

## **SUBJECT: Integrating Entrepreneurship into the Public School System**

### **SUBMITTED BY: Youth, Education and Training Committee**

#### **BACKGROUND**

Saskatchewan is recognized as one of the most entrepreneurial provinces in Canada. Because entrepreneurial activity is a key source of job creation and economic growth in our province, it is imperative that our government and business community continue to support an entrepreneurial culture. An area of support that is lacking is in the K-12 system. By promoting youth entrepreneurship programs and course integration in K-12 curriculum, Saskatchewan is creating more choices and career-ready students that are better equipped and prepared to be meaningful contributors to our economy and to themselves.

#### **ISSUE**

The community at large needs to find ways to encourage entrepreneurial spirit, and the schools are a significant vehicle within which this can be done. Saskatchewan's schools are failing at engaging our students and our system is failing by not making this mandatory. Our students today lack the understanding about our economy and simply put they are incapable of functioning as economic decision makers.

As a province that ranks high amongst its peers for promoting an entrepreneurial environment, Saskatchewan is a place that is not preparing its local talent with opportunities to explore the entrepreneurial career path. The youth of today and the future entrepreneurs of tomorrow are not adequately exposed to business education in our school curriculum.

While there has been the introduction of the Junior Achievement program (JA) that provides business education to elementary, middle and high school students, it is not mandatory nor consistently taught and supported in all schools and regions in Saskatchewan.

Recently, the Saskatchewan School Boards Association launched the Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneurship program (AYEP). This program aims to provide necessary training in order to prepare First Nation and Métis for business and entrepreneurship. Again however, the deployment of this program is in only 17 schools. Even though this is a move in the right direction, there are many schools that are simply identified and then placed on a waiting list.

Entrepreneurial programs such as JA and AYP, supported by the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce and broader business community, will force administrators and teachers to be more entrepreneurial in their jobs by encouraging innovation and also by creating competition and a more business-like environment within the K-12 education system.

Some of the reasons why these two programs and others are not considered or explored is the lack of financial support and lack of emphasis as a topic of mandatory priority in our school system. The inconsistency in programming and availability leads to lost opportunities, lost ideas, and in turn, a province that will lose its ranking as a top entrepreneurial province, resulting in an eventual drop in economic growth.

In addition to the lack of funding, there is also a training element consider with regard to the introduction of new curricula. Is the school system supportive of all schools and are teachers provided with the proper amount of training and resources needed to properly and effectively teach this subject?

Encouraging youth entrepreneurship is also an important step towards addressing the concerns about succession planning that many family-owned, small and medium sized businesses face. Without informing potential young entrepreneurs about the opportunities that can arise from buying an existing business, they will often choose other career paths, which results in existing business owners having no successors to continue their business once they retire.

### **RECOMMENDED**

- 1) That Saskatchewan's Ministry of Education ensure that entrepreneurship education be integrated in all levels of the K-12 education system.
- 2) That Saskatchewan's Ministry of Education ensure that entrepreneurial studies are included in at least one mandatory course and available to all elementary and middle school students, and that elective entrepreneurship programs are offered in all high schools.
- 3) That Saskatchewan's Ministry of Education ensure that the teachers responsible for the teaching of such courses are adequately trained and supported to present the course content.
- 4) That the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce continue to support entrepreneurial programs by encouraging the government, SCC membership, and the broader business community to support these programs by being funding partners, mentors and/or volunteers.