Divisional Futures & Community Relations Committee Minutes

Tuesday, September 20, 2011 – 12:00 noon
Board Room, Administration office

Present: P. Bowslaugh, G. Kruck, Dr. D. Michaels.

Regrets: M. Snelling

"Accepting the Challenge"

1. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 12:00 noon by the Trustee Bowslaugh.

2. ELECTION/REGULAR MEETINGS/COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

It was agreed Pat Bowslaugh would serve as Committee Chairperson for 2011-2012. It was further agreed that the Divisional Futures & Community Relations Committee meetings would be held on the second Tuesday of each month from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. as follows:

Tuesday, October 11, 2011	11:30 a.m.
Tuesday, November 8, 2011	11:30 a.m.
Tuesday, December 13, 2011	11:30 a.m.
Tuesday, January 10, 2012	11:30 a.m.
Tuesday, February 14, 2012	11:30 a.m.
Tuesday, March 13, 2012	11:30 a.m.
Tuesday, April 10, 2012	11:30 a.m.
Tuesday, May 8, 2012	11:30 a.m.
Tuesday, June 12, 2012	11:30 a.m.

The Committee reviewed their responsibilities as noted on the agenda.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Trustee Kruck requested discussions regarding continued meetings with students be placed on the next agenda when all Committee members were available to discuss same.

4. REVIEW OF COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Committee reviewed the Minutes of the meeting held June 17, 2011. Trustee Bowslaugh noted she had received commendations from people at the Joint BTA/BSD Provincial Elections Public Forum acknowledging the involvement of Ms. Sheri Bailey, Executive Assistant, in arranging and setting up for the forum and Trustee Sumner for his work with the BTA in preparing for the forum. The Minutes were accepted as information

5. COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE GOAL ITEMS

A) Provincial Elections

The Committee reviewed various items of information received from the Manitoba School Boards Association (MSBA) regarding educational issues and the upcoming Provincial Election. It was agreed the Committee would recommend that the information provided by MSBA (attached as Appendix "A") be forwarded to the nine candidates representing Brandon and Area in the October 4, 2011 election.

Recommendation:
That the election material supplied by Manitoba School Boards Association regarding educational issues be forwarded to the candidates representing the City of Brandon and Sprucewoods in the October 4, 2011 Provincial Election.

B) **Other Governance Goal Work – Research**

Trustee Kruck referencing a CBC Report regarding the benefits of exercise equipment use on student achievement in the classroom asked Senior Administration to provide research material on this matter in October for further discussion by the Committee.

Trustee Kruck also requested research regarding the benefits of using exercise balls in the classroom instead of chairs for students who require sensory intervention programming.

Trustee Bowslaugh inquired about the possibility of establishing a Public Relations person in the Division. Dr. Michaels noted with the advent of technology the position requires greater technology knowledge based skills than has been required in the past. A Communications Technology Specialist would be in charge of community relations through the use of technology; updating the web; promoting parent advocacy; and the video streaming of Board meetings currently being reviewed by the Board of Trustees. The Committee requested Senior Administration to provide a position description for a Communications Technology Specialist, for the next regular meeting of the Committee. This item will then be discussed as a possible budget enhancement request.

C) **Determine List of Stakeholder Meetings for 2011/2012**

The Committee reviewed the list of stakeholders they met with during the 2010-2011 school year, including the following: Representatives of Maple Leaf; Aboriginal Representatives; ACC; BU; BRHA; Neelin IB Students; Neelin Off-Campus Students; Vincent Massy AP Students; Crocus Plains Vocational Students; Students representing Waverly Park; New Era; Green Acres; George Fitton and École Harrison Schools. The Committee also reviewed government representatives to be met with as per their governance goal relating to advocacy. The Committee agreed to meet with the Brandon Police Service Personnel during the 2011-2012 school year as a new stakeholder group. Due to time constraints, all further discussions regarding possible stakeholder meetings were deferred until the next regular meeting of the Committee.

6. OTHER COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE MATTERS

NIL

7. OPERATIONS INFORMATION

NIL

8. NEXT REGULAR MEETING: Tuesday, October 11, 2011, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Conference Room.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

P. Bowslaugh, Chair	G. Kruck
K. Sumner	M. Snelling (Alternate)

Appendix A

MANITOBA
School Boards
ASSOCIATION

LEADERSHIP, ADVOCACY AND SERVICE FOR MANITOBA'S PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS

August 24, 2011

TO: All School Board Chairs

FROM: Carolyn Duhamel, Executive Director

RE: October 4 Provincial Election

Attached for your use is information we have generated to assist school boards in communicating with their communities and candidates during the current provincial election campaign.

