

THE FACTS ON BILL 64



*Local Voices
Local Choices*

Because schools belong to communities

Impacts on students - Why Should Parents and Communities Care?



Our current focus

- Manitoba has always sought to promote the best interests of all students by providing quality learning opportunities that reflect local needs in each community.
- Education belongs to communities through local choices made using funding that comes from your taxes.



What will Bill 64 do to improve this focus?

- In the longer term, the government's goal is to move all schools under one provincial education authority.
- Local programs, supports and services, along with all funding for education, would become controlled by the provincial education authority.
- The government hopes that by controlling community school resources, it can improve student performance in reading, math and science, in order to say in future that Manitoba is not "last" or "9th out of 10" when compared to other provinces.
- The government hopes that creating one provincial education authority will result in savings of \$40 million that will be used to fund classrooms, presumably towards meeting reading, math and science improvements.



Some important considerations

- Keeping up with national and global high achievers is important when it comes to reading, math and science but it is also important to remember that the difference between "first and last place scores" on national scores is very slight. Canada as a whole is the best performing nation in the world among English-speaking countries, Manitoba contributes to this national standing.

- Reading, math and science are important but they are not all that education is about. Across Manitoba's communities, students benefit from many different subjects and learning opportunities geared toward their individual interests. These opportunities are essential for preparing them for life beyond the classroom.

- Moving schools under one authority means creating a bigger, centralized bureaucracy, one that is not informed by the needs of local students and communities.

- This is because your local school divisions, which currently budget, create programs, and set priorities for each community they serve, will no longer exist.

- Instead, they will be replaced by branch offices of the provincial authority and then, not even in the 38 communities currently served by school divisions but instead, by 15 offices that will serve vastly different communities and in some cases large geographic regions.

- Loss of locally developed programs, supports and services would mean that each community will receive a "one size fits all" approach to education, reflective of the centralized decision-makers.

- Local programs students now receive could be in jeopardy, especially as specialized programs are discontinued so that every community becomes the same under one central authority.

- EVERY community will need to go hat in hand to Broadway to receive any of the tax dollars they pay in support of their schools.

- (And please make no mistake—while the government has said it will end local tax to support schools, each and every province funds education using your taxes, where else would funding for schools come from?)



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In real money, if savings of \$40 million is even possible after creating province-wide bureaucracy, this really amounts to less than \$200 per student.



Better Outcomes Promised?

- The province promises better outcomes under the new structure. The organizations that provide the test results note that:
 - In reading, math and science, 8 out of 10 Manitoba students meet or exceed expectations. This is also true of every other province.
 - Two out of ten students who do not meet or exceed expectations come from the poorest households.
 - \$200 per student could be used to address the creation of a meal program for the poorest students or to develop a stronger team of community liaison and outreach workers to encourage regular school attendance and to work with families on supporting students with the greatest needs.
 - Addressing the 2 out of 10 who don't meet expectations is not what the province has said it will do with the \$40 million.
 - The government has not indicated where any savings will come from and how this money would be spent to the advantage of students.



Is there anything I should know?

- Bill 64 removes the decades old restriction on closure of local schools. All decisions on whether schools in your community stay open or are closed to achieve the \$200 per student will be made by Broadway.
- Bill 64 also eliminates the requirement that bus rides be one hour or less for students travelling long wintry roads in rural and northern Manitoba. The same applies to Winnipeg too.

- Bill 64 claims that it provides new roles for parents by asking parents to volunteer to run their local schools. This community voice is instead of local school boards where (41% of trustees are parents, with a further 21% being parents of recent graduates and 19% are grandparents).
- The current duty of school boards to consult with and develop budgets, safe schools, and new programs, supports and services with parent councils, is replaced by school community councils who serve an advisory role only.
 - There is no legal provision under Bill 64 that says any advice of school community councils will receive consideration before decisions are made. The most important decisions relating to funding, classroom content and programming will held by government (current and future) under Bill 64.
- Government has made promises in the past when it comes to formal meetings on education with parents and other community stakeholders. Many promises were unfortunately broken, even if the law says they must be honoured.
 - Two years ago, the Minister of Education eliminated the legal duty to meet annually with the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils without even sending a courtesy letter to tell parents that this annual meeting was being taken away from them.
 - Thirty years ago, the government created an advisory council to inform the work of the Minister and Department of Education. **Meetings of this advisory council have not happened once over the last twenty years.**
 - What legal duty is sacred enough to ensure any advisory or community council proposed under Bill 64 will protect the duties to consult with or receive any advisement from the government appointees on the new advisory structures?
- Education in Manitoba is the second largest public investment that is made. Access to the \$2.6 billion that flows to our schools and local communities will be controlled only by Broadway under Bill 64.

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- Plans are already underway to take staff out of small communities and to instead have them support the provincial education authority. What will this loss of local business mean for communities already devastated by the COVID19 pandemic's virulent restrictions?
- Thousands of parents and community members have suffered tremendous loss over the past year. Bill 64 will place a final nail in the coffin for the economic vitality of many parents whose employment and businesses depend on local support from those working for their local school divisions.
- Bill 64 recognizes the right of Manitoba's Francophone community to keep control of its schools by protecting the right of that community to control funding, develop programs, and elect decision makers to ensure the needs of its students continue to be met. There is no doubt whatsoever that the Francophone community deserves this right and privilege. Those same rights and privileges, designed to protect community interests, also applies to every other community. Don't your communities' interests deserve the same protection under Bill 64?
- Diversity within our communities is important and deserves consideration.
 - Elected school boards in Manitoba remain the **ONLY** level of elected office where women and men are equally represented.
 - Indigenous representatives in First Nations communities where trustees are elected by their community are not referenced anywhere under Bill 64.
 - Other minority voices on school boards across Manitoba are also at risk of disappearing altogether.
 - There is nothing under Bill 64 that provides for how these significant and important voices will continue to guide the development of programs, supports, services and budget decisions that strengthen the ongoing delivery of inclusive, fair, and responsive public education.
 - Under Bill 64, the school community councils and advisory will have no authority to provide programs specific to individual communities' unique cultures, including language, religion, cultural programs, and more.

