

QUESTIONS OF CONCERN FOR MANITOBA EDUCATION  
In light of provincial changes to education (BEST and Bill 64)

**INCLUSION**

1. Manitoba Education currently has a structure that includes programs for *Student Inclusion Supports*. This is removed in the new government structure that is advertised in their *Putting Students First* ppt. (slide 22).
  - Who is looking after our vulnerable students or students with needs?
  - Where are the supports to ensure equity in the system for these students?
2. Manitoba Education currently has a structure that includes programs for *the Blind and Visually impaired*. This is removed in the new government structure that is advertised in their *Putting Students First* ppt. (slide 22).
  - Who is looking after services for our blind and visually impaired students?
3. Manitoba Education currently has a structure that includes programs for the *Deaf and Hearing Impaired*. This is removed in the new government structure that is advertised in their *Putting Students First* ppt. (slide 22).
  - Who is looking after services for our deaf and hard of hearing students?
4. BEST commits to more timely assessments and interventions for students with special learning needs.
  - How is Manitoba Education creating a system to ensure that these assessments and specialized services are available to students in northern and rural communities without available services and staff?
  - What **funding** is placed towards this initiative?

**VOICE/REPRESENTATION**

5. Parents currently have a voice with school PAC and local representation from elected school boards. Boards will be removed; School Division Offices and School Division leaders will be removed. It would seem that this is a substantial reduction and concerted efforts to remove many of the voices and supports from within communities.
  - How is 'more voice' achieved when all supports and oversight groups in the province are being removed and silenced?
  - What is the rationale for reducing the entire province to only 15 'advisory' members representing provincial needs?
  - How does this benefit minority groups and marginalized groups in the province?
6. We have local decision-making with school PACs and elected community reps on School Boards.
  - How does Manitoba Education improve the current local voices and planning from schools when participation is being significantly reduced at the provincial level?
7. Provincial voices and organizations, such as Manitoba Association of Parent Councils (MAPC), Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS), Manitoba Association of School Business Officials (MASBO)

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and Manitoba School Board Association (MSBA) appear in the current structure (see Putting Students First, slide 19) but ALL disappear in the new structure (slide 22).

- Why is Manitoba Education silencing the voices of oversight groups from educational leadership, community voices, parent groups and provincial groups such as MASBO, MASS and MAPC?
- The new plan has 15 appointed staff to work under PEA and 15 selected parents to form an advisory council. How is this providing more voice to Manitoban families and communities?

8. The province currently has an established provincial *Association of Parent Councils*, but it is disbanded in the new framework.
  - Why is this organization being removed?
  - Is this group not already hearing and representing unique voices from different locations to meet parent needs?
  - Why is it being replaced by an advisory group of 15 advisory members to represent provincial needs?
  - Is this new system not silencing the parent voice?
  - How will marginalized groups be represented?
9. We fear that there will be an under-representation of group voices in the new model. *For example*,
  - How is the voice of the School Division French Immersion program represented in the provincial parent group?
  - How are First Nations and Aboriginal youth/family needs represented in the provincial parent group?
10. When the province asked students to join the Provincial Student Advisory Council, it struggled to locate 20 students in the province to join, sending out 'urgent' messages to School Divisions about enlisting students participating.
  - How does BEST intend to capture the voice of all students with limited representation (time and interest) from all the diverse regions?
11. *"If teachers, school staff and leaders play a critical role in informing the path forward,"* why is consultation or virtual meetings with Minister Cullen limited to select staff at one school in the community with a minimal question period/time? Why were the comments and concerns from the K-12 review not acknowledged in Bill 64?
12. Quality decisions help keep organizations pointed in the right direction. Although buy-in by professionals in the field is critical when introducing a new education model, Manitoba Education has ignored the voice and expertise of elected officials, communities, leaders and professionals in school and School Division Offices. With their independent mindset and Autocratic style (Vroom-Yetton Model), Manitoba Education has couched whirlwind meetings under the guise of a Consultative process to create a false narrative.
  - Will Manitoba Education commit to a Collaborative model moving forward with current teachers and leaders in the field of education to ensure the preservation of our school programs?

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- Manitoba Education has indicated that questions can be forwarded to [edutransformation@gov.mb.ca](mailto:edutransformation@gov.mb.ca) and will be answered. When will responses be provided? What are the mechanisms to ensure transparency so all can view answers?
13. It would seem that the new educational plan has minimal standards of acceptability within the province and that Manitoba Education has not explored all possibilities or potential issues.
- How do Bill 64 and the BEST initiative align to the needs and requirements of each stakeholder group?
  - Which groups (i.e. students, parents, teachers, CUPE, school leaders, School Division leaders, School Boards, municipalities, industries) have vocalized support for this initiative within the province?
  - Which groups have voiced opposition to the proposed changes from Bill 64 and BEST?
14. The new suggested system will make it hard for parents to hold people accountable for education decisions since School Division leaders (locally hired) and school boards (locally elected) will no longer be available to hear about local issues or allow for discussions on problem areas. This plan is snuffing out democracy.
- Under the current system, how will parents be able to voice their local issues?
  - Is it the Director of Education (government-appointed) who will listen to parents?
  - How will accountability be built into the system if Directors of Education are appointed and do not need to answer to anyone? How will transparency be achieved?
15. The new K-12 education model has been criticized for failing to actively include representation from Indigenous communities, newcomers, or people with disabilities. It is a system that will create greater marginalization.
- How will Bill 64 and BEST model represent all groups in its limited structure?

#### **SCHOOL COUNCIL AUTHORITY**

16. The Manitoba Education BEST ppt indicates that they will support School Councils.
- How is this done from afar?
  - Why was the *engagement* piece removed from the new framework presentation?
17. Please indicate how establishing new School Community Councils, instead of PACs, will help *“improve student achievement and well-being.”*
- What is this assumption based on?
  - How will you measure success to correlate the impact of the SCC on student achievement and well-being?
18. School Community Councils, similar to PACs, are to help reflect the diversity of the school.
- How will this diversity better represented in the province if there are no longer local School Boards or School Division Office leadership to provide this voice?
  - How will 15 provincial parents represent all the diverse needs of each community in the province?

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19. Manitoba Education is implementing new School Community Councils to replace current school Parent Advisory Councils.
- Why are School Community Councils “*assessing the effectiveness of educational programming at the school*”? (see Putting Student First, slide 29)
  - Are the parent members qualified to assess the effectiveness of educational programs?
  - Is this not the role of educational leaders in the school, teaching personnel and School Division Office leadership, such as the Superintendent, who all have background, training and experience in education?
  - How does the new system ensure confidentiality so that it does not breach FIPPA regulations?
  - Will this type of plan be opened up for other government agencies in the province so non-certified or non-qualified personnel can also assist in guiding program quality and efficiency? If no, why not?
20. Manitoba Education is implementing new School Community Councils to replace current school Parent Advisory Councils who would now be involved in assessing the performance or evaluations of staff and could determine “*the need to evaluate the performance of any person employed at the school.*” (see Putting Student First, slide 29)
- Parents do not work in the school and are not direct line managers for staff. Why would parents be involved in determining performance evaluations within schools?
  - Does this model for outside evaluators exist in other sectors of government?
  - Does this not violate terms of privacy and disclosure or FIPPA regulations?
  - What supervisory backgrounds and educational experience do parents hold?
  - How will confidentiality be ensured?
21. Many, if not most of our community families have both working parents or single parent workers.
- What will this situation have on the recruitment for the significant responsibilities of the new school parent councils?
  - Will there be gender and socio-economic equity in their "election"?

**PARENT ENGAGEMENT**

22. The Manitoba Education BEST ppt indicates that they will engage parents. They neglect to note that this is *currently happening* with schools, the School Division administration and elected School Boards at the local level.
- How will 15 appointed Regional Directors not located in the community address local parent needs better?
  - Will the Regional Directors be travelling to the regions to meet with parents and school leaders?
  - How many times a month can they be expected in the community? What will be the **cost/expense** of this additional travel & expenses?

