

# **Fair Bargaining for a Better Future**

**Report on the 2007-2008  
Collective Bargaining Process**

**Prepared for the Alberta School Boards Association  
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# Process

- Interviewed 39 boards:
  - 4 large
  - 19 medium
  - 16 small
  - (8 boards members of the Coalition for Choice)
  - (12 boards members of SBEBA)



# Process

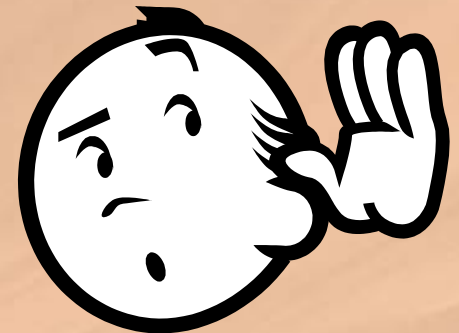
- Interviewed individuals including:
  - Deputy Ministers
  - Lawyers
  - Staff & past presidents of ASBA
  - Alberta Health Services
  - Heads of other provincial school board associations
- Research:
  - Other provinces
  - Labour Relations Board and Interest Arbitration decisions
  - Alberta Health Services



# What was heard

## BENEFITS

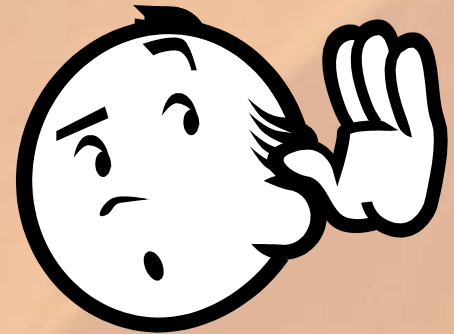
- Unfunded pension liability settled
- Five years of labour peace
- Salaries increased during life of contract were indexed to Alberta Average Weekly Earnings Index



# What was heard

## CONCERNS

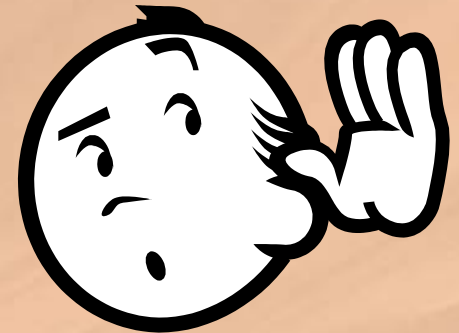
- Time pressure
- Boards were marginalized
- Undermined local bargaining
- Quality of contracts – onus on boards, not ATA to complete/compromise
- Contract language integrated into local agreements not precise
- Lack of respect for elected boards



# What was heard

## CHALLENGES:

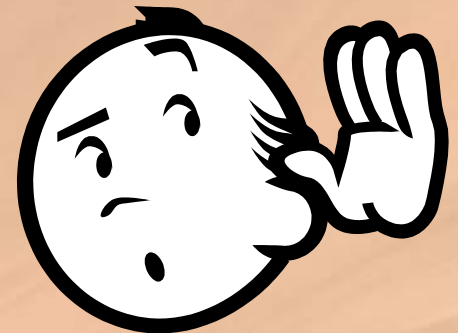
- Unclear provisions lead to grievances
- Insufficient funding – grid creep, other staff
- Undermined local negotiations
- Perfect storm in 2012



# What was heard

## IMPLICATIONS ON FUTURE BARGAINING

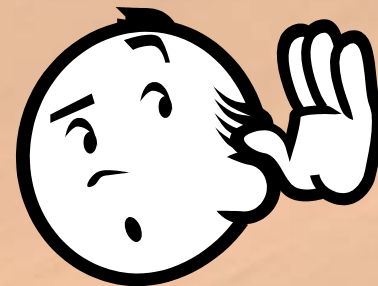
- Precedent for future provincial involvement
- 66% of boards interviewed supported provincial bargaining with involvement of ASBA
- 15% of boards interviewed opposed provincial bargaining
- Balance undecided



# What was heard

## RATIONALE FOR PROVINCIAL INVOLVEMENT

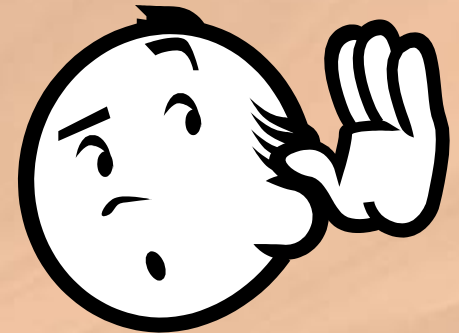
- YES
  - Effective, efficient, more timely negotiations
  - Improve relationships with staff (particularly in small communities)
  - Better balance in bargaining between boards and ATA; local bargaining is a farce, boards whipsawed
  - Government is source of \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$



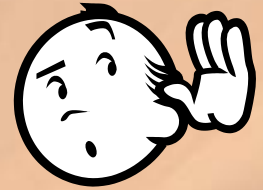
# What was heard

## RATIONALE FOR NO PROVINCIAL INVOLVEMENT

- Have good local labour relations
- What would boards do if not responsible for bargaining
- Fear amalgamation/elimination
- Respond to local issues
- Buffer for provincial government



