

# AGENDA

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Neerlandia Public Christian School Council

Wednesday, November 28, 2018 @ 7:30PM

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Devotions – Adam Crabbe**
- 3. Adopt Agenda**
- 4. Review and Approve Minutes – October 29, 2018**
- 5. Review Executive/Non-Executive Roles**
  - a. Chairperson
  - b. Vice Chairperson/General Adjunct
  - c. Secretary
  - d. Treasurer
  - e. Correspondence
  - f. PCCE Rep
- 6. Business from Minutes**
  - a. NPCSC/NCES AGM – Review
  - b. Council of School Council – November 6, 2018 - Report from Charlene
  - c.
- 7. Reports**
  - a. Principal/Student Council
  - b. School Trustee
- 8. New Business**
  - a. Bill 24 - An Act to Support Gay-Straight Alliances - discussion on NPSC position  
- PCCE Update on Bill 24 from Nov 2018
  - b. ASCA - Webinar - K-4 Curriculum Implementation Webinar
- 9. Correspondence**
- 10. Adjournment**

**Next Meeting: December 17, 2018 at 7:30PM**

**Devotions: Volunteer**

**Closing: Volunteer**

MISSION - The Neerlandia Public Christian School Council and Neerlandia Christian Education Society provides advisory support to the principal to further our children's Christian education and understanding of God's presence in all aspects of life.

## VISION

1. Encourage excellence in learning, holding the Bible as the infallible Word of God.
2. Provide a strong support network of parents, guardians and community members who care about the students, staff, and school.
3. Actively participate in school life and discuss current issues pertaining to the school.

# AGENDA

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Neerlandia Christian Education Society  
Wednesday, November 28, 2018 @ 9:00PM

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Adopt Agenda**
- 3. Review and Approve Minutes –October 29, 2018**
- 4. Review NCES Board Norms**
- 5. Business from Minutes**
  - a. Board Governance Workshop - proposed for Spring PD day (April 12?)
  - b. Membership Drive Update
  - c. After School Program - Sheri
  - d. Consideration of Preschool Program via Pembina Hills
  - e.
- 6. Reports**
  - a. Financial
  - b. Preschool
- 7. New Business**
  - a. Fundraiser
    - Sharron Widdup option (Katherine)
    - Student Band Performance (Annemiek)
    - Student Drama (Annemiek/Sheri)
    - Quote on woodworking supplies from Neerlandia Coop (via Steve)
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  - b. Retiring Members Thank You
  - c. NPCCS Council Group Photo
  - d.
- 8. Correspondence**
- 9. Future Items**
  - a. Improve organization of email/text/phone contact system
  - b. Review of NPCCS Council By-laws (last edited Nov 2015)
- 10. Closing – Katherine Nanninga**
- 11. Adjournment**

**Next Meeting: December 17, 2018 at 9:00PM Devotions/Closing: Volunteer Needed**

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## VISION

1. Encourage excellence in learning, holding the Bible as the infallible Word of God.
2. Provide a strong support network of parents, guardians and community members who care about the students, staff, and school.
3. Actively participate in school life and discuss current issues pertaining to the school.

## Boards and Principals of the PCCE Christian Schools.

Hugo VanderHoek – PCCE

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**A small group of Independent schools who have refused to comply with some changes to the School Act have experienced significant unrest over the last two and a half years. Five of these schools are part of the PCCE family. Behind the issues relating specifically to these schools are concerns that are relevant to all schools of faith in Alberta. Recent ministerial decisions are creating an increasing threat to all faith based schools and to the right of choice in education for all parents in the province.**

### The story

It began when some Independent schools felt that Bill 10 challenged their religious freedoms to allow Christian values and Biblical principles to speak to practical questions surrounding personal identity and parental responsibilities. The subsequent Bill 24 'An Act to Support Gay-Straight Alliances', became much more of an issue because it spelled out prescriptive expectations for schools that those

**Most of these schools did not necessarily object to having clubs where identity and sexuality is discussed, but they opposed the legal restrictions regarding the nature of those clubs.**

Christian schools boards found to be incompatible with their local foundational principles. Most of these schools did not necessarily object to having clubs where identity and sexuality are discussed, but they opposed the legal restrictions regarding the nature of those clubs. When Bill 24 came into law, the schools engaged the Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms (JCCF) to challenge section 16.1 and 45.1

of the revised school act in court as unconstitutional. In June 2018, the initial injunction application was rejected. A hearing to challenge the decision is set for December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018, at the Alberta Court of Appeal in Calgary.

