

# Be it resolved

## A resolutions primer for Manitoba school boards



### Introduction

This document has been compiled to answer some of the most common questions about the Manitoba School Boards Association resolution process. It provides a roadmap for school boards that are developing resolutions to take forward to regional meetings, as the first step in getting them on the convention floor.

A resolution is any motion that comes before the annual general meeting (the convention) of the Manitoba School Boards Association. A resolution may be a new by-law or by-law amendment, a new policy or policy amendment, or a request for action. Any resolution related to a by-law has some special rules attached to it, which are explained below. Whether a resolution is a policy or request for action is determined by the content of the resolution; the process for dealing with either of these two types of resolutions on the convention floor is the same.



### Getting started

Most school boards start thinking about possible resolutions to bring to convention when the call for resolutions goes out in early fall. But the right time to think of submitting a resolution is any time—whenever a matter comes to your board’s attention that has implications for other boards throughout the province.

When that time comes, your first step should be checking out what’s already on the books. To do that, refer to the association’s current *Policies and Requests for Action* or by-laws (part of the Executive Manual), as applicable. These can be found as downloads under About—Governance at [www.mbschoolboards.ca](http://www.mbschoolboards.ca).

If you are asking the association to do something, either directly or indirectly, any resolution you develop will be considered a **request for action**. Direct requests are those things that are within the association’s own control—something like providing a specific type of professional development for trustees. Indirect requests for action usually include words such as “lobby” or “advocate.” The association is unable to achieve the ultimate goals of the resolution on its own, but is being directed to work with other organizations, frequently government, to achieve it. If a request for action already exists, there is no benefit in bringing it back before the membership, unless the upcoming convention will mark three years since its original adoption. Requests for action have a three-year life-span, and will fall from the books after that time unless they are once again adopted by the membership. This will only happen if a board initiates that process.

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The association currently has **policy** in eight broad areas:

1. School Boards and Trustees;
2. Funding and Financial Matters;
3. Education Programming;
4. Students;
5. Human Resources;
6. Transportation;
7. Facilities and Materials; and
8. External Organizations.

If your proposed resolution deals more with fundamental beliefs rather than a specific action, review the existing policies and consider some questions. Does the resolution relate to one of these eight areas? If so, does it add something new, or contradict something that the policy already contains? In either of those cases, your resolution should take the form of an amendment to the existing policy. Or does the resolution reflect some fundamental belief in an area that is not covered off by the existing policies? If that's the case, then your resolution should take the form of a brand new policy statement.

**By-law** changes are most commonly introduced by the association's provincial executive, but they can be initiated by a school board. So if your school board thinks the association should be doing something differently in regard to elections, the conduct of convention, the structure of regions, or any other matter that is governed by one or more of its ten by-laws, you can submit a by-law amendment for consideration. Unlike regular resolutions, proposed by-law amendments are decided by board ballots, and require an affirmative vote of two-thirds to be adopted. Other than that, they are treated as any other resolutions.



### Drafting a resolution

Once a school board has decided to submit a resolution—and it has to be a board decision, not the decision of an individual trustee—the next step is actually drafting the resolution.

Resolutions that come before the membership of the Manitoba School Boards Association have a very specific, two-part format. The first part is the resolution proper. This always begins with the same wording: "Be it resolved that the Manitoba School Boards Association . . ." Those words are followed by some direction, such as that they advocate for, lobby, amend, or review. This first part of the resolution is the part that endures after the convention is over, so it must be clear, preferably concise, and able to stand on its own. This last point—able to stand alone—is especially important, because after convention, the resolution will be separated from the comments when it is incorporated into the association's policy manual. Resolutions should also be free from grammatical and spelling errors, and contain the correct names of any entities it includes, such as government departments.

The second part of the resolution is the comments. In some organizations this may be referred to as the rationale. The comments provide an opportunity for school boards to explain why they think their proposed resolution should be supported. Depending on the nature of the resolution, comments may include research, precedents, or even anecdotal evidence from the sponsoring school division. Comments are often used by school boards to open debate when the resolution reaches the convention floor, and that can be a useful way of thinking of them while they are being drafted.



## Timelines and procedures

While school boards may consider what resolutions they would like to submit to convention on a year round basis, there are some strict timelines when it comes to actually making that submission.

The call for resolutions is sent to all school boards each fall, and that document contains a deadline. If a resolution is going to be considered at regional meetings—the first step in it getting to the convention floor—it must be received at the association office by that deadline. If it is not, it will not be considered by the region. If that happens, the sponsoring school board can ask the provincial executive to accept the resolution as an emergent resolution. If the executive agrees that the resolution deals with an emergent issue, it will go before the membership at convention. If it does not consider the matter to be emergent and declines to take it forward, the sponsoring board may still ask that it be considered at convention, but that will only happen if consideration is supported by two-thirds of voting delegates at convention.

Meeting the submission deadline and being included on a regional meeting agenda does not guarantee that a resolution will make it to convention. First (and perhaps obviously), it needs to be adopted by the region. Second, each region is limited to the number of resolutions that it can take forward to convention—a maximum of five. Most years, each region considers fewer than five resolutions, so this by-law provision does not come into play. When a region has more than five resolutions under consideration, it needs to prioritize them, and submit the five most important to the entire province, or truly requiring provincial support (such as a by-law amendment). But that doesn't mean that any remaining resolutions simply disappear. The region has the option of adopting them as requests for action that will go directly to the provincial executive for consideration. While such requests for action do not have the endorsement of the entire membership, this can be a good option for straight-forward resolutions that clearly align with existing association policies.

One final note on procedures. The association's Policy and Resolutions Committee reviews all resolutions prior to convention. It has the authority to edit submitted resolutions, and to identify any conflicts with existing by-laws or policy. Sponsoring school boards do have the right to decline to accept any proposed amendments, but they are strongly encouraged to work with the committee to address any identified concerns or issues.

### Questions?

If you have questions about the resolutions process that are not answered in this document, please contact one of the following people at the association office:

- Josh Watt, Executive Director ([jwatt@mbschoolboards.ca](mailto:jwatt@mbschoolboards.ca))
- Andrea Kehler, Executive Assistant ([akehler@mbschoolboards.ca](mailto:akehler@mbschoolboards.ca))