

Decision 2008 – October 14th Election

The CSBA sent an Election Survey to federal political parties about their position on key CSBA priorities affected by federal policy on Monday September 8th. The following are CSBA perspectives on Copyright and the Goods and Services Tax. We will send the responses of the federal parties very shortly.

Copyright

Last spring, the CSBA published a series of 4 Bulletins to inform our members about Copyright issues. The Conservative government did, shortly after, introduce legislation to modernize copyright laws that included an amendment protecting education.

That Bill died when the government called the election.

Please ask your candidates where they stand on allowing for the educational use of internet materials provided they were intended to be freely downloaded

Goods and Services Tax

The following summarizes the CBSA's position which we sent (August '08) to the House of Commons Finance Committee for their annual pre-budget consultations process.

Clawback - The GST is a federal clawback on monies raised through taxation and intended for education.

Inefficient - The GST Inhibits Administrative Efficiency - Although it was introduced to reduce complexity and increase transparency for the business sector, it had the very opposite impact on school boards. That the federal government must offer courses to boards to help deal with the confusion speaks to this problem.

Well-Known Inefficiencies - The Institute for Research in Public Policy recommends fully rebating the MUSH sector (Municipalities, Universities, Schools and Hospitals) as part of a comprehensive strategy to increase efficiency in the Canadian economy. The federal government, in 2004, went part of the way by providing municipalities with a full 100% rebate of the GST. By not offering this rebate to the rest of the MUSH sector, the federal government is sending a message about the value it places on education and demonstrating its concern about economic efficiencies.

Canadians Support Removing the Clawback - Canadians do not know that funds intended to be spent on such programs as health and education are clawed back by the federal government. And they don't approve. A 2007 public opinion poll conducted by SES Research found that 84% of Canadians want the federal government to create a level playing field for all provinces by increasing the GST rebate to 100% for publicly-funded not-for-profit health institutions, facilities and agencies.

School Boards Would Rather Spend On.....

"The Ottawa Carleton District School Board serves nearly 70,000 students within a 2,760 square kilometre. We are deeply proud of our wide range of programs that promote excellence and meet individual needs. Our staff support and challenge students to achieve their best in academics, the arts, athletics, and technology. With the \$2.5 million we send to the federal government in GST we could replace 10 roofs, update 25 school libraries or purchase 8,000 new computer terminals which would allow more than a 10% increase of our students to have access to a terminal." Michael Clarke, Chief Financial Officer, OCDSB

"The Trillium Lakelands District School Board has an annual budget of \$184 million dollars and provides quality education services to just under 18,000 students. Our district covers approximately 11,500 square kilometres encompassing the municipalities of the City of Kawartha Lakes, Haliburton County, and the Municipality of Muskoka. In 06/07 the board paid \$1,070,089 in net GST to the federal government. We would have preferred to add fourteen teachers to deal with a shortfall in our Special Education Division, or purchase 43 classroom sets of band musical instruments, or provide \$22,293 for each of our 48 schools libraries, or to purchase 17,835 text books. Each student in our board loses approximately \$60 every year to the GST." Rick Johnson, Chair, Trillium Lakelands District School Board, President, CSBA.

"The Evergreen School Division, located in the Interlake region of Manitoba, borders Lake Winnipeg from Winnipeg Beach north to Hecla Island. Our school community is culturally diverse and consists of approximately 1700 students. Evergreen proudly offers a variety of quality educational programs, safe schools and transportation, exemplary student services, state of the art information and communication technologies and outstanding curriculum. We forwarded \$130,000 to the federal government in GST last year. We want our students to compete with the best in the world and would have preferred to have hired three new or two experienced specialist teachers." Ruth Ann Furgala, Trustee, Evergreen School Division, Immediate Past President of the Manitoba Association of School Trustees and MAST Representative to the CSBA.

Tell your candidates what you would rather spend your GST money on.

Please note Election InfoPicks of September 18th reporting on correspondence to and from the government on first nations education.

Rick Johnson, CSBA President