



BRANDON SCHOOL DIVISION

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, THE BRANDON SCHOOL DIVISION, HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS, AT 7:00 P.M., MONDAY, MARCH 1, 2021.

TRUSTEES PRESENT:

L. Ross, Chairperson	S. Bambridge, Vice-Chairperson
C. Ekenna	K. Fallis
B. Foley	J. Gobeil
D. Kejick	L. Letain
J. Murray	

ALSO PRESENT:

D. Labossiere, Secretary-Treasurer
M. Gustafson, A/Superintendent / CEO
E. McFadzen, Assistant Superintendent
E. Jamora, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer
B. Sangster, Recording Secretary
T. Curtis, Video Streaming Operator

CALL:

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. with a traditional heritage acknowledgement and welcomed everyone in attendance. Trustee Ross then referred to the Call.

The meeting had been called for the purpose of the following:

- a) 2021-2022 Public Budget Presentation/Consultation

Trustee Ross reviewed the 2021-2022 Budget Presentation, highlighting the following:

A. Brandon School Division Staff Complement, Enrollment, Facilities and Transportation

B. 2021-2022 Budget Outline:

1. Budget Development Process

- Stakeholder Feedback
- Establishing Guidelines for the 2021-2022 Preliminary Budget Preparation
- Finance and Facilities Governance Goals for 2018-2022
- Factors Impacting Budget Considerations
- Comparison to Provincial Average & Similar Divisions
- Revenue By Source
- Expense by Function
- Expense by Object
- Enrollment
- Summary of Staff FTE for 2021-2022 Budget
- Accumulated Surplus
- Capital Reserves

2. Proposed 2021-2022 Operating Budget
 - 2021-2022 Operating Budget Summary
3. Special Requirement/Levy
 - Special Requirement
 - Special Levy (Municipal Taxes)
 - Effect of the School Year Budget
 - Education Property Tax on a Home Assessed at \$270,000
4. Next Steps
 - March 8, 2021 – Board Meeting – Board Approves Budget
 - March 15, 2021 – Special Levy due to Municipalities

The following individuals made presentations regarding the proposed 2021-2022 Budget:

1) Ms. Mary-Louise Davis, Brandon Teachers' Association

Ms. Mary-Louise Davis spoke on behalf of the Brandon Teachers' Association (BTA), Education Finance Committee. Ms. Davis acknowledged that the Board's hands were tied in many ways due to the Province's demand that property taxes not increase in any division, which means Brandon School Division is \$720,000 short of its proposed budget.

Ms. Davis conveyed the BTA's questions and concerns regarding the Budget process and the decision the Board is faced with approving on March 8th. She noted the Finance and Facilities Committee has been making large contributions to Capital Reserves in the past years, totaling over \$6 million. The BTA understands the significant savings required to fulfill the recommendations of the Ameresco Report and complete the Maryland Park School, however, there is now a shortfall in the operational side.

Ms. Davis questioned the budget setting process this year, noting the public discussions about setting the budget lasted just under two hours, with Senior Administration presenting three (3) options for making up the \$720,500 shortfall. There were certainly more than three (3) options for making up the difference. Why were no other solutions discussed or even mentioned? This budget has hundreds of lines, yet the Board did not comb through any of these in front of the public. The BTA was disappointed to see the Board opt for the pre-simplified route to solving this damaging predicament rather than explore all, or any additional, options during a public meeting.

Ms. Davis also noted concern about how accessible to the public the Budget process this year has been, adding that COVID-19 has necessitated changes to the normal process. In the past, Public Budget Consultation nights have been held in person with a live video feed like this year, but those unable to attend have been able to phone in or email questions. Why was that not done this year? If there is a more transparent and accessible option available, why was the lesser option chosen?

Ms. Davis thanked the Board for all the concern shown for Division students during Budget Deliberations, where the Board aimed to make cuts that would directly affect students the least. When Trustee Murray expressed how appalled he was at a Provincial government who "takes money from children during a pandemic to balance a budget" it was clear how seriously the Board takes the lives of children in their care. When Trustee Ross apologized to students, staff and the community for the cuts the Board has to make, the BTA understood how frustrated and disappointed she was with the Province. It is the Provincial government that chose to cut services to children across this province. The Broken Promise, Stolen Futures report (2020) showed that 40.1% of Manitoba children live in families experiencing poverty. Manitoba children benefit almost 10% less than the National average from government grants and transfers to improve their quality of life. And

instead of increasing support to this vulnerable population, this government forced the Board to make cuts.

Ms. Davis thanked Trustees for all the advocacy they do, asking them to *“please, don’t forget this and never back down – our kids need you.”*

2) Mr. Jamie Rose, President, CUPE Local 737

Mr. Jamie Rose, President, CUPE Local 737, spoke on behalf of Brandon School Division Support Staff. Mr. Rose opened his remarks by saying that with the Minister of Education directing school divisions to freeze their education property taxes, cutting funding, and following a provincial mandate in the collective bargaining process, he wanted to take the opportunity to acknowledge the hard decisions the Board of Trustees have to make when they are handed such a difficult situation.

Mr. Rose noted he has spent many hours at Board meetings to advocate for support staff, and he does not always agree with the decisions the Trustees make. He is always comfortable and welcome to express the support staff views.

Mr. Rose spoke on the lives of support staff and teachers changing one year ago, with the pandemic requiring Division employees to go above and beyond every day since. He acknowledged the dedication and hard work of everyone working in Division schools with limited resources during an incredibly uncertain time.

Mr. Rose cited the Province of Manitoba website, where the Minister of Education states:

“Quality education and training opportunities help Manitobans achieve their fullest potential, while also contributing immensely to the development of a strong workforce that is vital to the social and economic well-being of our entire Province”.

He stated that the Government’s decision to freeze funding means cuts to programs and classroom support. Students in Brandon’s schools are being left behind. This problem is too important to leave to year-to-year negotiating with a Province clearly committed to cutting education. CUPE Local 737 needs to be vocal advocates for the community, for the students, for the support staff and teachers, and for meaningful reinvestment as part of this budget process. Mr. Rose asked the Trustees to send a clear message to the Province that their cuts to education are hurting the students’ future. Funding students’ education is an investment, not an expense.

Mr. Rose indicated that it would take funding to have quality output for education in Manitoba. As a taxpayer, he wants his tax dollars spent wisely; however, he will not support tax cuts that will continue to hurt the education system. If land taxes for education are removed, where will the money to teach the students come from?

In closing, Mr. Rose spoke to the soon to be released K-12 Education Review, stating he would like the Board of Trustees to know that CUPE Local 737 supports local autonomy to make decisions for our students’ education and future.

Trustee Ross thanked everyone for taking the time to attend the meeting and for their presentations and spoke on next steps in regards to the 2021-2022 Budget.

The meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Chairperson

Secretary-Treasurer