

## **K-12 Public Education in The Pas**

### **The 1950s**

The governance of public school education in The Pas during the 1950s was a period of organizational change, significant challenges, and unusual opportunity. Some of this was a reflection of sociological change in the province and in education generally, but other elements were a result of the attitudes of individuals who were active in the educational system during this period.

### **Budget Pressures**

The Pas School District #1635 budget for the year 1950 was set in February that year at \$65,709.95. Once the carry over surplus (\$1,780.13), Department of Education grants (\$21,250.18) and Grade 12 student fees (\$787) were deducted, the Town of The Pas portion was \$41,912.62. In response to the Town's request, the School Board agreed to reduce the Town's contribution to \$36,912.62 with the Town's assurance that "should the sum of \$3000 be required for the purpose of acquiring additional school accommodation the sum of \$3000 will be paid on demand during the year 1950 and be charged to the School Board for the year 1951."

The 1950 school year began with a total enrolment of 649 students divided into Grades 1-6 (383 students) and Grades 7-12 (266 students), accommodated in the eight-room red brick The Pas School and some wooden classroom annexes beside it.

Money continued to be tight and in January 1951 there was concern that funds may be insufficient to pay all the accounts if enough school taxes were not received, In addition, in February the Board reiterated that no further fees should be charged to Grade 12 students, following a recommendation of the school inspector that had been agreed to by the Board in September 1949. The Board directed a refund of the Grade 12 fees in March 1951.

An ongoing issue was the collection of school taxes from those living in Unorganized Territory. The School District wanted this task to be done by the Local Government of Consul, and for the Municipal Commission to appoint a tax collector for the unorganized portion of The Pas School District.

In March 1953 the annual budget was set at \$84,842 but was reduced a month later when changes in Manitoba government grants for education had an impact on funds available from Town taxes, resulting in the possibility in the short term of a need to borrow funds to operate the School District. The Town was the primary lender source if this loan was needed before obtaining a bank loan. And by November 1954 the fees for students living at Clearwater Lake was raised as a Board meeting issue.

The 1955 School District budget was set in March and reached \$163,304, having more than doubled since 1950. In October 1955 refunding of Grade 12 student fees to parents living outside The Pas School District (such as Snow Lake) was done when the province agreed to pay the fees when there was no local high school in such communities. In March 1956, after the School District enquired about funding from the federal government for students living on Crown Land, it was advised that federal education grants were paid directly to the Town of The Pas for the education of students whose parents lived on Crown Land.

In June 1956 the Board began to question the rate it was charged by the Town for lights and power. By November the Board Chair proposed a power rate the same as the domestic rate, a move that would save the School District up to \$1200 on its annual budget. In June 1957, due to vandalism at some schools, the Town was informed that the District's 1958 budget needs would require an amount to cover breakages.

In November 1957 the School Board supported a resolution at the annual meeting of the Manitoba School Trustees Association calling for a Basic School Grant Formula for all school districts in the province, so as to aid in fairness in covering education costs. One suggestion was to set a grant of \$6000 per classroom per year.

By 1958 additional pressures on the annual School District budget was coming from increasing teacher salaries, increased enrolment of students, a need to find ways to finance new school construction, and additional insurance coverage. In May 1959 the Town complained that while the Public Schools Act required students to be accepted for schooling, the Municipal Act didn't allow them to be counted as residents until having lived in the Town for twelve months. At a subsequent meeting with the Minister of Education he proclaimed that new nonresident students be sent to school free of charge. When the Mayor of The Pas retorted that the nonresident fee didn't meet the cost of educating a child, the Minister explained that over time the nonresident rate would go up.

By 1959 the pressures of increased enrolment, a need for more classroom space, competition in obtaining qualified teachers, a growing influence of the Department of Education, the nonresident fee controversy, and a desire by community members to have improvements made in the courses available to their children would result in discussions about a totally new development idea that might resolve these issues - consolidation and amalgamation.

## **Community Issues**

As the 1950s began, the limited resources of the School District also limited its ability to respond to community requests. For high school graduation exercises and celebrations community facilities were very limited. In June 1950 the Salvation Army Hall was a space used. Later on the Lido Theatre and the Guy Hall were used for graduation functions.

In June 1950 the local Community Club was granted use of the southern portion of a

school property (between Gordon Avenue and Constant Avenue) for the purpose of a children's playground, until such time as it may be used for a school purpose. In April 1952 a request from a local business person to rent a portion of this property "for the purpose of erecting [sic] a moveable Service Station which could be removed on a three month notice" was refused by the Board.

