

INNER CITY DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 3-2021

To the Chair and Members

Winnipeg Public School Board:

November 10, 2021

The Inner City District Advisory Committee reports as follows:

1. Acknowledgement of Indigenous People of Canada

The Committee was informed that the meeting of the Inner City District Advisory Committee is taking place on Treaty One Land and the traditional homeland of the Metis Nation.

2. WSD Budget Consultation 2022/2023

The Secretary-Treasurer was in attendance to provide an overview of the 2022/2023 Budget Consultation. The Committee was 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. Last year, the Provincial Government directed school divisions throughout the province to freeze property tax levies at 2020 levels, leading to a reduction of 0.54 percent on the property tax levy for WSD homeowners, or a decrease of about \$8 a year on the average assessed home value of \$225,700 within WSD. This reduced provincial investment in education resulted in cuts for students of \$4,457,395 in WSD and cuts in most divisions across the city.

The Committee was informed that the province made it impossible for WSD to raise revenue through property taxes to be able to fund programs that are unique and valued within the WSD community.

The Committee was informed that it is anticipated that this year, the provincial government will continue to fund education at the same level as last year and freeze property taxes which may result in a significant loss of programs and services for students. As the Board of Trustees begins its discussions and consultations with the public regarding its 2022/2023 budget, several significant factors must be taken into consideration such as a drop in enrolment, rising labour costs, inflation, provincial funding and cap on property taxes.

The Committee was informed that the September 30, 2018, enrolment count totalled 33,093 which reflected a steady trend of enrolment of approximately 33,000 students per year over the previous decade. However, since then, enrolment has dropped since 2019 (1.05 percent), 2020 (9.62 percent), 2021 (2.32 percent). The Committee was informed that the pandemic contributed to the drop in enrolment due to home schooling. The Committee was informed that the drop in enrolment directly results in a reduction of provincial funding which represents about 60percent of WSD's overall funding.

The Committee was informed that the salary and benefit costs represent approximately 87 percent of the budget. The Committee was informed that due to arbitration rulings in the spring of 2020, significant increases in labour costs have occurred for the 2020/21 fiscal year and will have a large impact on the 2022/2023 budget. To date there has been no additional funding from the Province to cover these costs however efforts in appealing for more funding will continue.

The Committee was informed that year-over-year inflation in Manitoba at September 30, 2021 is 4.66 percent. The Committee was informed that excluding the effect of enrolment, provincial funding has increased at the rate of approximately 0.6 percent over the last few years which is less than the rate of inflation in Manitoba even in non-pandemic years (2018- 2.53percent, 2019 – 2.27 percent).

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The Committee was informed that the property tax revenue that represents about 40 percent of WSD's overall funding has been capped at 2 percent for the past few years. WSD's recent overall funding of approximately 1.16 percent is contributing to the funding pressures.

The Committee was informed that these summary issues are based on the current information prior to the final Provincial funding announcement in early February 2022.

The Committee was informed that the Board is committed to obtaining feedback from school communities, parent councils, residents and staff groups for the 2022/2023 budget. The District Advisory meetings will provide parent representatives with an opportunity to share feedback, ideas and questions with the trustees.

The Committee was informed that the members of the Board are interested in receiving feedback on resources required to fulfill educational mandates, the most important issues for schools and suggestions to address budget challenges.

The Committee expressed support for the teacher salaries and that other administrative salaries be reviewed, including trustees.

The Committee was informed that school trustees do not receive a salary for time spent on school board business, they do receive a payment indemnity. The annual indemnity ranges from \$21,500 to \$26,500 to assist with Board business including attending meetings.

3. Education Modernization Act Update

The Committee was informed that on September 1, 2021, an interim Premier of Manitoba was appointed due to the recent resignation of the Honorable Brian Pallister. The interim Premier of Manitoba announced that Bill 64 - The Education Modernization Act will be removed from provincial business in the fall due to public concerns expressed regarding various components of Bill 64, namely the proposed governance model.

The Committee was 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, all of which are vital services to support our students, families and community.

The Committee was informed that although, Bill 64 – The Education Modernization Act has been withdrawn by the provincial government, the Minister of Education has publicly stated that the proposed governance model outlined in Bill 64 appeared to be the most significant concern for parents and stakeholders.

The Committee was informed that the Minister of Education also stated the commitment to implementing the three pillars outlined in the "Better Education Starts Today" (B.E.S.T.) strategy; under the headings High Quality Learning and Outcomes, Future Ready Students and Excellence in Teaching and Leadership.