We have chosen to focus on three themes during the campaign, themes which capture key policy positions of this association. Those themes are:

- investing in education;
- helping all students succeed; and
- keeping local schools local.

For each of these topics, we have provided background information, a summary of why the issue is important from an educational or community perspective, and several possible questions that you may wish to ask of candidates in your riding(s). You may also want to augment these questions with some of your own questions that reflect your own local circumstances. In the upcoming days, we will be submitting these same questions (somewhat revised to reflect provincial rather than local circumstances) to the leaders of Manitoba's political parties. We will share these results with you as they are received.

We have also attached a flyer that encourages people to think about these topics in the context of the provincial election. Please feel free to duplicate or post this flyer as you feel appropriate.

I hope you find this material helpful. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call or email me at cduhamel@mbschoolboards.ca. Thank you.

CD:hd

Attachment

cc Provincial Executive
Superintendents
Secretary-treasurers

191 PROVENCHER BOULEVARD, WINNIPEG, MANITOBA R2H 0G4 | PHONE 204.233.1595 | TOLL FREE 1.800.262.8836 | FAX 204.231.1356 | WWW.MBSCHOOLBOARDS.CA

This election, let's talk about . . .

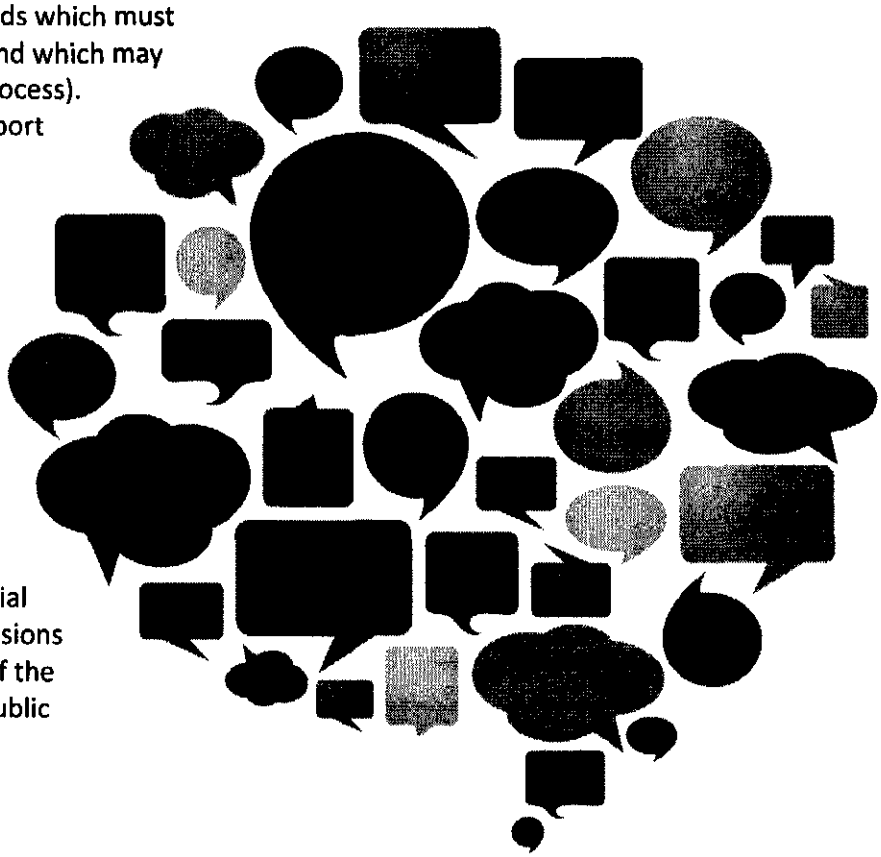
Investing in education

Background:

In Manitoba, the funding of public schools is a joint responsibility of the provincial government and locally-elected school boards.

