

SOUTH DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 3 -2021

To the Chair and Members
Winnipeg Public School Board:

November 16, 2021

The South District Advisory Committee reports as follows:

1. Acknowledgement of Indigenous People of Canada

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

2. Election of Committee Chair

The Committee was informed that at the inaugural Board meeting, held September 13, 2021, Trustee Jamie Dumont was appointed as the Board's representative and Trustee Chris Broughton was appointed as the Board's alternate representative to this Committee.

The alternate parent representative from Earl Grey School volunteered to the Chair the South District Advisory Committee meeting.

3. Budget Consultation 2022/2023

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

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. The Committee was informed that last year under direction from the Province, property tax levels were frozen at 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 cuts of \$4,457,395 for WSD. School divisions across the city were obligated to make similar cuts to their budgets. The Committee was 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.

The Committee was 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. The Committee was informed that as WSD begins 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.

The Committee was 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. The Committee was informed that since 2018, there has been significant reduction in enrolment, 2019 saw a decrease of 1.05 percent, 2020 was down 9.62 percent and 2021 was down 2.32 percent. The Committee was 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. The Committee was informed that the drop in enrolment directly results in a reduction of provincial funding which represents 60 percent of WSD of the overall funding for WSD.

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The Committee was 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. The Committee was informed the Province has not provided any additional funding to cover increased labour costs. The Committee was informed that WSD will continue to make appeals for additional funding.

The Committee was informed that year-over-year inflation in Manitoba as of September 30, 2021, is at 4.66 percent. The inflation rate primarily impacts labour agreements, as well as other goods and services.

The Committee was 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.

The Committee was 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.

In response to an enquiry, the Committee was informed that it is anticipated that approximately \$20 million dollars in reductions will be required to achieve a balanced budget. The Committee was informed that unfortunately reductions to the salary portion of the budget will need to be made which will result in the loss of staff and valuable programming. The Committee was informed that programs mandated by the Public Schools Act will be retained, but programming outside of what is mandated, such as nursery programs, early childhood education programs, language programs etc. will need to be discussed.

The Committee was informed that each year the Board of Trustees receives recommendations from the Community to reduce administration costs, however, to achieve the savings required all administration positions would need to be eliminated several times over. The Committee was informed that without an increase in funding from the Provincial Government, there will have to be reductions made to programs and services.

In response to an enquiry regarding the distribution of budget information to the community, the Committee informed that information will be provided via social media, newsletters and Board meetings. The Committee informed interested parties may register to appear as a delegation at a Board meeting. The Committee was encouraged to share the information in the Budget brochure and discuss the questions regarding resources available to schools to fill educational mandates, important school issues and suggestions on how WSD might address the fiscal challenges of the 2022/2023 budget. Committee members were encouraged to provide feedback to board@wsd1.org as soon as possible. Committee members were informed that the final budget must be submitted to the Province by March 15, 2022.

4. Bill 64 – Education Modernization Act Update

The Committee was 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.

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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, and many more, all of which are vital services to support students, families and the community.

The Committee was 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.

The Committee was 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. The Committee was informed that the outcomes must demonstrate an ability to benefit the unique needs of supporting our students and school communities.

The Committee was informed that WSD will continue to be engaged in discussions with the Province to maintain programs and services for our students. The Committee was informed that the Board of Trustees will follow up with previous recommendations that were made to the Province that were not reflected in Bill 64.

5. Covid – 19 Update

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

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.

The Committee expressed concern that any reduction of teachers and support staff may not allow for smaller class sizes to accommodate proper social distancing measures. The Committee was informed that budget reductions would not implemented immediately.

6. School Resource Officer Program

The Committee was 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.

The Committee was 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.

The Committee was informed that the initial goal of the survey was to determine if the program should continue, however difficult budget decisions resulted in the SRO program being terminated prior to the compilation of the survey results.

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The Committee was informed the survey was completed by WSD student's grade 7-12, parents/guardians and WSD staff. The Committee was 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. The Committee was 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.

The Committee was 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.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jamie Dumont
Trustee Representative

In Attendance:

Voting Representatives

Earl Grey School
Gladstone School
Grant Park High School
Harrow School
J.B. Mitchell School
Laverendrye School
Queenston School
Robert H. Smith School
Rockwood School

Regrets

Brock Corydon School
Carpathia School
College Churchill High School
Grosvenor School
Kelvin High School
Lord Roberts School
Montrose School
River Heights School
Riverview School
Ecole Sir William Osler

Administration

Celia Caetano-Gomes, Superintendent of Education Services
Paul Kochan, Secretary-Treasurer
Julie Millar, Director
Navinder Basra, Director of Finance & Assistant Secretary-Treasurer
Brenda Lapointe, Board & Community Liaison
Ryan Hughes, Principal College Churchill High School
Nathan Tocher, Vice-Principal College Churchill High School
Terri Rodrigues-Warner, Principal Gladstone School
Paulette Huggins, Principal J.B. Mitchell School
Nicole Kurtz, Vice-Principal J.B. Mitchell School
Timothy Cox, Principal Kelvin High School
Michelle Namaka, Principal Queenston School
Dominic Zagari, Principal River Heights School
Cinzia Caputo, Principal Riverview School
Adam Dyck, Principal Robert H. Smith School
Angela Perez, Principal Rockwood School
Dominique Ostermann, Principal Ecole Sir William Osler

Trustees

Jamie Dumont
Chris Broughton