# What was heard

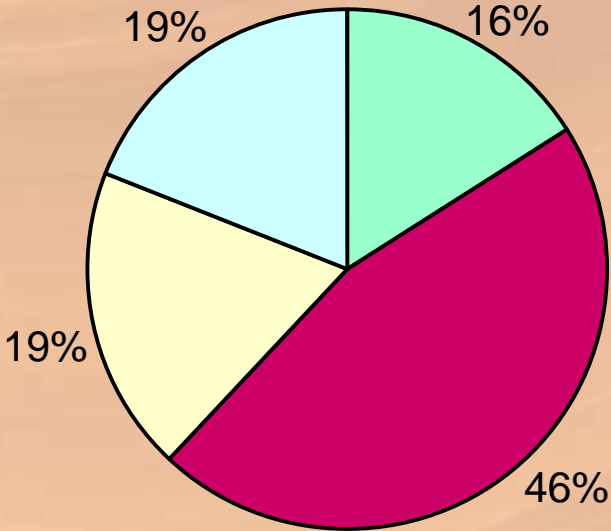


## CAPACITY OF BOARDS, ASBA, and SBEBA

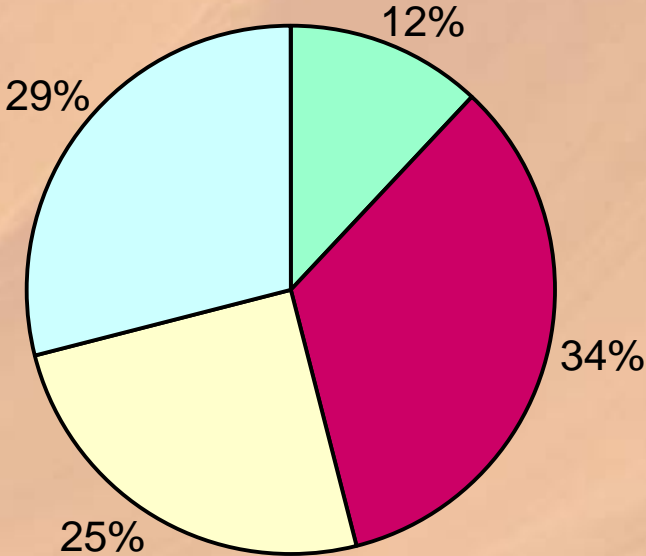
- Boards – turnover, ATA influence, responsibility to bargain, but no taxation powers
- ASBA – loose coalition/less power, concerns regarding services/costs
  - Overall, boards agree **ASBA is VALUABLE**
- SBEBA – meets the needs of smaller boards. Given the circumstances of 2007/08 worked well. Needs to improve transparency and communication with members.

# Interest in Trusteeship

**2007**



**2004**

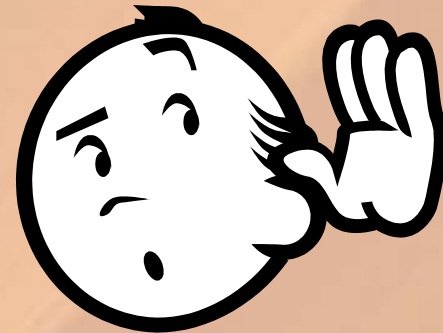


- Acclaimed-New
- Acclaimed-Returning
- Elected-New
- Elected-Returning

# What was heard

## CAPACITY OF ATA

- Astute
- Powerful
- United
- Long-range planning
- Divide and conquer
- Whipsaw boards



# Looked to the past:

- County system, amalgamations
- 1994/95 fiscal restraint, 2001/02 labour unrest
- Learning Commission 2002/03
- 2005 ASBA resolution
- Creation of SBEBA
- Bargaining structures across Canada



# Looked to the future:



- Status quo is not an option
- Government must have a meaningful role (funder)
- Local input preferred, but in reality salary differential is .01%
- Perfect storm in 2012; act now, move to progressively more aggressive strategies on a firm timeline

# Objective:

Provide Certainty in the  
Bargaining Process  
Before August 2012.



# Option #1

PURSUE VOLUNTARY AGREEMENT  
ON A SINGLE  
COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT PROCESS  
BETWEEN  
AN EMPLOYERS' ASSOCIATION  
AND THE ATA.

# Option #1

- Timeline – 2009
- Involve – Alberta Employment & Immigration, Department of Education, ASBA, ATA

## RATIONALE

- Maintains the PRINCIPLE OF CHOICE for Boards
- More efficient, timely
- Precedent in county system, Alberta Health Services and UNA

## Option #2

PURSUE ENABLING LEGISLATION  
TO REQUIRE  
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING BETWEEN  
AN EMPLOYERS' ASSOCIATION  
AND THE ATA.

# Option #2

- Timeline – 2010
- Involve – Government of Alberta, Department of Education, Alberta Employment & Immigration, ASBA, ATA

## RATIONALE

- Still maintains the PRINCIPLE OF CHOICE; Boards decide if they wish to join an employers' association, but ATA must negotiate one contract, at one table with an employers' association
- Solves the problem of the LRB
- Precedent of the construction industry

# Option #3

PURSUE A  
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING PROCESS  
INVOLVING  
THE ALBERTA GOVERNMENT,  
ASBA AND ATA.

# Option #3

- Timeline – 2011
- Involve – Government of Alberta, Department of Education, ASBA, ATA

## RATIONALE

- Will need at least a year to determine what issues would be bargained at a provincial table, the mechanism, the roles of each of the parties
- The FUNDER is at the table
- Process more efficient, effective, less costly (in \$\$ and time)
- Bargaining in all other provinces, with the exception of Manitoba, has had some form of provincial government involvement
- Other reports also advise provincial government involvement (Task Force on Teachers' Unfunded Pension Liability 2007; Alberta Financial Management Commission 2002)

# Conclusion

- Start now for success by 2012
- There is no quick fix – options provide a strategy to pursue over 3 years
- Communication with the public, the government, ASBA members, ATA is critical
- My preference and belief is that Option 3 has the most merit (best opportunity for long term success), but I believe ASBA must pursue options 1 and 2 to arrive at this conclusion