Annually, the province allots ***operating funds*** to each school division in accordance with a complex formula that takes into account overall student numbers, population density, transportation needs, and the number of students with special needs, among other factors. These funds take the form of either ***block grants*** (which are generally unrestricted funds) or ***categorical grants*** (funds which must be used for a specific purpose, and which may require a separate application process). Operating funds are used to support the delivery of programs and services to students. In addition to operating funds, the province provides ***capital funding*** (that is, funding for school construction and major renovations) through the Public Schools Finance Board, and funds the employers' contribution to the Teachers' Retirement Allowance Fund, which is the teachers' pension plan. On a province-wide basis, the provincial government provides school divisions with approximately two-thirds of the funds required to operate our public schools.

Annually, each school board sets a budget. Through the budgeting process, the board establishes its priorities in terms of programs and services. Boards may add new courses, programs or services as a result of legislative requirements or education department mandates. When that is the case, there may be some additional provincial funding, but that funding rarely covers all implementation costs. As part of the budgeting process, each school board holds public consultation meetings to give community members a chance to share their views on where money should be spent, a process which may lead to further program or service adjustments. Once the budget has been set, the school board determines how much additional money it will require, over and above the operating funds provided by the province, for the upcoming school year. It raises the additional funds required by levying a tax on property called the ***special levy***.

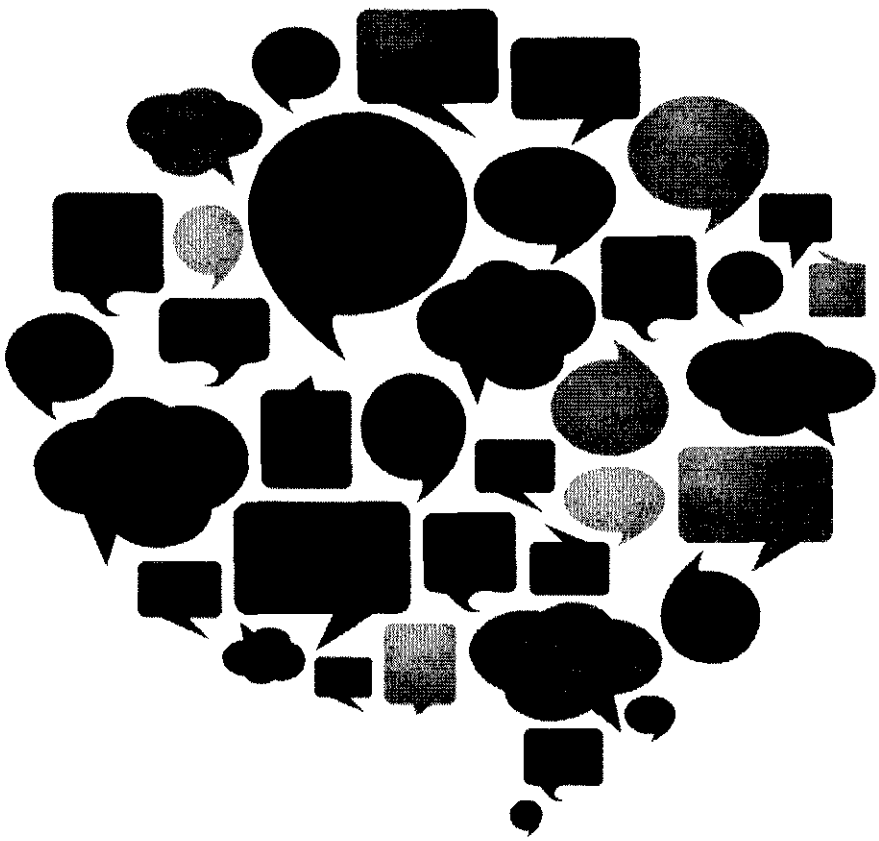


The issue:

Over several decades, the percentage of school operating funds generated from provincial revenues has declined from a high of 80% to the present rate of under 70%. The difference has been paid by local property owners, through the special levy. Although successive provincial governments have taken steps to offer property tax relief, there is an influential segment of the population which believes that there should be no education property taxes whatsoever. However, the elimination of the special levy without a radical overhaul of the current education funding system, the infusion of significant new dollars, and the development of a fail-safe mechanism to prevent future underfunding would negatively impact the quality of our schools, and our children's futures.

Some questions for candidates:

- Do you support the continuation of the special levy as a source of revenue for public education?
- Do you believe that there are additional revenue sources that could or should be dedicated to education? If yes, what ones?
- Do you think that the current balance of provincial vs. local funding of education is appropriate? If not, how do you think it should be changed?
- In order to best serve students, school boards require a degree of predictability and stability in the funds available to them. How do you think that predictability and stability should be achieved?



