing, and when appropriate joint action, is an essential element in the overall governance of public education throughout our nation.

CONCLUSION

Research demonstrates that the re-organization of public education structures exerts an impact upon School Board Governance. The existence of school boards is a reflection of society's deep rooted belief that educational governance should reflect community and regional values and priorities (Dibbon Sheppard and Brown). In modern times, the balance between provincial government intervention and School Board governance has been challenging. There is emerging empirical evidence in support of collaborative leadership and organizational learning.

Thank you for your understanding and support. The poet Dylan Thomas, cautioned his readers not to "*go gently into the good night.*" I can only tell you that the NLSBA will follow his advice!

Respectfully Submitted:

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