The Committee was informed that while WSD supports some of the key priority actions 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. The outcomes must demonstrate an ability to benefit the unique needs of supporting our students and school communities.

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The Committee was informed that as the largest school division in Manitoba, WSD will continue to be engaged in discussions with the Province to maintain programs and services for students. WSD remains committed to putting students, teachers and public education first.

4. COVID - 19

The Committee was informed that public health officials announced new public health orders that came into effect on October 5, 2021. While the province has moved to the restricted (orange) level of the Pandemic Response System, schools will remain at caution (yellow). Public health officials will continue to recommend school-specific approaches if increasing risk is identified.

The Committee was 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 inquiry, the Committee was informed that staff and students will continue to follow the health and safety measures as per public health guidance. The Board of Trustees worked closely to develop, enhance and implement COVID – 19 protocols.

The Committee was informed that masks are required for use in all indoor public spaces. Masks may be removed indoors where there is physical distancing of 2 meter (6 feet) for the purpose of eating, drinking, and for short, infrequent mask breaks. Mask use during extracurricular school sports should follow public health guidance for sports in place at the time. Masks can be removed when outside for brief mask breaks.

5. School Resource Officer Program

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.

The Committee was informed that as part of the 2021/2022 Budget discussions, this matter was referred to the Finance/ Personnel Committee for consideration. On March 9, 2021, the Board of trustees removed the SRO program from the budget effective July 1, 2021.

The Committee was informed that the School Resource (SRO) program was initiated in Winnipeg School Division (WSD) in 2002, initially called “The North End School Resource Office Partnership Initiative”. In response to concerns raised about the role of police officers in schools across Canada, the Board of Trustees requested a review of the SRO program which was launched in January 2021.

The Committee was informed that the goal of the survey was to review the merit of the SRO program in school including: support for safe and caring schools; impact of SRO program on safety for students, parents and staff; influence of SROs on student, staff and community ecosystem; program enhancement potentials and provide feedback to the Board of Trustees whether the SRO program should continue.

The Committee was informed that the key findings are based on the total number of possible participants among WSD students, parent/guardians and WSD staff. WSD Students in the group include only Grade 7 to 12.

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The Committee was informed that the survey data shows support for the SRO program to continue with 36 percent of students, 57 percent of parents/guardians, 74 percent of staff and 100 percent of SROs. A third of students (35 percent), 47 percent of parents/guardians and 10 percent of staff members were unaware of the program or were not sure if the program existed in their school. The results indicate that the SRO program and objectives require more awareness and understanding by students, staff and parents/guardians.

The Committee recommended that the Board of Trustees continue discussions regarding a funding partnership with Winnipeg Police Department.

Respectfully Submitted,

YIJIE CHEN
Trustee Representative

In Attendance:**Voting Representatives:**

Argyle Alternative High School
Children of the Earth School
David Livingstone School
Fort Rouge School
Gordon Bell High School
Hugh John Macdonald School
King Edward School
Mulvey School
R.B. Russell High School
William Whyte School

Regrets:

Dufferin School
Machray School
Pinkham School
Sister MacNamara School
Strathcona School
General Wolfe School
John M. King School
Niji Mahkwa School
Norquay School
Victoria Albert School
Wellington School

Administration:

Fatima Mota, Superintendent
Rob Riel, Director
Paul Kochan, Secretary-Treasurer/CFO
Brenda Lapointe, Board and Community Liaison Officer
Patricia Mainville, Principal Argyle Alternative High School
Gath McAlpine, Principal Dufferin School
Collen Dawson, Vice-Principal Dufferin School
Stacie Edgar, Principal Fort Rouge School
Mercy Sackey, Vice-Principal Gordon Bell High School
Jonathon Fast, Acting Vice-Principal Gordon Bell High School
Matthew Adkins, Principal Hugh John Macdonald School
Peter Correia, Principal Mulvey School
Chris Clarke, Principal David Livingstone School
Marsha Missyabit, Vice-Principal Niji Mahkwa School
Cree Crowchild, Principal Norquay School
Jennifer Scott, Vice-Principal Norquay School
Paul Krowiak, Principal R.B. Russell High School
Debbie Lenhardt Mair, Principal Sister MacNamara School
James Tyson, Vice-Principal Sister MacNamara School
Susan Darazsi, Principal Strathcona School
Wendy Verbong, Principal William Whyte School
Matthew Mosseau, Community Support Worker
Tammy Shone, Community Support Worker
Leonor Tavares, Community Support Worker
Elisa Solomon, Recording Secretary

Trustee:

Jennifer Chen
Betty Edel (Regrets)