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- Will the Regional Directors field daily calls to meet daily needs, as is done via School Division Offices? Or will they require additional staffing to support? If so, how many? What is the **cost** of salaries and benefits?
23. School Community Councils is a new title to define a PAC, which is *already occurring* in schools. We currently have issues attracting parent volunteers to this group due to parent family and work commitments, problems with care services for meeting times, disinterest or time limitation for attendance and transportation needs.
- How is Manitoba Education aiming to enhance attendance by parents?
  - What will be done differently than what has already been implemented by schools/School Divisions to increase parent attendance?

**PROVINCIAL CONTROL**

24. Manitoba Education indicated that currently, Superintendents, Secretary-Treasurers, and Boards deliver/oversee K-12 education and the provincial curriculum. The new BEST ppt displays the K-12 curriculum is in the new provincial framework.
- With this shift, how will this impact our local curriculum and programs?
25. Message for Teachers, School Leaders and Leaders, indicates that "*the Provincial Education Authority being established as early as November 2021...Once established, the Provincial Education Authority will become the employer for all public schools.*"
- With this statement, are we to assume that Superintendents will be taking direction from the Provincial Education Authority as of November 2021?
  - Will the PEA dictate the direction for all School Divisions?
  - What happens to the voice of the elected Boards?
  - The Boards hire Superintendents. Who is now the direct line manager?
26. Bill 64 abolishes 37 School Divisions and replaces them with 15 regional advisory districts, while the French language School Division is left untouched. The region of the former Minister of Education 's own riding in Hanover sees no change. Trying to make sense of the reasons behind the restructuring is bewildering. These new regions will contain student populations that vary in size from about 2,500 to over 100,000 students, while each regional area is to have one government-appointed Regional Director of Education. Student population then doesn't seem to be a common denominator. When the new geographical extent of each unique region is considered, there are staggering differences among them. One of the most egregious moves is to replace the four current northern school jurisdictions with one massive region in an area that covers two-thirds of Manitoba (and greater in area than Great Britain).
- How will the regional Director of Education better serve northern and remote communities than the current structure with Boards and School Division Offices with Educational leaders?
  - What budget will be afforded to the Director of Education for their additional support staff and increased travel expenses and other expenditures?

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27. Schools have been the recipients of repeated cuts by the province, failing to match inflation with funding increases. In early 2017, the province announced eliminating legislation that restricted K-3 classroom sizes to 20. However, School Division leadership and School Board decisions committed in their local budgets to ensure that this low-class size initiative remained. At the community level, capped classes at 20 or less in K-3 were maintained, as much as possible, depending on financial ability.
- Will these local decisions remain if local decisions and funding are now under the Provincial Education Authority (PEA) and Director of Education?

### **FUNDING CONTROL**

28. Manitoba Education recognizes that “...access to programming and funding vary depending on where you live.” <https://bettereducationmb.ca/>
- What has Manitoba Education done to ensure that students have access to similar programming across the province despite location and socio-economic circumstances?
  - What has Manitoba Education done to ensure greater access to funding for those who need it most? Specifically, what are the strategic support plans for change?
29. We currently determine our capital needs based on school and community input and Board/School Division oversight.
- How will Manitoba Education determine and prioritize needs and establish equitable processes in the 15 provincial regions?
  - How much will be shifted to the provincial level from the regional level?

### **SAVINGS OR SPENDING**

30. MIXED MESSAGING – Minister Cullen and Premier Pallister indicate that there will be **40 million savings** in the new BEST and Bill 64 restructuring. In his Jan 4, 2021 press conference, Minister Pallister stated that they inherited a **billion-dollar deficit** from the previous government (see time 4.44-6.45 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2jIMyh5VgIA>).

Education Minister Cullen indicated that the Manitoba public school system would get **\$20.8 million more** in the next academic year, for a total of **\$1.35 billion**, which is a 1.56% increase in funding, which he said is the "highest dollar investment in Manitoba's education history." (Feb 5, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/education-investment-cliff-cullen-manitoba-1.5902493>).

Recently, in his message to a local school, during his virtual visit in May 2021, Minister Cullen indicated that they would be **infusing 1.6 billion** into the education system in the next four years. The mixed messaging proposes that investment in education by another party is bad, but it is a good strategy when done by the PC government.

- What is the message by this government for Bill 64 and BEST? Will there be savings or investments?
- Please clarify if cuts or investment in education is more important?

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31. In his January press conference, Premier Palliser defended **cuts** to middle management positions while augmenting senior cabinet positions, which **increases costs** (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2jlMyh5VglA>, time 4.44-6.45) during the pandemic. Much of the messaging is that School Divisions are 'top heavy.' Our School Division currently has one individual with educational experience and expertise assigned to the Superintendent/Secretary-Treasurer/Student Support Services Coordinator roles. One School Division office staff assumes the Payroll Dept and Human Resources position. Another staff is the Transportation/Maintenance/ Custodial Supervisor. This equates to 8 School Division positions occupied by 3 individuals. Each of these positions requires the same meetings, accountability and paperwork as in other locations. Equally, most clerical staff at the School Division office support several departments, such as one secretary whose time is allocated to supporting the needs of the Secretary-Treasurer, Transportation/Maintenance/ Custodial Supervisor and assisting the School Board Trustees.
- Can Manitoba Education provide an outline of what is considered top-heavy staff allocations in each School Division?
  - How would the new structure align to the current staffing and supports in School Division offices? Where are the specific savings going to be? How will personnel and services be re-aligned?
  - In light of transparency, it would be important to demonstrate current Manitoba Education structures and supports. Could an organigram be created to outline Manitoba Education leadership staff, departments and number of support staff?
  - The Directors of Education cannot work in isolation. What new roles are being created under the new Bill 64 and BEST structures? How many staff are being hired? What is the estimated cost for these new departments and assistants?

**PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS/ COVID19**

32. New challenges, new learnings: the impact of COVID-19 on Manitoba's education system (slide 3) - Manitoba Education indicates that changes to education are being implemented due to the K-12 review and "*lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.*" (See <https://bettereducationmb.ca/>) If this is so, why do Bill 64 and K-12 review plans not align?
- What lessons were learned from Covid-19 that will create a better structure for student education and equity in access to programs?
  - Based on these statements, did Manitoba Education decide to overhaul education in the midst of this pandemic?
  - If the province of Manitoba has the worst per capita increase to Covid cases in the country (May 18, 2021), is Manitoba Education suggesting that schools and School Divisions are to blame?
  - If Manitoba Education was in charge of strategic, emergency planning for the province, why are the implications, rollout issues, and communication issues being blamed on schools and School Divisions?
  - Manitoba Education, in alignment with public health authorities, guided the provincial Covid plans for School Divisions. Why then does the report indicate it was "*difficult to be agile and quickly respond*"? Is this not a highlight on the needs of the provincial leadership strategies?

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33. New challenges, new learnings: the impact of COVID-19 on Manitoba's education system (slide 3) - Manitoba Education states, "*A lack of consistent, province-wide data made real-time planning and decision-making difficult, undermining our ability to innovate and continuously improve.*"
- Should Manitoba Education not have provided a structure for data collection and coordination before a pandemic?
  - If provincial data is needed, why was this not established in the provincial system before Covid19?
  - Why are School Divisions being blamed for Manitoba Education not being prepared?

34. New challenges, new learnings: the impact of COVID-19 on Manitoba's education system (slide 4) - Information is misleading. When Manitoba Education indicated that there is the highest administration cost in Canada, it does not explain why this might be – Such as smaller rural, remote or northern centers providing supports to students over a large region.

Manitoba Education falsely presents data. For instance, "*Manitoba spends more on administration than most other provinces – Ontario spends 2.1% on administration vs. 3.1% in Manitoba (48% more)*" This shows a 1% difference between the provinces, not 48%. However, slide 17 indicates, "*We spend more on administration than other provinces – almost 50% more than Ontario. Reducing administration costs will allow us to move resources to classrooms.*" Why did Manitoba Education change the amount from 48% to 50%? How is the reduction of administration costs being maintained when the new plan has Directors of Education with additional staffing?

There is a further example of information distortion and manipulation of data, such as the parent/community survey with widespread criticism for its' leading questions and poor design.