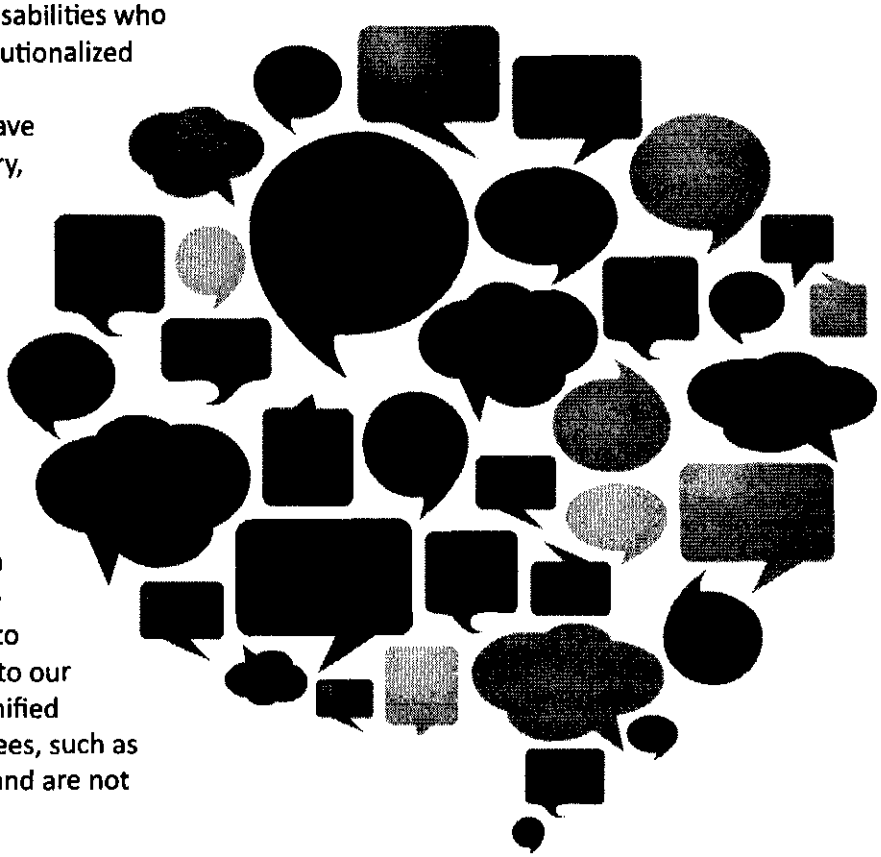
This election, let's talk about . . .

Helping all students succeed

Background:

Manitoba, like other Canadian provinces, is becoming increasingly diverse. Most obviously, an aggressive immigration policy has resulted in increased cultural diversity, with people in growing numbers from around the world calling Manitoba home. In Manitoba, Aboriginal peoples are a growing segment of the population in our province, a trend that will continue for many years. We have become more inclusive as a society; individuals with physical, intellectual or mental disabilities who at one time may have been institutionalized are now accommodated in the mainstream. Family structures have evolved over the past half-century, with more households headed by a single parent, and in the majority of two-parent households, both parents are employed outside the home.

This growing diversity brings with it both opportunities and challenges. While all Manitobans can benefit both economically and culturally from increased immigration, language and social supports are needed to help new Canadians integrate into our society. The challenges are magnified when individuals arrive as refugees, such as those from war-torn countries, and are not immigrants by choice. Historically, Canada's Aboriginal population has achieved lower levels of academic and economic success than the overall population. If that trend is not reversed, the negative impact on both the personal and national levels will be enormous. Greater integration of individuals with disabilities into society can benefit both those individuals and the broader population, but only when the necessary supports are in place. The need for high-quality childcare for both pre-school and school-aged children grows in proportion to the number of primary caregivers joining the province's workforce.