A desire to allow school children to attend events of the four day Northern Manitoba Trappers' Festival triggered efforts to accommodate. While he was in The Pas in 1953 for the Trappers' Festival, Mr. Eric Wild (Canadian conductor, arranger, composer) offered to provide a musical and educational program for the pupils. In February 1953 the Board instructed teachers "to call the roll on Thursday and Friday only and let the classes out to see the events." By 1957 teachers were authorized to take attendance and release students at 9:45 a.m. on Wednesday and 10:20 a.m. on Thursday and Friday.

In 1954 use of The Pas School play ground was granted to the B. P. O. Elks for Little League Baseball and to The Pas Legion for Gayland Shows held in July. In June 1955 use of the school property on Gordon Avenue was granted to the B. P. O. Elks for two circus shows on the understanding that the grounds would be left clean and any holes filled. At times the use of this empty property, designated for a future school, became a bit contentious. The Town desired to use it for building lots, a request the Board denied. In May 1955 a delegation of veterans representing those wanting to build homes under the Veterans Land Act asked "to have the property on Gordon Avenue sold so they could build homes." While the Board looked into the request, it responded in June noting that the "property was purchased from the Indian Department and an agreement was made at that time whereby it could never be used for any other purpose than school use."

Community groups had limited access to the smaller The Pas School (red brick building), and more requests were forthcoming later in the decade with the construction of The Pas Collegiate and its new auditorium space. In 1955, with the organization of The Pas Home and School Association, it was allowed use of the auditorium to hold its annual tea and display. Its request in 1956 to have water facilities provided in the auditorium was denied by the Board as it had not been included in the 1956 budget. The Pas Glee Club was granted access for its practices, but a provincial request to operate a baby clinic was relegated to use of one of the unused school annex classrooms.

In May 1957 the local Music Festival Association complained that there had not been enough entries from the elementary students, and blamed the principal for "not living up to curriculum." The principal's response to the Board was that it was "not the place of the school to have entries to swell the numbers when the students weren't interested in music and were probably not getting anything from that branch of education, when their efforts could be to better use by paying more attention to their studies."

In October 1958 The Pas Lions Club notified the Board that it was prepared to sponsor a Teen Canteen, with regular "meetings on Friday evening" if the Board allowed use of The Pas Collegiate auditorium for this. The initial Board response was to allow this use, but that

it “was in no way responsible and any breach of regulations would mean immediate cancellation.” By November the high school custodian reported that “running of Teen Canteen in the Collegiate up to now had not worked satisfactorily, in that the members in some cases were making use of the whole school, leaving...exterior doors partly open so they could leave...and return later without entering through the proper entrance.” The Board then put its regulations for dances in writing for the Lions. In December the Board discussed this use further and approved the use of a spare classroom in the school as a smoking room.

In January 1959 the Board notified the Lions Club that the smoking room for future Teen Canteens would not be available. A new school custodian at the school did not want to work Friday evenings and the Board did not want to pay for someone else to be there. Further negotiations with the Lions Club were put off until the election of a new Board, and by October 1959 permission to continue use of the auditorium was denied due to the loss of a sponsor.

Complaints in April 1959 about the very poor condition of playground equipment originally installed by the B. P. O. Elks on the Gordon Avenue school property led to that organization agreeing to repair it, but in September 1959 the Board asked that it be removed.

One school community issue that would have consequences in the future arose when a parent delegation came to a Board meeting on September 14, 1951 “to discuss the accommodation of pupils eating lunch during the noon hour. A discussion followed with the thought of having a noon supervisor and hot soup prepared for the pupils who were unable to go home during the noon hour.” The noon break in those days was from 12:00 noon to 1:30 p.m. A committee of two trustees was struck to look into the matter and make recommendations. At the October 12 Board meeting, a motion passed to “request the teachers to consider a Monitor system of the school during the noon hour. Supervising children eating lunches in the school and general supervision of the main school building, this supervision to be of children in the main school building only.” Further to this issue, the Board noted at its November 9 meeting “The teachers will supervise for a 45 minute period in the Music room, from 12:00 noon to 12:45 p.m. after that time the students would be free to play and do work in their room, etc.”

A delegation of four parents returned in February 1953 with a petition requesting that the lunch hour supervision be resumed. This resumption would continue for several years but after the opening of the new Kelsey School, lunch room supervision became another hot topic in February 1959. The pupils were refusing to respect the authority of the school custodian who had been given the supervisory task. The school principal (who was also the president of the local Teachers’ Association) felt it was “not fair to ask Teachers to give up their lunch hour to supervise.” The Board had a letter sent out to parents of lunch students warning them of the problem.