- Can Manitobans expect that moving forward, information presented to the communities will be factually accurate and not purposefully misleading, as indicated in some of the previous documents and statements?
35. Why does the BEST document continuously refer to dealings with a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic to indicate structural issues and needs in education in the province? School Divisions were receiving directions from Manitoba Education and Manitoba Health and adapted as quickly as possible within the short window of time they were provided. The two government agencies (Education & Health) often changed the course of action, made additional changes, or called last-minute meetings, press conferences or calls for leadership staff to attend. At the end of these regional or provincial changes, schools and School Divisions were left to adapt, change, and communicate with their stakeholders quickly.
- Why is this pandemic situation unrelated to past practice, being used as a negative reflection of services and a catalyst for provincial change?
  - Is Manitoba Education aware of the extreme adaptive challenges which have taken place in schools across the province for the past 15 months?
  - Is Manitoba Education aware of how complex school systems are and how communication with all stakeholders is not immediate?
  - Is Manitoba Education aware of the extreme conditions and additional efforts required to implement ongoing health measures, varied teaching methods and mental health supports to students?

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- Manitoba Education provided the communication for school safety protocols, mask-wearing, bus requirements, online platforms, outdoor restrictions, cafeteria rules, music class limitations, sports requirements, etc.? Why are School Divisions being referenced negatively for their efforts to follow ever-changing provincial protocols and mandates?
36. On May 15, Manitoba saw one of the worst surges in Covid cases in Canada (33% increase in a week, <https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/coronavirustracker/>).
- Given the focus by Manitoba Education on Covid coordination efforts as a rationale for changes to the educational overhaul, would this data not point to provincial failings in dealing with Covid issues rather than a School Division issue?
37. The BEST document (p. 7) indicates that a rationale for the change was that during Covid19, *“with 37 different governing bodies it was difficult to be agile and respond quickly”* and that parents and caregivers *“struggled to access information about changes and to inform and influence decisions.”* Manitoba Education further states that *“a lack of consistent, province-wide data made real-time planning and decision making difficult.”*
- As the provincial body in charge of Education in Manitoba, why are schools and School Divisions being criticized for provincial efforts that Manitoba Education should have coordinated?
  - During the pandemic, were instructions not being coordinated by Manitoba Education and the Minister of Health?
  - Does the inability to innovate and continuously improve and allocate resources where they are needed most during a global pandemic not reflect on the coordinating efforts from the provincial oversight bodies, such as Manitoba Education?
  - Does the specific and repeated focus on referencing the pandemic timeline indicate that coordination with the School Divisions was working fine prior to this issue?
38. The BEST document (p. 10) indicates that a rationale for the change was that the *“complex system with 37 school boards also makes rapid and coordinated response difficult—as we learned during the COVID-19 pandemic.”* Therefore, the government will now be dismantling 37 School Divisions because plans did not flow smoothly during the unknown experience during a global pandemic.

The changes will create a need for each school to connect to regional Directors of Education for assistance.

- How will this model be more effective when supports are no longer locally centralized, and schools are left on their own to deal with local issues?
  - Will this not cause a greater sense of isolation for school administrators?
39. There are 37 elected regional school boards that will be unified into 15 regions (plus DFSM) by July 1, 2022. In the next 14 months, Manitoba Education will transition an entire provincial system without any formalized plan being outlined or shared. Despite the repeated critique of the 37 School Divisions’ actions during the pandemic, there have been few specifics from Manitoba Education. Only minimal transition time was provided for the changes affecting all School Divisions and communities.
- How does Manitoba Education defend the push to make sweeping changes to the educational system as each School Division is still navigating Covid19 issues during a global pandemic?
  - Is this a sound, ethical and empathetic plan to place on schools at this time, considering all that schools and School Divisions have had to navigate since March 2020?

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- Why is Manitoba Education making provincial changes the focus with schools and School Divisions working on recovery learning plans? Will this not interfere with the time and energy schools/School Divisions should be directing towards students?

#### IMPLEMENTATION TIME

40. In September 2020, Manitoba Education indicated that families could enroll in the *Homeschooling* program to support online learning. In the School Division, we were made aware that it took until November (2 months) until parents received feedback on their child's enrollment. It took Manitoba Education until January 2021 (5 months) to contact the School Division when students enrolled in the *Homeschooling* program could not be located and had been absent from all classes (5 months). Similarly, Manitoba Education launched the Remote Learning Support Centre with resources and staff available to help facilitate remote learning in January 2021 – which was 10 months after the pandemic started.
- Given the amount of time it takes Manitoba Education to organize and implement initiatives, how will there be a successful overhaul of a provincial system in 15 months?

#### GRADUATION RATES

41. We want to ensure strong educational programs and success for all. However, Manitoba Education chooses to highlight success in a negative light "*Only 82% of Manitoba students graduate on time.*"
- Diversity and differentiation matter in our school system. What is Manitoba Education defining as "on time"?
  - Many factors can impede a student's timeline to graduation, such as trauma, socio-economic needs and hardship, mental illness, disabilities, learning needs, homelessness, addictions, etc. Is Manitoba Education aware of the issues? Do they know the student stories? What plans have they introduced to help support students in these areas?
  - Rather than shame or blame, what support will be offered to communities to help improve success rates for the 18% who have 'not yet' made it to graduation?

#### LOCAL JOBS/COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT

42. Manitoba Education indicated that currently, Superintendents, Secretary-Treasurer, and Boards deliver/oversee Human Resources. Their new BEST ppt removes this from the framework.
- How will this impact our local hiring process?
  - Who are advertising positions?
  - Will schools be competing against one another?
  - Who will be overseeing salaries and benefits?
  - With any of this position be offloaded to schools?
  - Who will ensure similar hiring practices, wages, benefits etc., between schools in the same community?
43. Services are being removed from the School Division Offices to increase a centralized system imposed by the province.

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- Which of these tasks/jobs will then be placed on staff at the school level?
- Which additional positions will be required at the school level? What will be the staffing increase?
- Will all positions be removed from the School Division Office? If so, when will staff know about their layoff so they can plan to secure alternate employment?
- How many jobs will be removed from the local community? When will we know?

#### ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

44. Addressing achievement and gaps in learning has always been done by schools and School Divisions. Manitoba Education indicates that they will take this over.
- Is Manitoba Education now guiding and overseeing the practice for the entire province?
  - What will support for schools look like when developing and implementing plans?

#### EXPERTISE NEEDED

45. Minister Cliff Cullen's capabilities to oversee provincial education were described in the Jan 4, 2021 press conference by Premier Pallister. Cullen's qualifications for the position were touted as attending public school, having 3 sons attending public school, a wife who taught for 40 years in education, and Cullen's support for public school (see time 21.00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2jIMyh5VglA>). Minister Cullen worked in the agricultural and environmental sectors and also has experience as an insurance broker. Similarly, with a degree in social work and experience in this field and the health sector, Deputy Minister Dana Rudy also lacks the background knowledge and expertise in education and the intricacies of running a school or School Division. At the same time, other members in Manitoba Education have backgrounds in politics, economics, etc.

Systems cannot function effectively without expertise and experience. A background in education is necessary when implementing initiatives and understanding best practices and educational issues, and barriers to success.

- Why is Bill 64 and BEST initiative targeting the removal of provincial experts in the field, such as Superintendents, who have studied and worked in school and School Division oversight and management, and understand educational best practice?
- Would it not be prudent, when making sweeping reforms to education, to have a team of experts on hand to guide in decision making for the provincial body?

#### SUPPORTS FOR SCHOOLS & SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

46. The Manitoba Education BEST ppt indicates that Manitoba Education will support school leaders and manage schools. They neglect to note that this is *currently happening* with Superintendents and other School Division leaders at the local level School Division Office.
- How will 15 appointed Regional Directors provide better supports to the system than 37 locally hired Superintendents with background and experience in education?