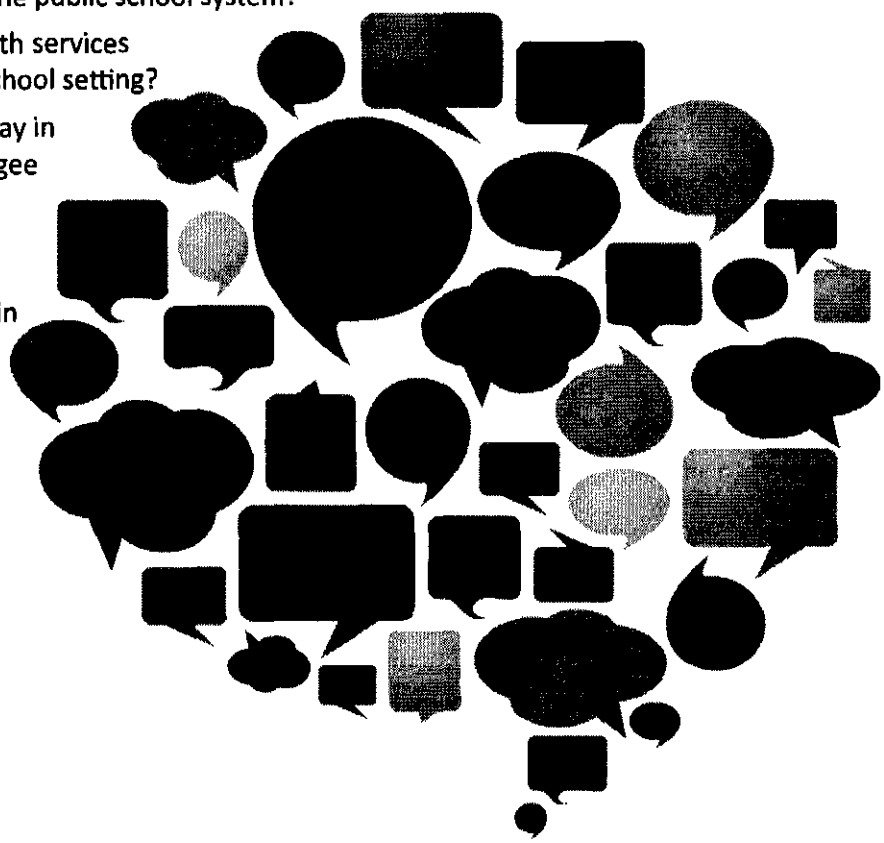


The issue:

Each of the societal issues outlined above is especially acute for the public school system. Children of immigrant and refugee families arrive at their local school, sometimes without the linguistic skills or academic background they need to succeed. Children with disabilities may require special physical or other supports in order to be integrated into the classroom and take full advantage of the opportunities school provides. High-quality early learning and care can help children from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve at the same level as their more fortunate peers once they start school, and all children and families can benefit from high-quality childcare. While the school is a logical locus for the delivery of many non-educational, child-related services, the logic of paying for these services with dollars intended for education is not clear. We need to increase the coordination of health, justice, social and other services delivered within the school system, and develop more equitable funding mechanisms for those services. In that way, we can ensure that all students receive the supports they need to succeed without jeopardizing overall educational quality by spreading available resources too thin.

Some questions for candidates:

- How do you think Manitoba should address the on-going shortage of affordable, high-quality childcare spaces?
- Do you support full-time kindergarten for Manitoba children? If so, under what, if any, conditions?
- What can the provincial government do to better coordinate and fund the delivery of services to children within the public school system?
- How should we pay for health services delivered to students in a school setting?
- What role should schools play in helping immigrant and refugee children and their families integrate into Manitoba society? What other organizations should share in that responsibility?