A successful community request was made in January 1959 by a group of parents who

wanted to build and maintain an outdoor rink on the playground of the new Kelsey School. The Board approved the use of the southeast corner for this as the parent group was apparently well organized. In November when the Lions Club requested to build another outdoor rink on the grounds of the Opasquia School, the Board withheld its consideration "until an organization is ready to accept responsibility for operation and supervision." It did, however, agree to assist the Lions to circulate a letter to parents, distributed via the students, regarding the formation of a community club to look after outdoor rinks.

## **Religious Relations**

For the most part, relations between the local religious organizations and the District school board were more harmonious than they had been in the 1940s. On November 9, 1951 the Ministerial Association attended a school board meeting to discuss its program of religious teachings which they would like conducted in the school, No decision was reached at this meeting, though the Board agreed to consider this at a later date. At a special meeting on November 27, "a lengthy discussion took place regarding the request of The Pas Ministerial Association to have Religious teaching conducted to Grade VII. The trustees felt, they woul [sic] like a little more time to think the situation over..." In February 1952, however, the request in regards to setting up a Religious program in The Pas School was not granted. In March 1953 the school board Chair was asked to meet with Rev. A. Harvey of the Ministerial Association to explain the Board's 'reasons for not adopting this request.

In January 1955 a delegation from The Pas Ministerial Association met with the trustees regarding the misconduct of one student during the required Religious Exercises. In March 1959 the Board approved "Rev. Harvey's plan to distribute bibles" to students.

In 1951 due to overcrowded conditions in the public school, some classroom space was rented in the Sacred Heart School for a few public school classes to be run by public school teachers. At times the overcrowding also occurred at this separate school. In August, 1954 Fr. A. J. B. Cossette enquired about the public school absorbing Grades 7 and 8 from the Sacred Heart School.

In September 1954 Rev. M. J. Campbell asked the Board to have his child (in a rented Grade 5 classroom located in the Sacred Heart School) be removed from the environment of the separate school and brought over to a Grade 5 in the Public School without delay. He was asked to put his request in writing but at its October 12 meeting the school board informed the parent "that this Board cannot see fit to move his son from the Public School room to which he had been assigned." The Board did, however, request that "a report on ...scholastic progress and his relationship with the other students of his class," be made to the Board. At the November 9 meeting the principal reported that the boy "appears quite settled down in the room he was placed in the Separate School, and the teacher feels he is doing very well in his studies."

In November 1955 the high school principal reported that changes in the Religious Exercises had been made "in that each teacher will hold a 10 minute period of Bible

Reading and the Lord's Prayer each day."

In March 1957 Fr. Cossette offered a room for a Grade 4 class in Sacred Heart School rent free if the Board would hire a teacher he recommended. The Board denied his request, though later that teacher would be employed in the School District.

## **Student Issues**

While few student issues reached the level of school board meetings, from time to time the Board did become involved due to parents appearing at a school board meeting or sending a letter to the Board. As the 1950s proceeded, principals seemed less reticent in asking for Board involvement or input in dealing with specific student behaviours.

In August 1950 the Board instructed the Secretary-Treasurer to have the high school examination results submitted to the local newspaper, The Northern Mail, for publication as it was thought the public would be interested in the result. In January 1951 the boys and girls high school curling teams were permitted to attend a bonspiel in Flin Flon.

In November that year it was suggested the two tube fire escapes leading from the second floor of The Pas School to the ground should be lengthened along with improvements to the structural supports. The custodian stated that the lengthening of these fire escapes would defeat the original idea when they were installed, so no action was taken.

In February 1953 the high school boys curling team won the main event of the Regional Bonspiel, and some of the boys were picked up by the RCMP around 3:00 a.m. The boys had been a bit noisy but nothing serious was reported. In February 1956 the high school principal wanted to put limits on participation in outside sports activities, limiting participation to one event per team. In March 1958 when some students were involved in drinking while at the Regional Bonspiel, it was decided they would not be allowed to represent their school at any future regional bonspiels. In October 1958 a new high school principal tightened things up by directing that only students conscientious in their work and having passing grades would be allowed to represent the school in extramural sports activities.

Truancy of some children would be brought to the Board's attention from time to time. The elementary principal reported in March 1953 that a couple students had "started for Churchill and were picked up...eventually...brought in Juvenile Court through stealing money from her purse."