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47. When school leaders have an issue, they can meet at the School Division Office to resolve problems, brainstorm or seek support.
- How will Manitoba Education provide the same support level to leadership teams when they are not in the community?
  - How can they address local issues they do not understand when unfamiliar with staff or school structures?
48. In Canada, the trend has been toward greater decentralization of organizations (Daft, 2016) yet total decentralization, with no coordination, is undesirable as it leads to confusion. We are seeing this in the province right now. The very purpose of School Divisions is the help maintain oversight, offer guidance and assistance and ensure efficiency in the system.
- How is a decentralized system going to provide better services, supports and guidance to our schools and leadership teams?
49. School Division Offices field calls and emails from school personnel and the local community daily.
- Who will now be taking these calls and assisting staff, parents and community members?
50. In the line authority identified in Bill 64, school Principals would be communicating with Directors of Education under a new authority.
- As there will be no School Division Office in the community, how will Manitoba Education ensure that questions from Principals are answered promptly, and problems are dealt with quickly and efficiently?
51. If school leadership is now required to add additional meetings with parent groups, their attention and energies are deflected from ensuring increased student learning.
- How is the BEST model ensuring that school leadership is not involved in meetings and initiatives that chip away at already increased schedules and time commitments?
52. School leaders have expertise that is best used towards improving education and overseeing teaching and learning. The new BEST model seems to be offloading managerial issues such as bussing, maintenance, substitutes, global financial oversight, human resource issues, etc.
- How will this new model help administrators remain focused on teaching and learning?
  - What is the increased scope of school-based management under the new BEST framework?
53. The BEST initiative (p. 23) indicates that Manitoba Education wants to *“explore the supports principals need to be successful in their role as education leaders including a review of business functions at the school level, including maintenance, operations, accounting and financial roles of principals to enable them to focus on school leadership, teaching, learning, parent and community engagement, school management and school effectiveness.”*
- With this statement, are we to assume that Principals will now need to take over oversight of maintenance, operations, accounting and finance in addition to their current responsibilities since School Division Offices will no longer be operational?

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- Does Manitoba Education understand that by placing a Business Manager in the schools, this is now an additional position and area of responsibility which will fall under school leadership purview? This will add to their workload.
54. The BEST initiative (p. 23) indicates that Manitoba Education wants to “*work across governments, faculties of education and within the K to 12 system to create a comprehensive school staff recruitment and retention strategy to address workforce needs in rural, remote and northern communities, and address limited supplies of French language and Indigenous languages teachers.*”
- Are we to assume that Principals will need to work on staff recruitment and retention strategies with the province since Division Offices will no longer be operational?
55. The BEST strategy talks about initiatives to assist teachers, yet this government was responsible for removing supports. The *Manitoba Curriculum Support Center* once served as a library for teachers, with 80 percent of its content available only in print. The closure of this library of classroom materials for teachers came without consultation with educators in the spring of 2019. The Manitoba Curriculum Support Centre, which supported teachers across the province, as well as those who choose to home school their children, supported MB teachers implementing curriculum with access to materials that may not be readily available in schools, especially in the Northern regions. More than just books, it had things such as sheet music, fine art prints and educational board games that teachers could use in classes.
- If curriculum initiatives are part of the BEST strategy, why did Manitoba Education not revamp this center rather than dismantling the service?
  - If the focus was to place documents online, how does this assist the divisions where online access is limited?
  - Initiatives are implemented without consultation of teaching or educational leaders in the province; how does the government decide on spending for new initiatives for BEST without knowledge of needs?
56. After closing the *Manitoba Curriculum Support Center*, the previous Minister of Education (Goertzen) indicated Manitoba Education would be “*doing more online resources with access to 2000 audiobooks, and other aids, and 250 lesson plans that can be directly streamed into classrooms.*” In the interest of transparency, it would be essential to understand how successful Manitoba Education changes have been in the past two years (March 2019-May 2021). Before moving forward, it is important to see the results from past changes within the system. Sharing results on this effort will provide a basis for understanding new initiatives being promoted for BEST.
- If accurate and as a support to divisions, how was the new structure utilized by staff during the pandemic?
  - Are the supports proving useful? What data has been collected from division to know if the online resources have made a more significant difference? i.e. How much has been accessed?
  - What was the **cost** associated with the changes that were implemented in 2019?

QUESTIONS OF CONCERN FOR MANITOBA EDUCATION  
In light of provincial changes to education (BEST and Bill 64)

**NORTHERN AND RURAL ISSUES**

57. There have been minimal support or planning to help smaller and northern School Divisions attract staff or clinicians to School Divisions. Yet in the information to parents and caregivers, Manitoba Education promises “*more inclusive classrooms and schools, including decreased wait times for students with special needs.*” This is also what we advocate and want for our students, but it takes funding, staffing and planning.
- What is Manitoba Education’s plan that will create a better system for special needs students?
58. Remote learning is not successful without the infrastructure (i.e. radio towers, internet access, computers in the home). We have reviewed our local data and do not see a successful provincial support system to meet our student needs. i.e. When the January-April report cards were received from the online remote learning center our community saw only a 7% success rate for the online students, with most report cards indicating N/A or comment that not enough information had been collected for an assessment. Obviously, education is not ‘one size fits all’. The online remote learning model does not work for all students, and differentiated approaches are needed.
- What other systems will be implemented to address diverse learning needs?
  - What plan has Manitoba Education created to help communities with limited access to technology?
  - What other supports have been implemented beyond technology?
59. We have limited IT supports in the north and saw weeks of delays with Maplewood shut down in the province this year, delaying report cards, an inability to record attendance or access other programs.
- How will Manitoba Education ensure that province-wide systems meet all needs promptly and do not hinder daily staff work as it is turned over to a centralized (out of community) service model?
60. What is considered a “*centralized service for students*”? Currently, services are available in the community. Is Manitoba Education continuing to support this? (For example, now, copies of report cards are provided to former students at no charge on the same day. Would this type of service continue?)
61. Automated systems work in large urban centers but are not successful in rural and remote regions with limited staff availability. Without a School Division Office, is Manitoba Education planning to pay, as an example, the Bellamy \$15,000 program fee to enlist in the yearly automated service for sub call out? Or will the money remain with hiring/retention of staff who currently fulfill this part-time role?
- Is Manitoba Education aware of the differences in services required in urban and rural settings? And why these differences exist?
62. Smaller School Divisions have difficulty filling positions with the required expertise. The smaller size of the School Division means that many roles are staffed undertaking 2-3 positions within the School Division Office.
- How does the Manitoba Education BEST plan address these needs to ensure that students can access qualified staff and resources?

QUESTIONS OF CONCERN FOR MANITOBA EDUCATION  
In light of provincial changes to education (BEST and Bill 64)

63. BEST wants to ensure “*STEAM skills through experiential and workplace technical-vocational learning experiences*” for all.
- Is there a plan to ensure equity for rural, remote and urban settings?
  - What will be the **cost** of this initiative?
64. Remote learning has not proved successful in northern and remote regions with limited access to technology or internet connection.
- How will the BEST program fill the gap to ensure equity in the system?
  - Funding supports the online school and repository. What about those students who do not have access? What is the plan to support their needs?
  - Why have alternate plans not been put in place to support rural and northern communities beyond a technology focus?
65. Smaller School Divisions have difficulty locating staff, such as a Secretary-Treasurer.
- How does Manitoba Education anticipate each school locating their own Business Manager, as indicated in Bill 64, to fill the need in a rural community?
  - Is this not duplication in services that would best be done from a regional office, such as the School Division Office, to **save costs**? How is this seen as more efficient?
66. School Division Leadership and Boards have been advocating for clinical services in rural and northern regions for years without any success.
- What is the newly established plan with the Advisory Council that will now “*ensure timely...clinical services for students with special needs*”?
67. Mental health supports and clinicians are severely limited or lacking in northern and rural communities.
- What will Manitoba Education be implementing to help enhance on-going clinicians, mental health services, and access to programs in the north?
  - What will Manitoba Education be doing to assist with addiction programs and services?
  - What will Manitoba Education be doing to help with student homelessness?
  - What will Manitoba Education be doing to help with issues due to poverty?
  - What will Manitoba Education be doing to help with issues due to neglect or abuse?
  - What will Manitoba Education be doing to help pregnant students access education?
  - Is there now a plan to help with staffing, services and programs for northern and rural regions?
68. If there is an expansion to technical and vocational programs, how will the province ensure students receive access to programs in each region, including remote and northern regions? What is the **cost** of this initiative?
69. Teachers, School Administrators, support staff and School Division Office personnel in smaller School Divisions must assume many of the duties that the technostructure and support staff perform in larger School Divisions. Many assume dual roles to meet the needs of the school community.

