

THE WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISION

SOUTH DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS – Tuesday, November 16, 2021

1. INTRODUCTIONS

Committee members were informed that the meeting of the South District Advisory Committee took 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 Dumont was appointed as the Board's representative and Trustee Broughton was appointed as the Board's alternate representative to this Committee.

2. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

The alternate Parent representative from Earl Grey School volunteered to Chair the meeting.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Committee members approved the agenda of November 16, 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 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. 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 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 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 which represents 60 percent of WSD of the overall funding for WSD.

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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 September 30, 2021 is at 4.66 percent. The inflation rate primarily impacts labour agreements, as well as other goods and services.

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 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, Committee members were informed that it is anticipated that approximately \$20 million dollars in reductions will be required to achieve a balanced budget. Committee members were informed that to achieve savings of \$20 million dollars, a simple reduction of expenditures will not be sufficient. Committee members were informed that unfortunately cuts to the salary portion of the budget will need to be made which will result in the loss of staff and valuable programming. Committee members were 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.

Committee members were 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.

In response to an enquiry regarding the distribution of budget information to the community, Committee members were informed that information will be provided via social media, newsletters and Board meetings. Committee members were informed interested parties may register to appear as a delegation at a Board meeting. Committee members were encouraged to share the information in the Budget brochure and discuss the questions regarding resources available to schools to fill education mandates, important school issues and suggestions on how WSD might address the fiscal challenges of the 2022/2023 budget with their respective parent councils. Committee members were informed Budget feedback can be emailed to Board@wsd1.org for consideration.

Committee members were encouraged to reach out to their MLA's and the Minister of Education with their comments and 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.

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. Committee members were informed that WSD had provided the province with a large number of recommendations which were not reflected in Bill 64 which will be followed up on with the Province as well.

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.

Committee members were informed that the Board of Trustees appreciates the efforts that have been made by staff, students, families and the community to make the restoration of safe schools successful.

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

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In response to concerns regarding the potential support staff strike, Committee members were informed that the Board of Trustees continues to negotiate with unions and hopes to be able to avoid a strike.

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 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 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.

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.

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.

8. ENQUIRIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS AND SCHOOL REPORTS

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

- NIL

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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/CFO
Julie Millar, Director
Navinder Basra, Director of Finance & Assistant Secretary-Treasurer
Brenda Lapointe, Board & Community Liaison Officer
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
Tarin Howard, Recording Secretary

Trustees

Jamie Dumont
Chris Broughton