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June 8, 2010

Chairs of District School Boards
Presidents of School Board Trustee Associations

Re: Regulations on Codes of Conduct for School Board Members

Dear Colleagues,

Higher levels of student achievement are this government's top priority in education and all partners in the education sector have a role to play. Good governance by our trustees and directors of education is necessary to enhance student achievement and well-being, close gaps in student achievement and maintain confidence in the province's publicly funded education system.

Our government's approach to publicly funded education has been and will always be one of respect, collaboration and consultation with our education partners. Consistent with this approach, I am seeking your input into provincial provisions for trustee codes of conduct, which will be put into place by regulation.

The Governance Review Committee (GRC) recommended trustee codes of conduct as effective governance tools for the education sector and noted, in fact, that many school boards already have a code of conduct in place. The regulation would consolidate this practice across the province. Every board will be required to adopt a code of conduct which, as recommended by the GRC, will include minimum provincial provisions. Boards will be able to add provisions to their code of conduct to address local concerns and reflect the mandate and vision of their board.

Approximately half of school boards have a trustee code of conduct or "code of ethics." There are certain principles that are widely reflected in these policies. The enclosed consultation paper identifies these commonly held principles and related standards of behaviour, any or all of which could form the provincial provisions for every code of conduct.

The consultation paper was reviewed at a meeting of the Partnership Table on April 29, 2010. There was a very fulsome discussion and I am grateful to the members of the Partnership Table for their constructive comments, which have been incorporated in the final document.

Student trustees have asked whether the code of conduct for school board members will apply to them. By virtue of section 55 of the *Education Act*, student trustees are not members of the board. While the regulation will not apply to them, it is expected that student trustees will respect the provisions in their board's trustee code of conduct.

As the GRC stated, code of conduct policies are “useful and effective mechanisms for setting the parameters of acceptable behaviour in meetings and on board-related business. Effectively used, they can also serve to encourage respect for divergent views and dissenting voices, which must be distinguished from obstructive and inappropriate behaviour.” I agree that a code of conduct should strive to promote these goals.

One of our great successes as a government has been to rebuild positive relationships with the education sector and bring peace and stability to our schools. Everyone in the education sector needs to be working together in order for our students to reach their full potential.

I look forward to hearing your views.

Sincerely,

Leona Dombrowsky
Minister of Education