In June 1953 a delegation asked for a reconsideration of the date deadline for school registration from age 6 by December 1 to December 31 as they had told their children they would be going to school and considered the school board was in error. The Board Chair pointed out that December 1 was the date in the Public Schools Act. The Board agreed to publish the December 31 date for the Fall of 1953, but for the Fall of 1954 it would return to December 1.

Board support for high school graduation activities was noted at a May 12, 1953 Board meeting when it agreed to pay the costs of the graduation dance, orchestra and hall rental, In September 1953 the high school Student Council discussed with the Board how the Council's donation of \$300 to the District should be spent. It was agreed to purchase a tape recorder. It was purchased and placed under the control of the principals, and its use restricted for school use only.

During the 1950s a significant issue for students, and teachers, was the overcrowding of classrooms due to the limited school facilities. By modern standards, these situations were astonishing. In September 1951 one Grade 5 classroom had 31 students and a Grade 6 classroom held 32. By October 1953 there were two Grade 5 classes, one with 39 students and the other held 40 students. In April 1954 the two Grade 5 classes held 40 students each. In December 1956 the Grade 6 enrolment was 39 and 40 students. In April 1957 the two Grade 2 classes each held 40 students, and in November that year Grades 4, 5, 6, and 11 all had enrolments of about 37 students. One Grade 5 student in 1952 remembers her class being allocated to a windowless room in the basement of The Pas "red brick" School.

After the opening of the new high school in 1954, a move began to remove some students from the wooden annex classrooms. Two Grade 2 classes were placed in one side of the high school auditorium, separated by moveable walls, but the music and gym classes held next door made it too disruptive for proper classes. One class was returned to the annex and the other to the "red brick" building.

In November 1955 the high school put on the operetta "The Kitchen Clock." The \$75 this venture earned was donated toward the construction of a stage for the auditorium. For the June 1956 graduation exercises, the graduates wore caps and gowns for the first time. School attendance could be disrupted by disease. In November 1955 the elementary principal noted there were lots of absences due to measles. In May 1956 a case of tuberculosis was found in the elementary school. That student ended up in a TB sanatorium and the elementary students were subjected to x-rays and tuberculin tests conducted by the local health unit. In addition, the Grade 4 public school students located in the separate school had to be x-rayed before they were admitted to the public school. All the other elementary students in The Pas would be examined, and the junior and senior high students were x-rayed. That Fall two children were sent to Winnipeg when they displayed signs of TB.

In December 1956, for the first time, 196 students took the opportunity to have school pictures taken, a practice that would continue long into the future.

The August 23, 1957 school board meeting was informed by the provincial school inspector of the gratifying results of the Collegiate exams. The December 1957 exam results were reported to be "ahead of the province and very gratifying."

One episode occurred in May 1958 when a high school teacher was accosted on the street by two students. The boys were "suspended for being rude and impertinent on the street."

Upon review the Board allowed them “to return to school ...with the clear understanding that any breach of discipline, either in school or disrespect to any teacher out of school will become cause for instant dismissal from The Pas School.” School was not always seen in a positive light by some students. In December 1958 an elementary principal noted in a report to the Board that a repeating Grade 6 student commented that “it would be the happiest day of his life when he didn’t have to go to school again.” And in January 1959 an elementary principal reported that “a 17-year old student still in Grade 4 was too old, getting out of hand, and had difficulty with his hearing.” She felt he should be advanced to a class of his own age and taught separately. The Rotary Club provided him with a hearing aid.

The Rotary Club also supported education by providing an opportunity for a high school student to participate in its “Adventure in Citizenship” experience in Ottawa in January 1958. Two students were sent to Winnipeg during the Spring Break to participate in the Model United Nations Assembly. Another high school student was selected in January 1959 to participate as a regional representative in a provincial oratorical contest sponsored by the Manitoba Trustees Association, but she was shocked to find out upon arriving that no arrangements for her accommodation had been made.

## **Teacher Issues**

During the 1950s, the level of teacher salaries was an ongoing discussion between the Board and its teachers. Significant evolution in the negotiation process would take place during that period. As in previous years, the typical Board method at the start of the decade was to set salary amounts for each teacher, and then to present this salary schedule to the teachers and to ask that the teachers confirm their interest in remaining with the School District. In May 1950 this process resulted in some teacher resignations and the Board had to place advertisements for the open positions in Winnipeg newspapers. The two principals were offered an additional amount per classroom (\$50 in 1951-52) for their supervision duties. Maximum teacher salaries at this time were about \$2,200, and somewhat more at the high school level.