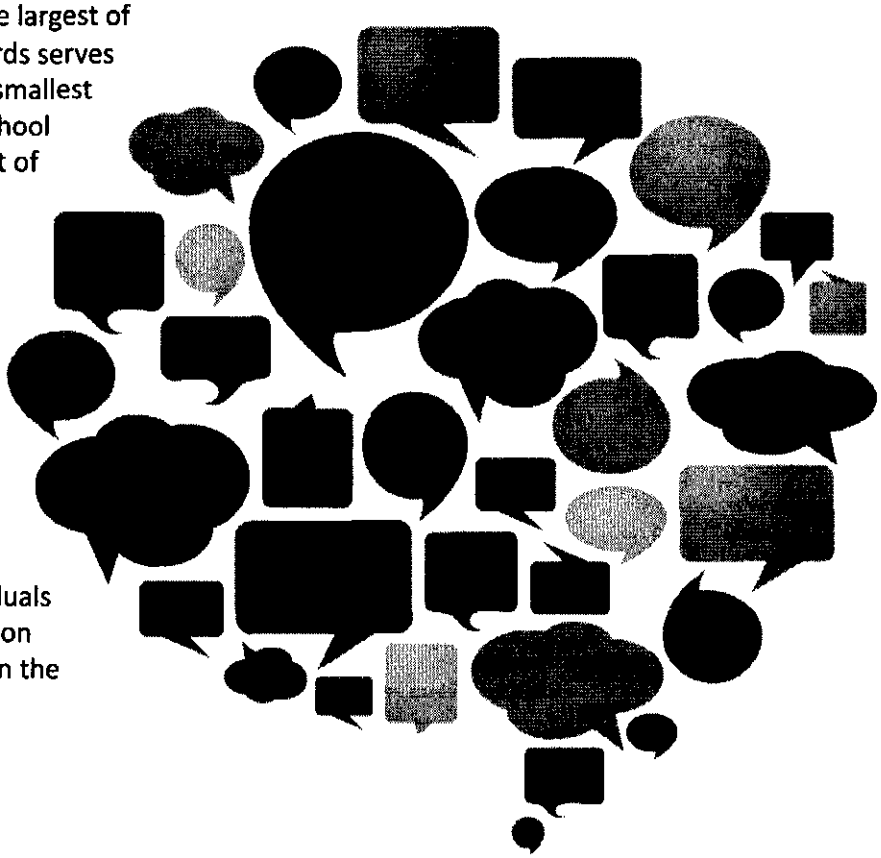
This election, let's talk about . . .

Keeping local schools local

Background:

School boards are a long-standing North American institution designed to give local communities a say in one of their most important assets: their children's futures. In Manitoba, school boards date back more than a century. In their earliest years, most school boards governed an individual school that served a small geographic area. Consolidations over the years have resulted in fewer school boards, each serving more students over a larger geographic area. Today, the largest of Manitoba's 37 public school boards serves over 30,000 students, while the smallest serves fewer than 1,000. Each school board governs a specific segment of the public school system called a ***school division***. In most cases, school divisions are geographic regions with discrete physical boundaries; in the case of the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine, the school board governs all schools that serve a specific linguistic segment of the population, in all regions of the province. ***School trustees*** are those individuals who have been elected to serve on school boards. By law, they live in the communities they serve.

School board governance is responsive and accountable, with regular elections, legally required consultations (e.g. on proposed budgets), standardized, transparent and accessible financial management and reporting (e.g. FRAME reports), and regularly scheduled, open meetings. School boards are grassroots, democratic institutions that spring from local communities. They give those communities the ability to shape schools in ways that respond to local needs and desires concerning their children's education. All schools in Manitoba offer their students a solid core education that is based on minimum requirements identified by the province. Beyond this core, programming from school to school and division to division varies widely as a result of community input and decisions made by local school boards (e.g. optional courses of study, enhanced early years programming, etc.).