QUESTIONS OF CONCERN FOR MANITOBA EDUCATION  
In light of provincial changes to education (BEST and Bill 64)

- How will the BEST strategy and Bill 64 create a reduction in staff work when localized supports and services disappear? Won't schools require additional supports to offset the additional needs?
70. With a significant portion of our students requiring bus service, will the loss of the one-hour ride limit on a bus be used to extend their rides to and from school to save transportation costs?
71. Research has shown adverse effects that long bus rides can have on achievement and health for students (Yeung & Nguyen-Hoang, 2020; Austin, Heutel, & Kreisman 2019).
- Will the BEST initiative recognize rural transportation issues to ensure equity and standards in the system for all students?
72. How will programs specific to our communities' unique cultures, including language, religion, and cultural programs, be initiated and supported?

**COST EFFECTIVE MEASURES/ FUNDING/ EQUITY**

73. Each school purchasing and overseeing budgets is **not cost-effective**. More money is saved when School Divisions can manage purchases and save funds from bulk purchase orders.
- How does Manitoba Education think that the new plan will **save money**?
  - What is the anticipated reduction to staff from School Division Offices?
74. Manitoba Education indicates that it is shifting more resources to classrooms. However, it only targets \$40 million. This is almost as much as Manitoba Education spent on the Learning Repository, Teacher Initiative Fund and K-12 Study. When placed in this context, it hardly feels substantial when so much has been spent on programs that have yet to show data that it made any difference.
- What types of increased **funding** could be expected by school sites?
  - What is the amount of the anticipated allocation of **additional funds** to schools?
75. There is a lot of talk about savings in the system but no breakdown of where services will be reallocated.
- When will Manitoba Education provide the framework so community members can see **where savings** will be occurring since this is not clear?
  - Will there be a comparative chart to see where cuts are occurring (**savings**) and where additional initiatives, programs, staffing and supports (new **costs**) are occurring?
76. What are the “*enhanced classroom supports for teachers*” implemented by the Minister’s Advisory Council? What is the financial allocation or **additional costs** associated with enhanced supports?
77. Functional departments at the central School Division Office can use school district resources more efficiently since a department’s activities do not have to be repeated across several schools. It also provides specialized services in one area and central access within the community.
- How is the BEST model planning to improve this system?
  - How will it **save funds**?
  - How many jobs will be removed or disappear from the School Division Offices?

QUESTIONS OF CONCERN FOR MANITOBA EDUCATION  
In light of provincial changes to education (BEST and Bill 64)

78. With the continuing reduction in operational **funding** for our local schools, what guarantees do we as a community have that our students and schools will not be short-changed?
79. Without Board governance, School Division oversight and provincial groups, how will the BEST framework ensure transparency? How will funding allocations be communicated?
80. When the development of operating budgets, safe schools' initiatives, and new programs, student supports and services previously proposed via public consultations and parent councils, are replaced by school community councils who serve an advisory role only, what incentive is left to address local needs?
81. Supposing amalgamation yields better academic results and **savings**. Why has Manitoba Education not provided a comparative chart to past amalgamation data in Manitoba (academic improvement, enhanced programs, **savings**) to help communities better understand the need for Bill 64 and BEST initiatives?
82. Is the BEST model based on specific criteria? Currently, there are only statements provided around a framework for the introduction of new initiatives.
- When will we learn about how the programs and changes will maximize educational achievement?
  - What criterion is Manitoba Education referencing?
  - What will be the **costs** of new programs?
  - What will be the **costs** of new personnel?
  - What are the **cost** savings? In which areas?
83. Manitoba's *Teachers' Idea Fund* is a five-year, \$25 million investment in the ideas and innovations of frontline teachers, staff and school leaders from across our province. Applications received by May 15, 2021, will be reviewed first, with approvals expected as soon as June 2021.

This is a costly initiative that has been criticized for poor timing, vetting issues for quality assurance, and pitting School Divisions against one another for funding. It has been dubbed "The Hunger Games" in educational financing by some groups. Many do not understand why School Divisions are not provided appropriate financing of programs, rather than competing against one another.

- Why did Manitoba Education think that during a pandemic was the time to introduce this funding initiative?
- Why did Manitoba Education not allocate the funds directly to School Divisions to determine suitable programs and initiatives? Why is Manitoba Education making all of the decisions?
- Why are current school Superintendents and School Divisions excluded from the approval process, as is a standard practice for all documents, applications and grants?
- Why are Superintendents not vetting this process in their School Divisions?
- How will selection occur?
- Who will determine what an appropriate program is?
- How will Manitoba Education determine equity within regions, programs, school levels, etc.?
- Many question the one-month turnaround for the vetting process. Who are the qualified staff who are overseeing vetting for this project?
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QUESTIONS OF CONCERN FOR MANITOBA EDUCATION  
In light of provincial changes to education (BEST and Bill 64)

**SYSTEM STABILITY**

84. Manitoba Education indicates that a priority is *“to maintain stability in the classroom for students, parents, teachers, and the broader school community.”*
- If true, why is Manitoba Education destabilizing the system and adding additional stressors with an overhaul of the provincial system amid a global pandemic?
85. Concerns have been raised that Manitoba Education is soliciting the expertise of teaching staff and leadership in an “Expression of Interest” application process. This is to assist Manitoba Education in their process by pooling a panel of experts to determine program planning and initiatives during the 2021-2022 schoolyear.
- Does soliciting this cooperation at this time not suggest that plans have not been determined and are only in their infancy of development?
  - If plans are not yet established, and consultation or advisory panels are being established, why is Manitoba Education aiming for an overhaul of the provincial system before completing written outlines and objectives?
  - In a time when all students will be returning to educational sites after 14 months of pandemic turmoil and will require additional supports for recovery learning, why is Manitoba Education removing expertise and supports from the schools?
  - What plans has Manitoba Education put in place to help the recovery learning process in the province in 2020-2021? Would this not be a better area of focus to assist students after enduring a 1.5 year of change?

**INDIGENOUS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION & FOCUS**

86. An Elders and Knowledge Keepers in School Initiative is a positive program but it is trivialized in the new framework by focusing on one initiative as a driver for student success. It does not recognize the many needs and issues within the communities, which are barriers to success. Additionally, Manitoba Education does not seem to be aware that many of these types of programs already exist in communities, especially in the northern regions, and that School Division leaders/Superintendents have been working to reinforce these programs. Showing respect for the values and traditional knowledge held by Indigenous peoples and showing that our schools safe and inviting place that welcomed and value all is important – but there is more to be addressed.
- How will Manitoba Education, without the assistance of School Division Leaders, help oversee these types of programs?
  - How does Manitoba Education see this initiative closing the gap in Indigenous student achievement?
  - What is the **cost** of this program?
  - Who will be in charge of leading/overseeing this program implementation in each community?
87. The BEST initiative never mentions the Path to Reconciliation Act or Truth and Reconciliation. To many, this new focus seems to neglect the Indigenous nations and peoples and severely limits the voice and engagement of Indigenous community members. We need to create spaces for Indigenous ways of knowing.

QUESTIONS OF CONCERN FOR MANITOBA EDUCATION  
In light of provincial changes to education (BEST and Bill 64)