Teachers (and principals) would try to influence the Board to consider salary improvements by providing salary comparisons with other school districts. Further, discussions began to be about the implementation of a single salary schedule. The schedule proposed in February and agreed upon in March for 1950-51 included a \$200 annual increase for the public school (i.e. elementary) teachers, a \$200 increase for Junior High teachers, and a \$300 increase for high school teachers. Principal salaries were also increased. It was noted, however, that a single salary schedule would be developed for 1951-52. When the Board and teachers began discussions in January 1952 on the 1952-53 schedule, it was concluded and agreed upon in April 1952 and for the first time included salary increments (annual increases based on acquired teaching experience with the School District) as a means to retain qualified teachers.

Another issue the Board wanted dealt with concerned the reasons, other than illness, for



which teachers requested to be away from school, At its October 14, 1952 meeting the Board directed that principals should refer these requests to the Board for decisions. In November, upon the death of Trustee Frank Needham, the school was closed by the Board in his honour during the afternoon of his funeral. In December 1952 the Board did allow a teacher to leave school a day early to travel home to New Brunswick for Christmas, but charged him the substitute costs.

In January 1953 another milestone occurred when the Board supported the application of The Pas Local Association of the Manitoba Teachers' Society to the Manitoba Labour Board. By March the Board had supported increases to the teachers' salary schedule: \$200 for elementary and junior high teachers, \$200 for the Collegiate (high school) teachers, and \$100 for teachers with degrees. The Board still followed their practice of an annual review of the teaching staff to decide whether to retain or dismiss each teacher. It was also their practice to review the teacher applications for hiring decisions.

An annual social event with teachers and board members attending had begun many years earlier. The June 1953 Board minutes noted the Board's appreciation "for the fine party that the teachers put on for the Board and their wives."

The report to the Board on February 8, 1954 on salary discussions with the teachers saw the introduction of the salary increment concept, with twelve steps of \$100 proposed for Collegiate teachers, but only ten steps for elementary and junior high teachers. On February 28, 1956 the concept of a joint collective agreement was indicated when the details of the salary schedule, increments and past experience were placed in the Board minutes, pending the Teachers' Association acceptance. It was accepted and the signatures of Board and MTS Local officials were added to the typed agreement in the Board minutes. Subsequently, in April, the Board made efforts to hire a part-time teacher to allow principals to be released to conduct classroom supervision.

In April 1956 a major issue came to light when the high school principal received a report that a high school student had offered to sell information on the contents of a Grade 10 exam to another student. Several investigative interviews followed, including involvement of the provincial school inspector, resulting in the confession of a high school teacher who had been involved in the provision of exam information to two of his female students. The teacher met with the Board, admitted his transgression, and was allowed to resign immediately. The two girls directly involved were expelled from the Collegiate as a result of "alleged irregularities in connection with the recent term exams."

In June 1956, supporting the goal of improving teacher qualifications, the Board agreed to give four elementary teachers time off to write exams, In September, the Board agreed that elementary principals should be relieved of teaching duties full time, the better to carry out their supervision responsibilities.

In January 1957 the Board agreed that a local teacher who was the District Secretary of the Northern Region of the Manitoba Teachers' Society could be given a few hours off in

order to make plane connections to attend the MTS annual convention in Winnipeg.

Further development in the salary negotiation process can be noted in February 1958. The teachers' salary brief received by the Board was reviewed in comparison to the schedules of other school districts. The next month the Board supported improvements to the salary schedule increments, payments for past experience, and included a principal's scale in the salary schedule.

In March 1958 the Board advertised in Winnipeg newspapers for the principal positions of two new elementary schools to be opened in The Pas School District. Such was the disappointment in the quality of applicants, even after advertising, that in June 1958 the Board felt "to keep in line and make an attractive offer to bring a principal from the Southern part of the Province, that we would present to the Local Teachers' Society the thought of raising the amount already offered for classroom supervision." The Board agreed "to increase the supervision allowance for principals...by \$60 per classroom if it was satisfactory to the local MTS ." The teachers agreed.

In June 1958 when Mr. George Goodwin, the high school principal since 1952 (and of The Pas Collegiate Institute since it opened in 1954), submitted his resignation, he was presented with a pen and pencil set by the Board. On June 21 a short interview was held with an applicant for this open position and the Board engaged Mr. V.C. Hardy for the 1958-59 school term.