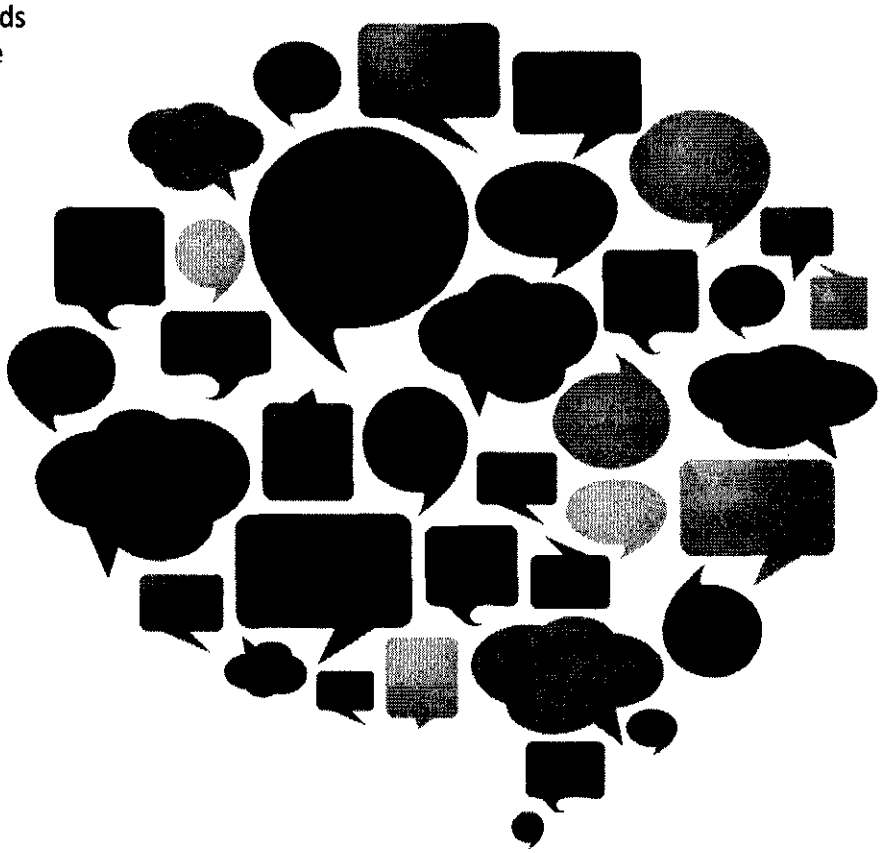


The issue:

School board powers and responsibilities are outlined in *The Public Schools Act* and accompanying regulations, and as such, they may be changed from time to time. Sometimes, changes are necessitated by external developments such as new technologies or social trends. At other times, however, changes have been made that seem to serve no purpose other than to increase the centralization of power at the provincial level, with a corresponding reduction in school boards' ability to develop and implement local policy. When this happens, the ability of communities to shape their schools is diminished. Increased centralization and the adoption of "one size fits all" policies can also impede the ability of school boards to best manage resources and react quickly to changing circumstances. Specific areas of concern that have emerged over a number of years include the impact of binding arbitration on teacher bargaining and restrictions on the ability of school boards to manage the number and kind of schools operating in a division. Potential areas of concern include a change from local to provincial teacher bargaining and mandated class size limits.

Some questions for candidates:

- How do you keep informed about what's happening in our schools?
- What do you think is the biggest challenge facing *local* schools?
- If elected, how do you envision your relationship with the school board(s) in your constituency?
- Bearing in mind what you know about the authority of school boards in Manitoba at this time, are there any specific additional responsibilities or powers that you think they should be *given*? Conversely, are there any responsibilities or powers that you think should be *eliminated*?



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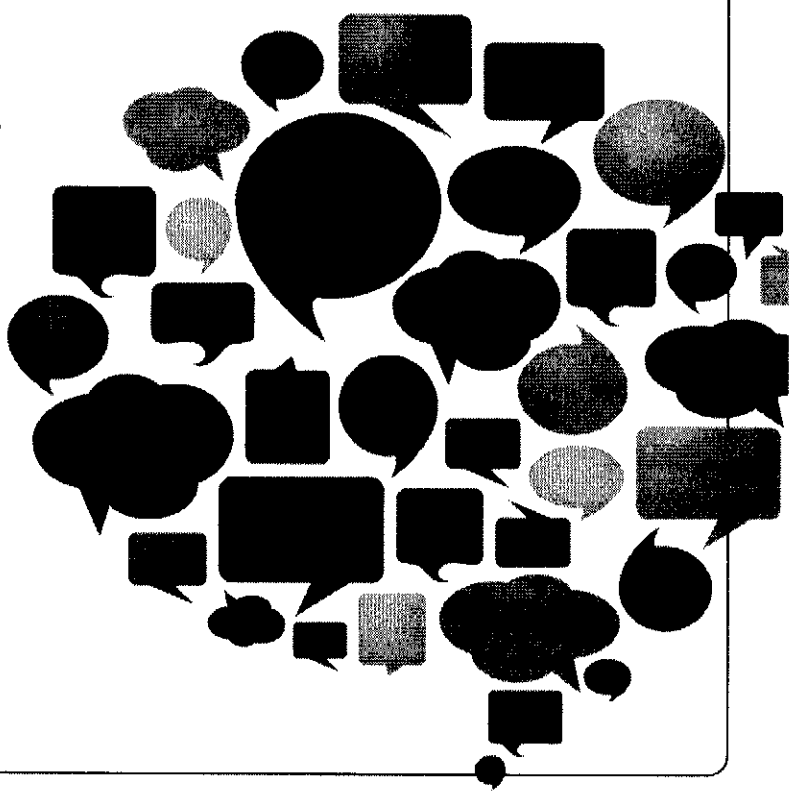
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