



October 28, 2009

Keray Henke
Deputy Minister, Alberta Education
7th Floor Commerce Place
10155 - 102 Street
Edmonton, AB T5J 4L5

Dear Sir:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our input and views with regards to the Charter School Concept Paper provided to us on October 9, 2009. The Charter School Concept Paper was reviewed with our Board of Trustees and we would like to highlight the following points with regard to any possible direction that Charter Schools may take in the future role in education in Alberta.

1. Any change to the focus of charter schools should not create a two-tier education system where public schools are required to provide special education programs to students while “charter schools are not required to provide the same special education programs nor obligated to enroll every student who seeks admission”. (Alberta Education website under Charter Schools and Special Education)
2. Further to the point raised in item number 1, charter schools must be consistent with the concept of a single “inclusive” education system for all students in Alberta. This would ensure that special education students are accepted for enrolment in Charter Schools along with other students.
3. Any revisions to the resource funding of charter schools should remain open and transparent as it is now for school jurisdictions in the Funding Manual. Overall funding for charter schools should not take funding resources away from the public school system that serves 92% to 93% of the population. Therefore, any funding given to charter schools cannot be done at the expense of public education. Additionally, public funds should not be used to promote private for profit operation of charter schools.
4. Any revisions to the governance model of charter schools should be consistent with the governance model of public school jurisdictions. The governance of charter schools must be accountable to the community through a locally elected community school board.

Keray Henke
Page 2
October 28, 2009

5. Any changes to the plan for charter schools should not minimize the opportunity of the public school system to be innovative. Nor should the changes to charter schools minimize the funding from AISI to resource that innovation in charter schools.

In closing, the premise that charter schools have provided the leadership in innovation that would foster the development in public schools is not supported by the paper. As stated in the paper "One of the original purposes of charter schools was that they would be centres of innovation and would share innovations with the rest of the system. This purpose has largely not been realized". Additionally, we are disappointed that there isn't a stronger research base in this concept paper. Given the lack to background details and methodology, it raises concerns regarding the validity of this paper.

Sincerely,

Grant W. Henderson, Ph. D.
Superintendent of Schools

GWH/sg