In September 1958 staffing for the four schools in the School District was reported: The Pas Collegiate (including Grades 7-12) had twelve teachers (two on a permit), Kelsey School had ten teachers, The Pas Public School had seven teachers, and Opasquia School had six teachers on staff. The large class sizes were still a concern (with three Grade 4 classes of 35, 37, and 38 students) so the Board agreed to seek another Grade 4 teacher to start in January 1959.

In November 1958 Principal Hardy proposed eliminating recess at TPCI, claiming that "students don't go outside, there was very little value in having students clutter up the inside of the building, also Flin Flon and Lynn Lake School Districts had done this." The Board suggested that the principal discuss this with the staff before going ahead. In January 1959 Principal Hardy reported he "had installed supervision in the boy's toilets and it was working very well." He also instituted a detention room, which some parents objected to.

As a result of local discussions about the possible consolidation of school districts around The Pas, the Board decided at its March 10, 1959 meeting to get proof of teacher experience and qualifications before finalizing a salary schedule that could be presented to its teachers. The Board passed a motion "to procure from all teachers a sworn statement in duplicate stating years of experience and qualifications...permit experience not acceptable" and required these to be submitted by March 15. Further, before engagement, a written report on each member of their staff was to be presented by the

principal for March 17.

In April 1959 high school principal Hardy indicated he planned to resign at the end of the school year. His resignation was accepted and the search for a replacement began. On April 11 the first collective agreement with the local teachers was completed. It defined educational qualifications, basic salary, allowances for additional qualifications, a substitute salary, placement on the salary schedule, administrative allowances, a process for dealing with complaints against teachers, security of tenure, and a dispute process.

In April the Board directed Principal Hardy to arrange outdoor recesses so students could practice for the annual Field Day events. Subsequently the Collegiate staff requested a meeting with the Board to get “a clearer interpretation as to what was expected of them in encouraging the students in preparation of the annual Field Day.” It seemed to the teachers that they were being asked “to go out on the playground and take part in the exercises.” At a joint meeting on April 23, the Board stated that teachers were “only to encourage the students in participating and practicing the Field Day events.” The teachers noted that the high school grounds (and adjacent streets) were hardly suitable for competitions and suggested to try to arrange use of the sports grounds west of town instead. This was done. They also suggested that since all students did not engage in competitions, a series of fun activities for the non-competitors was an alternative.

In November 1959 the Board directed that the elementary schools would be closed so that Miss McLeish, the art instructor from the Manitoba Teachers College, could conduct a workshop for the School District’s elementary teachers.

## **Growth and Consolidation**

The growth of the student population in The Pas during the 1950s, almost 50%, put considerable pressure on The Pas School District’s Board of Trustees to find ways to be able to accommodate these students. At the start of the decade construction costs were mainly the responsibility of the school board and the municipality, but by the end of the decade a growing involvement of the provincial government in funding school capital projects made this cost less of a local burden.

In mid-June 1950 student population growth resulted in the school board calling for tenders to build “a new classroom, size and specifications to be approved by the Building Committee.” This classroom was to be added onto the existing row of a wood school annex. It was decided to discuss the question of a new school building with the Mayor and Town Council prior to holding a joint meeting with the Municipal and Public Utility Board. This latter joint meeting was held on June 23, 1950 and Mr. Mellish, the chair of the Utility Board, noted that a number of questions and particulars would need to be clarified “before serious thought could be given the request,” Among these were: current student enrolment, number of “repeaters,” how many beginners were expected for the Fall school opening, approval of any plans by the Department of Education, cost and necessity of construction, and most

critical “who shall bear the cost? Are the tax payers in The Pas in a position to bear the additional costs, in view of the fact that the present tax rate is high? Another step, if and when the PUB gave its approval, was the necessity of gaining the approval of the voters to a By-law on the construction of a new school.”

At the July 28, 1950 meeting, the Board accepted the tender of \$5,269 from Lauze Brothers to construct a “32' x 30' annex and a 14' x 14' office attached to the other Annexes in East side of the main school...” Construction would be supervised by the school custodian, and additional \$3,000 funding would be requested from the Town.

By September 1950 the Board agreed to hire an architect to prepare tentative plans for a twelve-room school with an auditorium. Some trustees were sent along with the school inspector to visit schools in St. Vital and Portage la Prairie “for the purpose of obtaining ideas, construction ideas, equipment, for proposed new school in The Pas.” Concurrent with this initiative, the Board also decided to introduce a commercial course at the high school if grants were available from the Department of Education.