- Can Manitoba Education explain why they are enforcing a provincial program that is silencing diverse community voices?
  - All groups need to have a say in defining the outcomes of success and achievement at all levels. How will Manitoba Education ensure parent voice, from the different communities, is represented within the provincial framework?
88. Education systems have been complicit in the oppression of Indigenous people built on a platform of systemic racism. Several community members have referred to the Bill 64 and BEST initiatives moving from the democratic system to an authoritative learning model. Many are concerned that it too closely parallels thoughts modelled from the time of Residential Schools where communities were not provided with a say in education and process was dictated from government.
- How does Manitoba Education address this area of concern, especially for Indigenous communities?
  - The new plan BEST sees a focus on centralized assessment for markers of achievement which will again lead to negative representation of already marginalized groups. Why is this model being imposed without consultation from Indigenous communities?
89. This government has taken on a particularly adversarial relationship with Indigenous peoples. We see that the government initiatives disproportionately impact Indigenous peoples in Manitoba, whether it's poor access to healthcare, criminalization and over-incarceration, or lack of access to well-paid unionized work. In 2019, the government cut Access programs that were designed to make post-secondary education more viable for Indigenous and Northern students and **eliminated \$1.6 million** in bursaries.
- How can northern and rural communities trust that the new BEST program will continue to invest in Indigenous and Northern students when other initiatives have proven the opposite to be true?
90. The Manitoba government's Bill 64, the Education Modernization Act, is described as a 100% step backwards for Indigenous education. It returns to the same top-down, centrally controlled political and cultural ideology that led to the problems Indigenous learners face in the current system. It also threatens to undo everything successful, such as the recent improvement to graduation rates and more culturally based learning. Bill 64 targets local decision-making by removing elected leadership and administration. It would replace superintendents and trustees with a single Director taking orders from people appointed by the provincial government. Collapsing School Divisions directly affect urban and northern Indigenous students who attend off-reserve schools. Local leadership is needed at every school level and is something beyond the parent advisory councils at every school, which are proposed by Bill 64.
- Superintendents take time to liaise and meet with different school groups and the community. This time is not available to school leaders who are already burdened by heavy workloads. How will Bill 64 and the BEST initiative improve learning for Indigenous communities under the new structure?
91. The "designation of school attendance officers" is a throwback to the age of the Residential schools. Proposal 122(1) states that "*the provincial education authority must appoint one or more school attendance officers or must designate one or more of its employees as school attendance officers.*" Attendance issues are not enforcement issues but require solutions of support, care, and understanding.
- How does Manitoba Education believe that enforcement for attendance will help the relationship between families and schools?

QUESTIONS OF CONCERN FOR MANITOBA EDUCATION  
In light of provincial changes to education (BEST and Bill 64)

- Why are we not investing in mental health supports or poverty issues (transportation, child care needs, etc.) instead of targeting resources to a big brother type policing policy in education?
- Truancy officers were unsuccessful in the past and were replaced with support staff who would try to build relationships and bridge needs between families and schools. Is Manitoba Education aware of what is currently being implemented and tried in each School Division? Have there been any meetings with superintendents to strategize over solutions for this area?
- Has there been any work done by Manitoba Education with Indigenous communities to understand the needs? What reports can be viewed?

**SUPPORT/RESEARCH ON NEW EDUCATION MODEL**

92. The BEST campaign and Bill 64 are viewed as simplified plans for schools, which are complex social structures. BEST is projected as a bureaucratic/industrialized/business model (Weber, 1947) focused on rules, procedures and hierarchy of authority. This type of model conspires against good leadership and leads to increased dissatisfaction (Bennis & Townsend, Reinventing Leadership, 2005).
- What research was used to determine that this model was best for a complex system like education?
93. As of 2003, one of every six children in Canada still lived in poverty. As a nation, we have been unsuccessful at eradicating child poverty. Over the past decades, the inequity of family incomes in Canada has grown, and for some families this has increased the depth of poverty. Additionally, Canadian research confirms poverty's negative influence on student behavior, achievement and retention in school.

It is well documented that poverty decreases a child's readiness for school through aspects of health, home life, schooling and neighborhoods. Studies repeatedly shown that socioeconomic factors have a large, pervasive and persistent influence over school achievement (Ferguson, Bovaird & Mueller, 2007).

- What efforts in the BEST model addresses the poverty needs and its impact on academic achievement?
- Without local divisions, which partnerships will be developed/continued to ensure support programs for students, especially in the north and remote regions, will continue?
- Will coordination of support efforts (clinicians, local agencies, mental health, medical) be managed by the Director of Education or will this now be coordinated by schools and their staff?

**SUPERINTENDENT REMOVAL/ APPOINTED DIRECTORS OF EDUCATION**

94. The BEST campaign seems to disregard job specialization and the experience of skilled professionals in education.
- Is there a guarantee that those appointed to a leadership position, such as Director of Education, will have the educational background, understanding, skills and experience in K-12 education?
95. Since the mid-1990s, a resurgence of scholarly inquiry helped describe the changing landscape of Superintendents' work and laid the groundwork for redefining their role as transformational leaders (Björk, 2000; Cuban, 1988; Johnson 1996). As accountability initiatives increased the organizational,

QUESTIONS OF CONCERN FOR MANITOBA EDUCATION  
In light of provincial changes to education (BEST and Bill 64)

managerial and environmental aspects, once prime areas of School Division leadership led to broader initiatives in school reform, new patterns of governance, and improving the core technology of teaching and student learning.

Additionally, top administrators, such as Superintendents, retain several decisions such as setting overall goals, strategic planning, school district policy formulation, bargaining with unions, providing professional development, working with community partners, overseeing School Division data, and developing financial and accounting systems. For its part, Manitoba Education defines School Division leadership as “*top-heavy, complicated*” (see Putting students first, slide 19), seemingly unaware of their roles and extended responsibilities.

- In the new framework, who would now be poised to take over all of these areas?
- Will Manitoba Education provide job outlines to identify the shifts in roles and responsibilities throughout the system, as this is unclear?

96. The shift in early educational reform for most systems in North America focused on accountability and primarily focused on managing performance standards and school improvement. By the late 1980s, the shift moved towards improved learning, teaching strategies, student performance, distributive leadership, and community partnerships and alliances. The initiatives highlighted the changes in education movements and underscored the importance of the Superintendents’ educational and instructional leadership roles for School Divisions (Björk, 1993).

Manitoba Overview of New Governance Model – With the removal of Division Office staff and the Superintendent positions, BEST indicates that “*much of the provincial education authority’s administrative duties will be carried out by the Director of Education within each region.*” The statement seems to be a disconnect to the role of a Superintendent or senior administration roles.

- Are we to assume that Education Directors will now become the educational and instructional leaders for the 15 regions? Given the scope of the job, how will this be achieved?
- If Directors of Education will become the educational and instructional leaders, how do they also conduct the provincial education authority *administrative duties*? Won’t this require additional staffing? What will be the **cost** of these additional supports?
- Does Manitoba Education understand the current role of senior administrators and Superintendents in School Division Offices?
- Why do BEST documents seem to portray the senior administrative roles/School Division Office through a 1980’s lens of educational leadership?

97. Research findings support the notion that school reform requires the Superintendent's support, involvement, and leadership (Björk, & Gurley, 2003). Studies confirm that Superintendents who are knowledgeable about instructional programs and who are engaged in improving teaching and learning contribute to the instructional effectiveness of their School Divisions (Bridges, 1982; Cuban, 1984).
- If Superintendents are no longer part of the provincial structure, who will ensure each amalgamated region's instructional effectiveness?
  - What measures will be put in place to ensure that supports occur for school leaders and their schools? How will this system of support be delivered?

QUESTIONS OF CONCERN FOR MANITOBA EDUCATION  
In light of provincial changes to education (BEST and Bill 64)

- What research was consulted to determine that this new model, which excludes the expertise and supports from School Division Office administration and Superintendents, will yield better results for our students?
98. According to work by Goleman, directive/autocratic leaders make all the decisions, provide little room for consultation and give orders to their team. Tight controls and follow-up combined with high clarity in rules, roles, and expectations are critical elements of a Directive leadership style. Directive leadership can be efficient in low-skilled teams and during crises when decisions must be made very quickly – however, it is also one of the most despised leadership styles. This micromanagement focus is detrimental to employee engagement, especially in highly skilled teams in complex environments.
- Given that teaching professionals and school/School Division leaders are qualified and educated staff in their field, why is Manitoba Education adopting a directive leadership approach by appointing Directors of Education and establishing Authorities?
99. Top-level administrators, such as school Superintendents, are generally concerned with *nonprogrammed* decisions (Puccio, Cabra, & Schwagler, 2017). This means there is no established procedure for handling the problem, either because it involves issues that have never been encountered before or because it is complex or extremely important. Dealing with Covid19 and the pandemic is an example of this.
- Middle-level administrators, such as principals, and first-level administrators, such as department heads, are mainly concerned with *programmed* decisions. These trigger solutions that have already been determined by past experience as appropriate for the problem in question. In some cases, middle-level administration would be invited to participate in nonprogrammed decisions as well. The nature, frequency and degree of certainty surrounding a problem usually dictate the administration level the decision should be made. In a new provincial model, it will be important to understand which levels of the decision will be made at the school level and those to be made by Manitoba Education or one of the 15 Directors of Education.
- When can schools and School Divisions expect an outline that redefines this new decision-making structure?

