

# THE WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISION

## STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

### SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS – Tuesday, November 23, 2021

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#### 1. INTRODUCTIONS

Committee members were informed that the meeting of the Student Advisory Committee is taking place on Treaty One Land and the traditional homeland of the Metis nation.

Committee members were informed that at the Inaugural meeting of the Board of Trustees held on September 13, 2021, Trustee Broughton was appointed as the Board's representative and Trustee Schatkowsky was appointed as the Board's alternate representative to this Committee.

#### 2. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

The alternate student representative from College Churchill High School volunteered to Chair the meeting.

#### 3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Committee members approved the agenda of November 23, 2021, as distributed.

#### 4. BUDGET CONSULTATION 2022/2023

Committee members received an overview on the Budget Consultation for the 2022/2023 school year.

Committee members were informed that on March 9, 2021, the Board of Trustees approved a budget for the 2021/2022 school year in the amount of \$421,039,400. Committee members were informed that last year under direction from the Province, property tax levels were frozen at the 2020 levels, leading to a reduction of 0.54 percent on the property tax levy for WSD homeowners. This reduced provincial investment in education resulted in reductions of \$4,457,395 for WSD. School divisions across the city were required to make similar reductions to their budgets. Committee members were informed that without the option to raise revenue through property taxes WSD was unable to fund programs that are unique and valued within the WSD community.

Committee members were informed that it is anticipated the provincial government will continue to fund education at the same level as last year and freeze property taxes once again this year. This may result in a significant loss to programs and services for students. Committee members were informed that as WSD begins discussions and consultations with the public regarding the 2022/2023 budget, several significant factors must be taken into consideration including, drop in enrolment, rising labour costs, inflation, provincial funding and the cap on property taxes.

Committee members were informed that in September of 2018, enrolment totaled 33,093 which reflected a steady trend in enrolment of approximately 33,000 students per year over the previous decade. Committee members were informed that since 2018 there has been significant drops in student enrolment, 2019 saw a drop of 1.05 percent, 2020 was down 9.62 percent and 2021 was down 2.32 percent. Committee members were informed that the pandemic would have resulted in many families opting to provide homeschooling for their children, however, with students largely returning to in-class education for the 2021/2022 school year, there appears to be a more permanent trend developing. Committee members were informed that the drop in enrolment directly results in a reduction of provincial funding

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which represents 60 percent of WSD of the overall funding for WSD.

Committee members were informed that salary and benefit costs represent 87 percent of WSD's budget. Arbitration rulings in the spring of 2020 significantly increased labour costs for the 2020/2021 fiscal year and will continue to have significant impact on the 2022/2023 budget. Committee members were informed the Province has not provided any additional funding to cover increased labour costs. Committee members were informed that WSD will continue to make appeals for additional funding.

Committee members were informed that year-over-year inflation in Manitoba as of October 31, 2021, is at 4.7 percent. The inflation rate primarily impacts labour agreements, but impacts other goods and services as well.

Committee members were informed that provincial funding, excluding the effect of enrolment, has increased at the rate of 0.6 percent over the last few years, which is less than the rate of inflation in Manitoba including non-pandemic years.

Committee members were informed that property tax revenue represents 40 percent of the overall funding for WSD which has been capped at 2 percent for the past few years. Overall funding for WSD is approximately 1.16 percent  $[(2\% \times 40\%) + (.6\% \times 60\%)]$  which does not allow for adequate funding for all of the programs and services offered by WSD.

Committee members were informed that final numbers have not been provided to date, however it is anticipated that without an increase in funding WSD will unfortunately be required to reduce expenditures again this year.

In response to an enquiry regarding staff reductions, Committee members were informed that WSD is still waiting for the provincial funding announcement and if there will be an option to raise property taxes to provide additional funding. Committee members were informed that WSD offers many programs outside what is mandated by the Public Schools Act, and that reductions to non-mandated programs would be discussed prior to any staff reductions.

In response to an enquiry regarding programing available for students with unique learning requirements, the Committee was informed that funding and staffing can result in delayed support for students.

In response to an enquiry, the student representative from Grant Park High School was provided clarification on the process to address concerns.

**5. BILL 64 – EDUCATION MODERNIZATION ACT UPDATE**

Committee members were informed that on September 1, 2021, the interim Premier of Manitoba announced that Bill 64 – the Education Modernization Act would be removed from provincial business due to public concerns expressed regarding various components of Bill 64, namely the proposed governance model.

Committee members were informed that the withdrawal of Bill 64 allows WSD to continue to provide valuable services and programs such as Nutrition programs, Housing assistance, Health connections, Reading Recovery, Math Pathways, Autism programs, Anxiety Programs, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Programs, and many more, all of which are vital services to support students, families and the community.

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Committee members were informed that although Bill 64 has been withdrawn by the provincial government the Minister of Education stated of the four pillars outlined in the “Better Education Starts Today” (B.E.S.T.) strategy, Governance, High Quality Learning and Outcomes, Future Ready Students and Excellence in Teaching and Leadership, the only one that was of concern was Governance, and stated there was still commitment to implementing the other three pillars.