In the months following that June decision, Independent school boards and administrators engaged in discussions with the ministry of Education to defend and preserve their core principles and their parental school model. The conversation with the ministry progressed under a cloud of threat of removal of funding and accreditation. At the heart of the disagreement was the minister's demand that schools must adopt specific language in their 'Safe and Caring Learning Environment' policies such as

- *the policy must not contain any provisions that ... require a principal to obtain the approval of the superintendent or board ...*
- *the principal of the school shall immediately grant permission for the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at the school...*
- *the principal is responsible for ensuring that notification, if any, respecting a voluntary student organization or an activity referred to in section 16.1(1) of the School Act is limited to the fact of the establishment of the organization or the holding of the activity...*

The schools objected to using that language because

- it enshrines a situation in which a school may not communicate freely with parents about their children
- it puts limits on the communication and transparency between boards and principal
- it removes authority from elected boards
- it threatens a board's ability to ensure that all the school's activities and instructional content is consistent with its foundational principles.

By the end of August the schools posted their updated 'Safe and Caring Learning Environment' policies on their websites and waited for the minister's response. In early September the ministry sent the schools directions for changes to their 'Safe and Caring Learning Environment' policies that were both surprising and concerning. It was the first substantial response to the policies that the schools received from the minister. As expected, the ministry objected to the schools' procedures regarding student clubs or activities, particularly those procedures concerning restricted information to parents about their child's participation in a school club, and concerning the expectation that all student organized activities must be consistent with Christian school values.

**By demanding that independent schools remove religious content from their safe-and-caring policies the minister entered into a new arena of dispute, namely that of religious content.**

**This new direction and focus must be of concern to all Christian schools because it threatens the ability of every religious school to teach according to its own beliefs and principles.**

But the ministry's response went further than that. It proceeded to highlight other statements in the policies that it considered 'disrespecting of diversity', and 'unwelcoming, uncaring and/or disrespectful'. By demanding that independent schools remove religious content from their safe-and-caring policies the ministry entered into a new arena of dispute, namely that of religious content. This new direction and focus must be of concern to all Christian schools because it threatens the ability of every religious school to teach according to its own beliefs and principles.

Here are some statements that can currently be found in the curriculum of most of our Christian schools, which Alberta Education now bans because it considers them 'disrespecting of diversity':

- "... the above doctrines will be taught as truth in our school"
- "the unchangeable and infallible truth of the Word of God"
- "The school's teachers and staff need not teach ethics or religious doctrines that are contrary to the school community's faith/value commitments in a way that portrays them as equally credible or worthy of belief."

And some other statements, also common in the curriculum of many of our Christian schools, which Alberta Education now bans because it considers them 'unwelcoming, uncaring and/or disrespectful':

- "God created mankind as male and female, equal in dignity and worth, yet with distinct and complementary roles"
- "We believe men and women were created in the image of God, after His likeness, and therefore have transcendent, intrinsic worth"
- "God's institution of marriage, a covenant relationship between one man and one woman, is the sole environment within which sexual activity is permitted, and is the context in which children are to be raised."
- "To develop godly attitudes toward marriage and the family along with the understanding and skills needed to establish a God-honouring home."
- "Upon receipt of a request for a club or activity, the principal shall determine whether the requested club or activities would create a safe, caring, welcoming and respectful environment and is consistent with the vision and mission of the school."

### **The dilemma of the Independent Schools**

The deputy minister concluded the letter of response with the statement that 'failure to remove the above content from a school's "Safe and Caring" policies within the next 30 days "may result in funding implications ... and the suspension or cancellation of accreditation."'