#### HEALTH AND SAFETY

100. With our community's schools operating independently of each other, how will decisions about emergent school closings (weather, safety) be conducted with Bill's restriction that only the Minister of Education will make these decisions?
101. Will the Director of Education continue to work with and attend meetings with local authorities and community groups to help bridge community issues that affect schools and communities (i.e. Jordan's Principle, Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, CFS, OCN, RCMP, Scan, etc.)?
102. How can a centralized authority not located in the town be aware and responsive to the specific student needs of our community?

QUESTIONS OF CONCERN FOR MANITOBA EDUCATION  
In light of provincial changes to education (BEST and Bill 64)

**TRUTH IN MESSAGING**

103. We agree that improving standards and wanting the best education for all Manitoba students is a priority. However, out of the 79 countries that participated in PISA in 2018, Canada ranked 6<sup>th</sup> for reading scores, 8<sup>th</sup> in Science, 12<sup>th</sup> in math. <https://caps-i.ca/the-pisa-results-are-in-and-canadian-high-schools-continue-to-perform-well/>
- If Canada is represented in the top 10 countries in the world for their education, why is the BEST campaign not highlighting this achievement by the School Divisions and educators and leaders and instead of propagating a message of an inferior educational model?
  - Is this not misleading data that undermines the efforts of those who work in education?

**CHANGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY/ STRATEGIC PLAN**

104. Not knowing the organigram or framework is causing angst in the system. Schools, School Divisions and Boards cannot strategically plan for the upcoming school year without knowing what will be happening.
- If Manitoba Education has a plan for restructuring the provincial model, why has this not been shared to understand the proposed model better?
105. Organizations should systematically prepare for and implement significant organizational change. John Kotter, a Harvard Business School professor, developed a well-known and widely adopted approach for managing organizational change. The approach, updated in Kotter's book *Accelerate*, involves eight stages. The current announcements do not seem to be following known change management strategies.
- What system is being followed/implemented in the overhauling of the education system?
  - Is the system and strategic plan which is being implemented the appropriate model to follow for education? Has it be used in other locations? If so, what is the success of their programs, academic success and/or financial savings?
106. Research on Change Management Strategy - Organizational Transformation indicates that it takes 3-5 years to implement change successfully.
- How is Manitoba Education expecting to successfully make this shift in education and introduce all of the other changes suggested within 15 months?
  - What change management strategy is being utilized?
107. House (1971) proposed a four-tiered model of leadership. School Divisions have traditionally run with either a participatory, supportive or achievement-oriented leadership style.
- Why has Manitoba Education decided to implement a directive leadership style that guides what is to be done, how it is to be done, how standards are to be set, and the rules and regulations?
  - What is happening to a collaborative framework and professional autonomy that is currently modelled throughout the province? Why is this being dismantled?
108. The terms leadership and management tend to be used interchangeably. However, although overlapping at times, the two terms are not identical and need to be clearly distinguished. In the new Manitoba Education system, all School Division Leadership and School Boards will be removed.
- Why is Manitoba Education moving from a leadership model into a management model for provincial education?

QUESTIONS OF CONCERN FOR MANITOBA EDUCATION  
In light of provincial changes to education (BEST and Bill 64)

- Can the rationale on how this will be better or lead to improvements be explained?

109. School leaders make a multitude of decisions on a daily basis. Most are programmed decisions that trigger solutions that have already been determined by past experience. However, when faced with new challenges from non-programmed/strategic decisions, these are typically guided by upper-level administrators' educational and leadership experience, such as Superintendents, and have important long-term implications for the school and School Division (Puccio, Cabra & Schawagler, 2017).
- In the new provincial model, who will be available to assist school leadership to navigate their daily/weekly issues?
  - Will the individuals supporting school leaders have the background experience and expertise in K-12 education?
  - Will Directors of Education be visible in the community, attend meetings and learn about the community and school context?
110. A rational model of decision-making assumes that there is a process whereby decision-makers seek to maximize the chances of achieving their desired objectives by considering all possible alternatives. In this case, Manitoba Education would need to explore all potential consequences from among the alternatives before determining a course of action.

Problems were voiced with the current education systems in Manitoba by multiple stakeholders during the 2019 K-12 review process. Yet, after receiving the information, Manitoba Education led no collective effort to determine cause and effect or to seek further input into leading or supporting change. There was no attempt to generate alternatives, evaluate possibilities, and choose different programming methods and supports. Instead, Manitoba Education implemented a new education framework during a pandemic that is confusing, adding stressors to a tired system, and upending supports throughout the province.

- Why did Manitoba Education not look towards receiving assistance from provincial leaders, who work in School Divisions, and are experts in their fields before resorting to Bill 64 and the BEST decisions?
  - What percentage of staff currently working for Manitoba Education have leadership experience in a K-12 school, has worked in the K-12 system or led a K-12 School Division?
  - Is Manitoba Education confident that there were sufficient educational experts involved in the decision-making process before launching the Bill 64 and BEST initiative?
  - Why do Bill 64 and the BEST document not align with the same initiatives?
  - Why was the announcement for change announced during one of the most challenging educational time in our history?
  - Why could this announcement not wait a year until staff and students have had time to recover from the extreme learning conditions endured during a pandemic?
  - Why is recovery learning not the priority for Manitoba Education?
  - The pandemic has changed education. Why is Manitoba Education proceeding with a plan from a report frame from 2019, prior to Covid19?
111. Angst occurs throughout the province since Manitoba Education has failed to provide a plan that outlines the specific issues with a specific plan for change. Uncertainty exists because, as the decision-maker, Manitoba Education has not proven with any certainty that the probabilities of the outcomes being considered will yield better academic results, increase supports to all regions or **produce savings**.

QUESTIONS OF CONCERN FOR MANITOBA EDUCATION  
In light of provincial changes to education (BEST and Bill 64)

- When will Manitoba Education provide communities with the data and strategic plan with specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely goals?
112. Several groups question the vetting process, selection and expertise of the panel that conducted the 2019 K-12 review, citing a lack of K-12 experience & knowledge in education and little to no school and/or School Division leadership knowledge represented within the selected committee.
- Why did the report not rely on the expertise and experience of vetted personnel in the field of education?
  - Is this type of review format, without specific expertise or grounding in the field, a similar format for other industries in Manitoba?
  - Why were there not varied stakeholders from each group (teacher, school leader, resource, counselling, Superintendent, parent, board) represented on the review panel?
  - What will be the vetting process for the members selected to become the new Directors of Education?
113. Manitoba Education will be moving towards establishing Directors of Education for Manitoba.
- What guarantees are there that the same lack of experience and expertise schools and leadership, as noted in the K-12 review process, will not be repeated in selecting appointed candidates?
  - Will there be transparency in the selection process?
  - How will candidates be vetted?
  - What part will political affiliation play a role in the selection process?
  - Will previous leadership experience in leading large groups and diverse school settings be a requirement for the position?
114. An escalation of commitment to a project can occur when decision-makers fail to recognize problems soon enough. Many in education are open to change and improvements. Yet, at this time, Manitoba Education has put on their perceptual blinders, forging ahead with a plan that no longer fits in a post-pandemic time.
- Despite the setbacks, delays, mental stressors, and sheer exhaustion of all, Manitoba Education is turning its back on current issues and needs of communities. Manitoba Education is screening out the negative feedback to the announcement of Bill 64 and their BEST initiative with a last-minute campaign to justify the imposed changes.
- Will Manitoba Education admit that it is wrong to move forward with this change during a pandemic and re-evaluate the launch of these initiatives?
  - Will Manitoba Education engage in meaningful dialogue with stakeholder groups to re-assess needs and changes in school's post-pandemic?
115. Bill 64 and the BEST initiative suggest that greater accountability is required in the provincial education system and introduces new assessment and data collection measures.
- Could this accountability framework also be applied to Manitoba Education, so there is greater transparency of program success, provincial efforts and **spending**, as these remain unclear?
- For example:
- What was the success rate for students of the online learning center from northern and remote regions?