In January 1951 another joint meeting with the Town Council was arranged to consider the site for a new school. In February school inspector Moffat provided information to the Board on a proposed debenture issue for building a new school. As a result a motion was passed to “authorize The Pas School District #1635 the borrowing of \$250,000 for the purpose of building and equipping a new school.” In July, after reviewing the plans for a new twelve room school, the Board accepted them subject to approval of the Department.

A special meeting in August 1951 further authorized borrowing \$250,000 for the new school less an auditorium, and for the Board to apply to the Municipal and Public Utility Board for permission to raise these funds under By-law (#7-1951). One important issue was the need to find buyers of such a debenture. At a meeting on November 20, 1952 the architectural plans for a twelve room school indicated it could be built for \$145,000, with the addition of an auditorium seating 400 at a cost of another \$35,000.

In February 1953 the Board selected one of the proposed schemes for the new school but asked the architects to offer suggestions on the relative merits of steam over oil heating, use of coal versus oil, diffused florescent lighting, and enlarging the library space. The Board also directed that student locker space should be built within the classrooms and the school corridors be at least nine feet wide. At a March meeting the idea was raised of having folding walls in the auditorium (to allow for four classrooms to be converted when needed) if the Department approved. Meetings with the Chamber of Commerce, Town Council and the public regarding the high school plans were held in April, and it was agreed to construct a collegiate on the site of the present school.

A special Board meeting on April 24, 1953 gave first reading to a By-law #1-53 to borrow \$210,000 to construct a new Collegiate. Inspector Moffat queried the Board on its support for taking in fifteen students from the Carrot Valley into the new school. By July discussions were started with the Minister of Education as the Board had been unable to arrange the

sale of its debenture. The Board hoped that the province would buy the debenture and deduct the payments from the annual grant to the School District in September 1953. With construction of the new Collegiate underway, and changes in government grants for education, payments to the contractor and to the architects necessitated a \$72,000 loan by the School District from the Town for the Fall 1953 term, and an \$80,000 loan from the bank in October.

Overcrowding continued during 1953 and measures had to be taken to accommodate some students in the basement of the Masonic Hall, renting classroom space in the Sacred Heart School, and even the purchase of the hall part of the Westminster United Church.

At its February 18, 1954 special meeting the School District Board agreed that Carrot Valley pupils be accepted in the School District for the year 1954-55 as requested by letter from Inspector Moffat, at a revenue from the Government of \$45 per pupil per year. This agreement could be renewed from year to year. In March the Minister and Deputy Minister of Education were invited to participate in the opening ceremonies for The Pas Collegiate.

The elementary student population continued to grow. By July 1954 considerable discussion took place on the need for new schools. It was agreed to gather statistics on the need and set up a board committee to study this. It was reported at the August 4, 1956 board meeting that "it was estimated that there were enough white population born in The Pas to make about 6 classrooms in Grade 1 in 1961." But property on which to build another school had to be obtained. At the August 2, 1957 Board meeting a press release on the construction of a twelve-classroom school was made, with a by-law vote planned for October. At the August 23, 1957 board meeting the new school plan was approved in principle. At a September 20, 1957 public meeting held to acquaint the public with the need for a new school and the plan options, the general feeling of those present was that the Board should seek to have a school larger than twelve classrooms. At the September meeting however, the Board moved to build a twelve-room school on the Settee Avenue site (Block #62) and to borrow \$180,000 for twenty years at 5 3/4% interest.

On September 9, 1957 a new aspect entered into the planning when Mr. Bell of Indian Affairs raised the possibility of providing capital costs for the building of a new school. He said he would recommend to the federal government that Indian Affairs pay for the construction of four of the classrooms thus allowing some of its students to attend school in The Pas School District.

By October 1957 a discussion with the Municipal and Public Utilities Board encouraged the District School Board to have sixteen classrooms built and so the By-law #1-57 was returned so a new by-law for a larger school project could be financed, and it was agreed to proceed with the construction of two new schools at \$240,000 - a ten-classroom school on Settee Avenue and a six-classroom school on Gordon Avenue. By November approvals for the two proposed schools had been received from the Fire Commission and the Department of Education. In January 1958 a new finance debenture (#2-57) for the two new schools was requested, and meetings with the architects began. By May the

construction contract was awarded.

