

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. Whether a resolution is a policy or request for action is determined by the content of the resolution. Any resolution related to a by-law has some special rules attached to it, which are explained below.

Getting started

Most school boards start thinking about possible resolutions to bring to convention when the call for resolutions goes out in the spring. 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 <https://www.mbschoolboards.ca/advocacy/>.

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.



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 with one of these areas and is a broader conversation impacting many boards or the entire sector, then you may wish to submit a new policy or policy amendment resolution. We recommend that you start by reviewing the existing policies and consider some questions. Which of the eight areas does the resolution relate to? 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 supporting information, which is often 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. Rationale 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 spring, and that document contains a deadline. If a resolution is going to be considered at regional meetings, it must be received at the association office by that deadline.

Meeting the submission deadline and being included on a regional meeting agenda does not guarantee that a resolution will make it to Convention. First, it must be adopted by the Region. Second, there is a province-wide limit: a maximum of 30 board-sponsored resolutions may be forwarded for consideration at the Association's AGM as regular resolutions. If more than 30 resolutions are adopted across all Regions, the Resolutions and Policy Committee will review all submissions and determine which resolutions will appear before the Convention, in order to ensure an efficient and manageable resolutions process. Third, the Resolutions and Policy Committee will also review the resolution against the committee's format and structure expectations. The content of the resolution may change slightly to ensure that it is clear and succinct when tabled at the Convention; however, the intent or rationale will not be altered.

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.

Not making the final 30 does not mean a resolution disappears. Regions may choose to forward adopted resolutions as requests for support directly to the Provincial Executive. When such requests for support are received however, members are advised that Provincial Executive will evaluate whether the resolution now being forwarded as a request for support has been amended to reflect any substantive observations, concerns or issues raised by Regional members when the resolution appeared before the Regional meeting. While requests for support do not carry the endorsement of the entire membership, they can still prompt important action — especially when the issue aligns with existing Association policies or requires timely attention.

Resolutions are a cornerstone of the MSBA's government relations and advocacy work. They provide school boards with a formal, collective mechanism to raise issues of provincial significance, shape association policy, and direct advocacy efforts on behalf of students, communities, and public education as a whole. By thoughtfully identifying issues, grounding them in local experience, and bringing them forward through the resolutions process, school boards affirm their leadership role and strengthen MSBA's mandate to speak with a unified voice. School boards are encouraged to actively consider, draft, and submit resolutions when matters arise that extend beyond their own division, ensuring that MSBA continues to reflect member priorities and effectively advocates for the public education sector in Manitoba.

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:

- Alan Campbell, Director of Advocacy and Public Affairs (acampbell@mbschoolboards.ca)
- Andrea Kehler, Executive Assistant (akehler@mbschoolboards.ca)

M A N I T O B A

School Boards
ASSOCIATION

www.mbschoolboards.ca