Throughout this process the Independent school boards felt the pressure to secure stable funding for the education of the children, while still maintaining the integrity of the Christian faith and upholding parental rights. The boards needed wisdom to distinguish between political challenges that might be solved through negotiation and ideological challenges that might compromise their Christian principles. They worked with legal advice to do what they could to protect Christian schooling,

Christian freedoms, and parental rights. They each developed policy updates that they felt maintained their principles and attempted to satisfy the minister.

Within the 30 day timeframe, the Independent Schools posted their updated 'Safe and Caring Learning Environment' policies for review. As of the end of October the ministry has not yet responded to the schools. It did however deposit the second instalment of government funding to schools at the usual end-of-October date.

If the ministry considers a school's policy noncompliant, the school could receive a ministerial order that compels it to post a 'minister approved policy' on the school's website. Should the government take adverse action against a school, the JCCF is committed to applying to the Court of Appeal to issue an immediate, interim injunction, seeking to stay any such negative action pending the Court's decision on December 3, 2018.

On Wednesday October 24<sup>th</sup> JCCF participated in a hearing at the Court of Appeal in preparation for the hearing of the injunction application on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018. JCCF was successful in obtaining the right to further apply to present new evidence before the Court of Appeal. Additionally, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada was granted status to intervene and present arguments to the Court of Appeal.

### **Larger threat to Christian Schooling**

It has to be clear that an issue over which there may be differences within the PCCE family, namely the nature of Gay-Straight Alliances, has now turned into a much larger issue that touches on the reasons of existence of the Christian school movement.

The ministry's interaction with the independent schools has moved from procedural and principle differences over students clubs, to differences regarding curriculum content, to an attack on freedom of choice in education. This affects all PCCE schools and threatens their ability to be distinctly Christian in their curriculum, policies, and structures.

### **Responses by Independent schools**

Independent Schools will respond locally to whatever action the minister decides. The Association of Independent Schools and Colleges of Alberta (AISCA) has already launched an ad campaign to defend parental rights of choice in education. It is actively lobbying and promoting this position. Local boards, parents, and school supporters are becoming increasingly active in their communication with the decision makers and influencers in politics. Social media networks are an important vehicle for this. JCCF is preparing to step up legal support, as is the Association of Reformed Political Action, (ARPA). The experiences of the last years have taught the schools to live prayerfully, trustingly, and patiently. They request the prayers of all the Christian School community.

### **Response options for Alternative Program schools**

As noted above, while independent schools are at the core of current political challenges, all Christian schools, including Alternative programs, need to be aware of the potential of harm to their own organizations. We all need to support the freedom of faith-based schools to have all aspects of programming align with our Christian beliefs. As such, we are asking our Alternative programs to enable their communities to prayer, to political action, and to practical support. Some specific ideas for action are outlined below and more resources and information are available from the PCCE office. We encourage you to determine the best course of action for your community.

### **Action to support school choice and Christian Education.**

**Prayer:** Our communal prayers for God to intervene and to show a way of resolution are important and necessary. We are deeply aware that Christian Education is not ultimately ours. It is not a right. It is God's gift to our children and to our communities. He can choose to protect it and flourish it for the time He desires.

**Contact government officials:**

- Appeals to government officials are effective if they are done in a personal and gracious manner.
- Phone calls are more successful than emails but they require more time and commitment.
- Call your MLAs and the ministries .
  - Premier Notley: 780 427 2251 [edmonton.strathcona@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:edmonton.strathcona@assembly.ab.ca)
  - Education Minister David Eggen 780 427 5010 [edmonton.calder@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:edmonton.calder@assembly.ab.ca)
  - Deputy Minister Curtis Clark: 780 427-3659 [EducationDeputyMinister@gov.ab.ca](mailto:EducationDeputyMinister@gov.ab.ca)
  - Local representatives: <[https://www.assembly.ab.ca/net/index.aspx?p=mla\\_home](https://www.assembly.ab.ca/net/index.aspx?p=mla_home)>
- Consider signing the United Conservative Party Petition to defend school choice in Alberta. The UCP MLAs intend to use results from this petition to raise questions in the house when the house sits again on October 29<sup>th</sup>. The more signatures there are, the more powerfully they can make the point.
- ARPA Easy Mail makes it easy to compose one email and send it to many recipients.

**Stay informed:**

A reference sheet with more resources and information is available from the PCCE office.