

What is the role of the school trustee?

Alberta's first manifestation of local government—locally-elected school boards—has governed education in Alberta since the late 1800s. Every three years (concurrent with municipal elections) Alberta's communities elect 480 Albertans to serve as school trustees on Alberta's public, separate and francophone school boards. The next election will be held in October. But what exactly *is* the role of an elected school trustee?

- **Trustees are advocates for children**, assessing educational policies in terms of what is best for the development of the whole child.
- **Trustees are politicians**, they are members of a government unit charged with the responsibility to govern the affairs of the school jurisdiction. They are responsible to their electorate through the democratic process.
- **Trustees are goal setters for their school systems**, identifying the results the board wishes the system to achieve.
- **Trustees are planners**, setting priorities in light of community expectations, available resources and sound educational practice.
- **Trustees are evaluators**, ensuring policies are within the parameters of the board's authority; consistent with goals; compatible with other policies; implemented in a fair and just manner and effective in achieving intended outcomes.
- **Trustees are financial planners**. The adoption of the budget is one of the most important decisions a school board makes. It is a statement to the administration and the public that the board is accountable for the dollars spent and it reflects the board's priorities and the blending of the needs and wishes of the community.
- **Trustees are policy makers**, crafting policies that guide the administration and other employees toward achieving the jurisdiction's goals.
- **Trustees are legislators**, setting policy.
- **Trustees are communicators**, interacting with the many publics that have a stake in education.
- **Trustees are advocates for education**, keeping the positive image of schools before the community to ensure that education is given a high priority and the community is aware of public education's accomplishments.
- **Trustees receive and disseminate information**.
- **Trustees are adjudicators**, hearing appeals from individuals and groups that feel policies or decisions affect them in a prejudicial manner.
- **Trustees are lobbyists**, communicating with all levels of government to ensure that the voice of the local community is heard by those who have the power to keep education high on the list of public priorities.

This is an abridged version of a document entitled *Role of the Trustee*, adopted by the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) in 1993. A complete version of this document is available on the ASBA Web site. For a copy, please contact ASBA at (780) 482-7311.