Committee members were informed that while WSD supports some of the key priorities outlined in B.E.S.T. strategies to improve student outcomes, any changes to the delivery of education in Manitoba must be piloted by the government to ensure that new initiatives will contribute to the educational success of the child. Committee members were informed that the outcomes must demonstrate an ability to benefit the unique needs of supporting our students and school communities.

Committee members were informed that WSD will continue to be engaged in discussions with the Province to maintain programs and services for our students.

In response to an enquiry regarding why the government had introduced Bill 64, the Committee was informed that the government had conducted a review of the education system in Manitoba with the intention to improve student success. The Committee was informed that many of the recommendations provided to the government by the commissioners appointed by the province to review the K-12 education system were not captured in Bill 64. This caused concerns among parents/guardians, members of the school community and educators across Manitoba which resulted in Bill 64 being withdrawn by the provincial government.

## **6. COVID-19 UPDATE**

Committee members were informed that Public Health officials announced new public health orders that came into effect on October 5, 2021. Committee members were informed that although the province has moved to restricted (orange) level of the Pandemic Response System, schools will remain at caution (yellow).

Committee members were provided an overview of the “Restoring Safe Schools” plan outlined by the Provincial government including mask requirements, hygiene requirements, vaccination and testing requirements, and isolation requirements.

In response to an enquiry regarding holding school bake sales, the Committee was informed that with Covid restrictions there are protocols regarding bringing food into schools. Committee members were advised to contact their school principal to obtain more information on the protocols for holding a bake sale.

In response to an enquiry regarding the restrictions on the use of lockers, Committee members were informed that administration is discussing options with the province. Committee members were informed that in order to adhere to the regulations regarding the cleaning and disinfecting of lockers, limiting the points of contact, etc. it is important to reach an equitable solution. Committee members suggested that consideration be given to allowing siblings to share lockers.

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**7. SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER PROGRAM**

Committee members were informed that at a meeting held November 1, 2021, the Board of Trustees approved a motion to distribute the results of the evaluation of the School Resource Officer (SRO) Program to all District Advisory Committees for information.

Committee members were informed that as part of the 2021/2022 Budget discussions the School Resource Officer (SRO) Program was discontinued effective July 1, 2021. Prior to the removal of the SRO program an evaluation of the program was conducted.

Committee members were informed the survey was completed by WSD student's grade 7-12, parents/guardians and WSD staff. Committee members were informed that the survey captured information regarding the SRO's ability to establish positive relationships with students, whether or not students felt safer at school with SRO's present, and if SRO's helped to keep school and neighborhoods safe. Committee members were informed that the results of the survey had indicated that the SRO program and objectives required more awareness and understanding by students, staff and parents/guardians.

In response to an enquiry regarding the purpose of SRO's in schools, Committee members were informed the role of the SRO was to provide safety within the school and community, improve relationships with the community and police, educate students about the law, and to assist students in resolving problems/issues.

In response to an enquiry regarding whether or not the SRO program would be reinstated, Committee members were informed that WSD will continue to work with the Winnipeg Police department and consult with the community to develop partnerships to keep our schools and community safe. Committee members were also encouraged to contact their trustee to share their suggestions.

**8. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Committee members were encouraged to provide agenda topics they would like to discuss at future meetings to [board@wsd1.org](mailto:board@wsd1.org) for consideration.

**9. ENQUIRIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS AND SCHOOL REPORTS**

SCHOOL REPORTS

The student representative from College Churchill High School informed Committee members that College Churchill High School is implementing a truth and reconciliation group for Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students to discuss ways to improve relationships and be better allies for the Indigenous population. Students at College Churchill High School have also instituted a Discussion Club where students are encouraged to listen first and share opinions second. The students are also able to develop public speaking and critical thinking skills.

Student representatives from the following schools provided a written report on school activities: (attached):

- NIL

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In Attendance:

**Voting Representatives**

College Churchill High School  
Elmwood High School  
Gordon Bell High School  
Grant Park School  
Tec Voc High School

**Regrets**

Argyle Alternative High School  
Children of the Earth High School  
Daniel McIntyre Collegiate  
Kelvin High School  
R.B. Russell High School  
Sisler High School  
St. John's High School  
W.A.E.C.

**Administration**

Julie Smerchanski, Director  
Brenda Lapointe, Board and Community Liaison Officer  
Paul Kochan, Secretary-Treasurer/CFO  
Nichola Batzel, Principal Children of the Earth School  
Elaine Mayham, Guidance Counselor Children of the Earth School  
Sandra Voyer, Resource Teacher Children of the Earth School  
Jonathan Fast, Vice-Principal (acting) Gordon Bell High School  
Tarin Howard, Recording Secretary

**Trustees**

Linda Schatkowsky  
Chris Broughton (Regrets)