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- How was the attendance data for students in the provincial homeschooling program during the pandemic? What strategies were used by the homeschooling and online learning center for students not attending classes? What was the rate of success for each strategy?
- What data was utilized to determine a need for the Teachers Idea Initiative?
- Why are the funds for the Teachers Idea Initiative not being provided to School Divisions to vet and determine?
- What is the **cost** of recent initiatives launched during the pandemic? Where is the data to highlight their success? Was feedback collected from families, students and School Divisions on the programs?

116. In 2001, the USA implemented the "No Child Left Behind Act" to focus on testing to measure academic progress in the education system. NCLBA failed to address achievement gaps adequately, showed discrepancies for vulnerable and minority youth, and provided little initiative to make a difference in education. After 13 years, it demonstrated that arbitrary scores on standardized test, rather than ensuring equal opportunity was a major issue.
- With BEST also focusing on additional testing and assessments, how will the focus be different to ensure different results than the failed USA model? How will it ensure that change can happen for all students?
117. In recent consultation meetings staff were informed by Manitoba Education that it was incorrect to say that Superintendents would no longer be a part of the new provincial system. As the current document indicates, Directors of Education will "*lead the delivery of K-12 education in the 15 newly established regions*" and be "*part of a unified system under the Provincial Education Authority while facilitating regional variation and local voice in the education experience in consultation with their local communities.*" Clarification on the statement is required.
- Can Manitoba Education clarify the role of the Superintendent, Secretary-Treasurer and School Division Office staff as we move forward in provincial overhaul?
  - Why are conflicting messages being presented to staff in meetings and documents within the province?

### **NEW INITIATIVES**

118. New initiatives are being implemented without staff input.
- What is the "*new provincial report card for students with special needs*"?
  - Who was involved in its creation?
  - When will teachers and administrators see the new report?
  - Will additional time be required for staff to learn about and implement another report card format?
  - Will Manitoba Education now be taking an active role to ensure that these services are provided to rural/northern regions, or will efforts continue to be placed on regional leaders and schools?
119. Staff meet with parents each year, hold individual meetings as required, make phone calls, write report cards at different intervals during the year, send home newsletters and keep an updated website. BEST indicates they will have initiatives that will "*establish better communication with parents and caregivers*".

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- Specifically, what will BEST be doing differently in regards to communication strategies?
120. What changes or provincial initiatives are being adopted by BEST to put a “*stronger focus on improving literacy and numeracy*”? Will there be a focus and funding on the issues that impede access to education and achievement?
121. There will be “*curriculum enhancements to science, mental health and physical/health education*” during the provincial changes to education.
- What are these curriculum enhancements?
  - When will these new curriculums be available to staff?
  - What is the **cost** of making these provincial changes?
  - Will staff be provided with PD to introduce these changes?
122. During the provincial changes to education, there will be new assessment tools for K readiness screening.
- When will these documents be provided to staff for implementation?
  - What is the **cost** of this “*new tool to assess student readiness*”?
123. There will also be new provincial tests and assessments for Early and Middle Years students during the provincial changes to education.
- Who is developing these tests?
  - When will these assessments be implemented?
  - What is the **cost** of this assessment initiative?
124. The BEST initiative refers to academic programs but neglects the complexities of meeting students’ socio-emotional and behavioural needs.
- Does Manitoba Education understand that schools provide additional supports and services to students as well as academics?
  - Why are these not better highlighted in the BEST document?
  - Why is there only cursory mention of poverty issues in the BEST document?
125. The BEST initiative identifies certain curriculum areas but pays little attention or mentions programs in the Arts and their importance.
- When determining measures of success, what does Manitoba Education see success looking like for all students?
  - What measures will be put in place to measure different success elements and include all curriculum areas?
126. It is expected that much of the provincial education authority's administrative duties will be carried out by the Director of Education within each region. (See the overview of new governance model fact sheet)

Bill 64 and the BEST model proposes removing senior administrators at School Division Offices, removing school boards in each community, reallocating local positions to a centralized system, and provincial restructuring systems in 15 months.

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The current framework from Manitoba Education is vague in its outline but indicates changes to the system by doing the following:

- 1) establishing a new Education Act,
- 2) creating a Provincial Education Authority,
- 3) developing a Provincial Advisory Council on Education,
- 4) establishing School Community Councils,
- 5) transform the Department of Education,
- 6) develop a new provincial funding model,
- 7) undertaking scoping for a provincial Student Information System,
- 8) developing a provincial data and performance measurement strategy,
- 9) launching a provincial survey,
- 10) appoint a Provincial Curriculum Advisory Panel,
- 11) develop a new provincial curriculum framework,
- 12) launching a Teachers' Idea Fund,
- 13) developing a new K-10 Science Curriculum Framework,
- 14) reviewing the curriculum and credit requirement for Physical Education/Health Education,
- 15) revising the French Immersion curriculum policy,
- 16) implementing new provincial summative assessments at Grades 3 or 4, 6 or 7, and 10,
- 17) implementing a provincial report card for students with special needs,
- 18) implementation of classroom-based formative assessments,
- 19) establishing a new Minister's Advisory Council on Inclusive Education,
- 20) implementing an Indigenous Inclusion Strategy,
- 21) creating an Elders and Knowledge Keepers in Schools Initiative,
- 22) establishing a Provincial Student Advisory Council,
- 23) partnering with the new department of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery,
- 24) implementing Manitoba Education's new Mental Health and Addictions Curriculum,
- 25) creating French Language student networks,
- 26) establishing a task force, in connection to the Poverty Reduction Strategy,
- 27) implementing a new provincial attendance policy,
- 28) review and update Manitoba's Provincial Code of Conduct,
- 29) improving and addressing gaps in nutrition programming,
- 30) introducing a consistent and comprehensive approach to early years assessment,
- 31) collaborating with First Nations partners,
- 32) exploring intensive language acquisition courses,
- 33) renewing interdepartmental protocols to guide school transitions,
- 34) adapt Language Arts high school credits,
- 35) advancing Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) skills,
- 36) developing new credits and micro-credential programs,
- 37) embedding career development within the K to 12 curriculums,
- 38) developing a provincial remote learning strategy (*note - potential classroom support*),
- 39) launching a provincial online high school (*note - potential classroom support*),
- 40) developing teaching and leadership standards,
- 41) undertaking a review of regulatory frameworks for strengthening the teaching profession,
- 42) conducting a review of funding designated for professional learning,
- 43) creating an innovative and results-based professional learning framework,

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- 44) providing sustained professional development for the implementation of K to 8 Mathematics and K to 12 Language Arts curricula,
- 45) developing a new provincial school leadership framework,
- 46) working with principals and vice-principals to facilitate their ongoing professional learning needs,
- 47) removing principals and vice-principals from teacher bargaining units,
- 48) creating a comprehensive school staff recruitment and retention strategy,
- 49) training opportunities for Educational Assistants,
- 50) establish a provincial table teacher bargaining framework, etc.

- Will communities be provided with the plans for each of these areas, including a projected timeline for start dates and completion and an estimated **cost** to each area?
- Based on this partial list, how will Manitoba Education **save money**, as has been indicated?
- Who will be appointed to lead each of the areas, and will they hold qualifications in education?
- How much of the changes will require additional time from school Principals now that there will be no School Division Offices to support these administrators?

127. As previously indicated, Manitoba Education has a list of programs that it wants to implement in the provincial overhaul. However, from the list of 50 initiatives listed by Manitoba Education as their focus areas, only 2 from the list directly impact classrooms.

Manitoba Education has indicated that it will “*target resources to the frontlines, the areas with the most need,*” but outlined plans are not supporting this statement. (See Putting Student First, slide 25)

- Why is Manitoba Education claiming “*more in-class supports as funding is redirected to classrooms where it matters the most*” (see information for parent and caregivers) when most funds are being allocated to supports that are not directly aimed at the classroom level?

128. The Online Learning Repository has been soliciting lessons and ideas from teachers to add resources. We agree that this is a great way to share ideas – but is this the time to be developing these resources.
- Many curriculum areas are being taught throughout the K-12 system. Is there a focus area for the repository? Or are all curriculum areas from K-12 being provided?
  - Who is vetting the material provided?
  - Is this the time to be asking teaching staff to add more to their professional efforts?

As indicated, we are reaching out to the Education Transformation team with our questions, which are being submitted to [edutransformation@gov.mb.ca](mailto:edutransformation@gov.mb.ca)