At the June 11, 1958 board meeting Inspector Gillies suggested the Board run a contest among the Grade 1-12 students for naming the two new schools. Two prizes of \$5,00 each would be given for the names selected by the judges. Five name entries were received by July 21: Opasquia, Evergreen, Kelsey, Spruce Grove, and Mary Duncan. The Board Chair and the Secretary-Treasurer selected the names Kelsey and Opasquia. In October the architect reported on the progress of construction of the new schools. Opasquia School was nearly completed but Kelsey School had serious enough plumbing delays that the Board agreed to hold back the plumbing payment for a year. The official opening of these schools was set for the afternoon of November 28, the Minister and Deputy Minister of Education were invited to attend, and the Board agreed to dismiss all students in the afternoon so there would be no holdup with the opening ceremonies. The Board Chair also suggested that a plaque should be mounted at each school noting the date of construction.

In November 1958 the two wooden school annex buildings were advertised for sale, though in the following year some of these classrooms would be needed temporarily.

At the December 3 board meeting a representative of the plumbing company attended to plead his case for the release of the hold back for the plumbing contract. He expressed his regret for the construction delays and asked to be allowed to complete the work in a timely manner (by December 20) or he would pay for another company to do so. With some hesitancy, the Board allowed the time necessary to complete the job.

## **Consolidation**

A public meeting was called on February 6, 1959 to discuss and vote on the consolidation of The Pas School District #1635 with the school districts of Carrot Valley #2283 and Wanless #2301, as a result of incentives now provided by the provincial government to amalgamate smaller school districts. Five reasons were presented to the meeting for consolidation:

1. Improved transportation to school
2. Qualified teachers more assured
3. Higher assessment
4. Avoid the need for maintenance at outlying school areas
5. Added grants for vocational classes more possible

The meeting unanimously voted its approval for the formation of a consolidated school district. A next step would be for the provincial Boundaries Commission to rule on the number of wards and trustees to be elected. As the planning continued, a challenge in a letter from The Pas Ministerial Association triggered a meeting with the Board to find out why students from Young's Point were left out of the plans to consolidate. The Board replied that it was "for financial and transportation reasons alone, not that segregation or racial discrimination was any part of the Board's boundary proposal," The Board stated that nothing prohibited the Young's Point students from attending now, but no transportation

would be provided as it was felt the taxpayer should not be burdened with the extra cost.

On April 15, 1959 the Board received a copy of the Order in Council #512/59 which established a Board of Trustees for the newly consolidated School District of Kelsey #2376. The legislation included all five of the current trustees from The Pas School District along with Laine Coad (Carrot Valley, Pasquia) and Leonard Molyneaux (Wanless, Rall's Island). Subsequently a letter was sent to the Boundaries Commission to include all the lands of the consolidated school district so that the Minister of Education could very quickly establish a new Kelsey School Division #45 and provide an election for its first Board of Trustees. At its May 19 meeting Dick Bell, now of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, argued that some students from The Pas Reserve now being sent away to attend residential high schools should be allowed to attend in Kelsey School Division. He proposed that the Department would pay regular fees, some of the building costs if new schools were needed, and The Pas Indian Day School on the reservation had room for manual training and home economics classes. The school board agreed to support the idea.

On June 16, 1959, the organizational meeting of the new Kelsey School Division #45 was held. The Board asked the Department of Education if it would pay for transporting students from Young's Point, and called for tenders for four bus routes used to bring students to school. At its July meeting the Board note it was "fully prepared to cooperate with [the Department of Indian Affairs] in any way dealing with education."

The Board also gave 'notice of our intention to reserve land in the Pasquia Land Settlement project for future school use. Trustee Coad was to review areas west of The Pas for future school use, and the Board approved a five-acre site in the Pasquia project for future school use.

In September 1959, as Wanless School would no longer be needed, tenders for its purchase were called for, and by October the Board asked the Town Council to reserve land in the vicinity of the new subdivision for future school use. By November further consideration took place on how integration of Indian students could be managed, by a straight fee per pupil or participation in funding a new school building program and fees similar to that paid by municipalities. This led to the school board asking the architects to produce preliminary sketches for a five-room addition to The Pas Collegiate for vocational training, and a six classroom addition with a small auditorium to Kelsey School. Discussions would take place on making provisions for accepting thirty Indian pupils at the high school level under a formula that addressed per pupil costs less capital costs.

The year 1959 ended with the School Division still seeking Town support to acquire 7.42 acres of land in the Town's proposed development scheme.

**Information Sources:**

The Pas School District #1635 Board minutes: 1950-1959  
Kelsey School Division #45 Board minutes 1959

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