

HIGH PRAIRIE SCHOOL DIVISION BOARD ADVOCACY POINTS

Mission

To inspire, lead, and empower success through accountability and resilience, creating a culture of lifelong learning.

Vision

High Prairie School Division will inspire students to learn, lead, and succeed in an ever-changing world.

Revised: May 12, 2026

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PRESERVING LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Background

The *Education Act* assigns clear governance responsibilities to locally elected boards of trustees. Under Section 33, boards are responsible for establishing governance structures, ensuring effective stewardship of resources, and recruiting and supervising the superintendent, who is entrusted with the day-to-day management of the school division.

Recent provincial actions, including centralized bargaining and compensation controls through TEBA and the Provincial Bargaining and Compensation Office (PBCO) have significantly constrained boards' ability to exercise these legislated responsibilities.

Unlike other locally elected governments, school boards have been removed from meaningful influence over recruitment, compensation, and retention, despite remaining fully accountable for operational outcomes.

Further, Bill 25, *An Act to Remove Politics and Ideology from Classrooms*, proposes significant changes that shift authority from locally elected school boards to the provincial government. The legislation would restrict boards from taking positions on political, social, or ideological matters unrelated to their mandate, introduce new provincial oversight of key governance functions such as superintendent contracts and school naming, and allow the Minister to set provincial priorities and even direct the transfer of school board property to the Crown. These changes collectively reduce local decision-making authority and represent a notable move toward increased centralization of Alberta's education system.

Objective

To protect and respect the autonomy of democratically elected trustees so they can fulfill their legislated responsibilities under the *Education Act* while responding effectively to their region's unique local and societal context.

Action Items (Advocacy Requests)

The High Prairie School Division Board of Trustees advocates for:

- **Alignment between provincial bargaining frameworks and boards' legislated responsibilities under Section 33 of the Education Act.**
- **A review of TEBA and PBCO structures to ensure local governance and operational effectiveness are not**

undermined.

- **Updates to Superintendent compensation regulations to reflect local labour markets and recruitment realities.**
- **Greater flexibility in capital and operational reserve guidelines to allow boards to respond to unforeseen circumstances and priority program needs.**
- **Assurance that any review or standardization of non-unionized employee compensation considers rural recruitment and retention challenges.**
- **Ongoing, direct communication between elected provincial officials and elected trustees, recognizing trustees as the level of governance best positioned to identify locally informed, practical solutions.**
- **Trustees will be limited in their ability to set strategic direction in the Education Plan as Province will mandate strategic priorities.**
- **Property sale and new regulations will hinder Boards from receiving all proceeds from property disposal.**

Supporting Information

The Minister of Education and Childcare's 2025 mandate letter commits to strengthening trustee accountability, protecting freedom of speech for elected trustees, and ensuring trustees can fulfill their roles unless removed by recall or provincial action. The letter also emphasizes proactive engagement with stakeholders to reduce unnecessary barriers and improve outcomes for Albertans.

Centralized constraints on recruitment and compensation conflict with these commitments, particularly in rural regions where labour shortages are more acute. Limiting boards' ability to recruit and retain qualified staff reduces their capacity to meet statutory obligations and respond to community needs, ultimately impacting student well-being and success.

Strategies to Support Advocacy Goals

Legislative Strategies

- **Meet with MLAs, provincial officials, and education partners to advocate for local board autonomy and rural education needs.**
- **Letters to MLAs and provincial officials.**

Public Awareness Strategies

- **Use websites, social media, media interviews, and community engagement to increase awareness of trustee roles and local governance concerns.**
- **Focus messaging on student success, rural sustainability, and the importance of locally informed decision-making.**

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Coalition Building Strategies

- Collaborate with rural and northern school divisions to develop shared advocacy positions and messaging.
- Build partnerships with municipalities, Indigenous leadership, community organizations, and education stakeholders to support advocacy efforts.