



PC#87-2012/2013

Provincial Council
May 31 – June 1, 2013

INITIAL REPORT
OF THE
MAC 203-13 WORK GROUP

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AMPA 2013 approved the following motion:

MAC 203-13

Cost Estimate: \$75,000

BE IT RESOLVED THAT AMPA direct the Provincial Executive to create an in-house work group that would:

- a. Study the implementation (with regard to financial, jobs, labour, and other implications) of moving to one publicly funded school system for each official language; and
- b. Prepare interim policy motions as necessary for presentation at Provincial Council; and
- c. Develop a multi-year action plan to create a public education campaign and lobby materials to promote the creation of one publicly funded school system for each official language; and
- d. Seek approval for the implementation of a strategic plan from the April and/or June 2013 meetings of Provincial Council.

The following have been assigned to the work group:

Domenic Bellissimo – Department Head, Communications/Political Action

Brad Bennett – Department Head, Negotiations and Contract Maintenance

Suzette Clark – Department Head, Educational Services

Andy Simpson – Department Head, Member Protection

Harvey Bischof – Vice President

Cindy Dubu  – Vice President elect

The work group met on May 2, 2013 to outline the strategic plan as required by the AMPA motion above. We began by reviewing what we understood to be the potential motivations for the passage of MAC 203-13, as well as two related policy motions¹. The work group discussed the fact that the separate school system increasingly struggles philosophically to justify its existence in a democratic

¹The following two motions were also approved at AMPA this year:

EDFI 202-13

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Policy 7.5 be amended by substitution to read:

7.5 Publicly Funded School Boards

7.5.1 It is the policy of OSSTF/FEESO that there should be only one publicly funded school system for each official language

EDFI 203-13

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Policy 7.5 be amended by the addition of a new subsection that reads:

“It is the policy of OSSTF that no OSSTF/FEESO jobs should be lost as a result of moving to one publicly funded school system for each official language.”

and pluralistic society. Given its particular denominational foundation, the separate school system has resisted curriculum and related initiatives, such as the formation of Gay/Straight Alliances, which we in OSSTF/FEESO take to be crucial in addressing our students' best interests, as seen in our policies². The financial implications of the duplication inherent in operating essentially parallel systems have long been a topic of discussion within and outside the Federation. Furthermore, the current competition between school boards for student enrolment provides a kind of tacit support to those who promote a voucher system of public education and results in resources committed to promotion and advertising, which do nothing to enhance the quality of education. Additionally, the separate system provides a point of weakness in negotiations with government; knowing that there is a building public awareness of the unjustifiability of the separate system, the union representing Catholic school teachers is under additional pressure to capitulate to government demands, thereby also weakening our negotiating position. For these and other reasons, OSSTF/FEESO is now committed in its policy to the creation of a single publicly funded system for each official language in Ontario.

Still, the creation of a single system has enormous potential ramifications and unintended consequences that need to be carefully considered. One immediately thinks of the fact, for example, that we have members who work in the Catholic system and whose jobs may rely on the existence of the system itself, not just the total numbers of students enrolled. A reduction in the number of schools and board offices is a likely result of the rationalization that would occur upon amalgamation of systems. At a minimum, a just transition for our members would be required. The implications for the labour situation are also complex. A single system would almost certainly result in a change to the regime of statutory union membership for teachers and possible representation votes between unions. How would that affect OSSTF/FEESO institutionally? How would that affect its members?

At this time, the work group is not proposing any related policies to Provincial Council for interim approval.

With these factors in mind, the work group recommends the following strategic action plan:

- 1) A study be conducted, through the Negotiations and Contract Maintenance Department, of the financial implications of the creation of a single publicly funded school system for each

² See, for example, the following :

8.15.9 It is the policy of OSSTF/FEESO that all secondary schools and universities should have Gay Straight Alliances to support LGBTQ students and their allies. (A.12)

8.15.10 It is the policy of OSSTF/FEESO that all students of publicly-funded employers in Ontario should have the right to organize school groups that explicitly use the following terms: sexual orientation, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and two-spirited. (A.12)

official language. That the department also consider the potential impact on members' jobs and recommend contract language and/or other provisions to protect members' work. A plan for potential representation votes under a changed board and union structure also be considered.

- 2) The legal basis for the current education system be studied, by the Member Protection Department, along with the necessary legislative steps that would be required to restructure the system in accordance with our policy. Additionally, the department will consider potential implications on the statutory membership regime within the education affiliates and the legal groundwork for possible representation votes.
- 3) Differences in curriculum and delivery between the systems be studied, by the Educational Services Department. For example, how are curriculum and delivery methods that promote equity implemented in the public and separate systems? How do the systems tend to differ in regard to approaches to Special Education?
- 4) A plan be developed, by the Communications/Political Action Department, for polling and/or focus groups to determine public attitudes toward the creation of a single publicly funded education system for each official language in Ontario, the reasons parents and students choose the public or separate systems, and the most effective messages for promoting a single system. A lobbying strategy and materials to promote our goals be developed and implemented following presentation to November Provincial Council.
- 5) The components above be reported to Provincial Council on November 15, 2013.
- 6) The MAC 203-13 work group continue to meet to develop an ongoing strategy with motions and proposed costs to be brought to AMPA 2014.