



BRANDON SCHOOL DIVISION

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, THE BRANDON SCHOOL DIVISION, HELD IN THE J. L. MILNE BOARDROOM, ADMINISTRATION OFFICE, 1031 - 6TH STREET, BRANDON, MANITOBA, AT 7:00 P.M., MONDAY, MARCH 3, 2014.

PRESENT:

Mr. M. Sefton, Chairperson, Mr. J. Murray, Vice-Chairperson, Mr. P. Bartlette, Mrs. P. Bowslaugh, Mr. D. Karnes, Mr. G. Kruck (via conference phone), Dr. L. Ross, Mr. K. Sumner.

Secretary-Treasurer, Mr. D. Labossiere, Recording Secretary, Mrs. S. Bailey, Live Streaming Video Operator, Ms. K. Boklaschuk.

Senior Administration: Dr. D. M. Michaels, Superintendent/CEO, Mr. G. Malazdrewicz, Associate Superintendent, Ms. E. Jamora, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer, Ms. B. Switzer, Director of Human Resources.

REGRETS:

Mr. M. Snelling

CALL:

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and referred to the Call.

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

- a) Public Budget Feedback Presentations.

The following individuals made presentations regarding the Proposed 2014/2015 Budget:

- A) Ms. Carla Milne, Director, Chair of Government Relations Committee, Brandon Chamber of Commerce noted the Chamber continues to be a supporter of quality education in the community. The Chamber understands that quality education will have a positive impact on the City and the Community at large, but stressed that it is crucial this is carried out in a fiscally responsible manner. They have had discussions with the Board and felt optimistic that the Board was taking a look at finding efficiencies in the budget to assist with the inflationary tax increases. They understand how difficult this can be as more than 85% of the Division's budget is spent on salary and wages. The Chamber also realizes the Division has little or minimal control over what a teacher makes and that the Division needs to remain competitive so that teachers receive a reasonable compensation for their contributions to help educate our children. However, as costs increase and with little control over wages, turning to look at organizational effectiveness while still providing a strong core education for students is essential. Therefore, the Chamber supports the Board for looking at enrollment, program and staffing efficiencies.

On the Division's website, it notes that the effect of a 2.9% increase on an average commercial property would result in an increase of \$539. If this amount was to be increased greater than 2.9% it will have an even larger impact on businesses. Businesses have also been faced with PST rate increases, expenses required to operate now having PST charged on them, and increased local municipal taxes due to assessment and mill rate. Therefore the Chamber asks the Board to continue to make those tough choices on critical needs and not the wants.

From an advocate side, the Chamber continues to be frustrated with a Province that is mandating initiatives they cannot afford. Not all divisions are affected the same way with these initiatives but unfortunately the Brandon School Division is significantly affected. The provincial/municipal split is near 60/40 while our neighbors in other provinces do not surpass 80/20 and some are funded 100% provincially. There needs to be dramatic changes made.

Ms. Milne concluded her presentation by thanking the Board for the opportunity to speak and hoped that her comments are taken constructively as anything great than a 2.9% increase on top of last year's large increase is not palatable.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Milne for her presentation.

- B) Ms. Alison Johnston, President of the Brandon Teachers' Association, provided a submission on behalf of the Division's teaching staff. She began her presentation by examining the statistics from the 2013-2014 FRAME Report. She noted if the Brandon School Division were ordinary, as defined on "Dictionary.com", then in order to match the provincial average, the Division's operating expenses per pupil would see an increase of \$1,194 per student. With a projected enrollment of 8,438 students for 2014-2015, by being merely ordinary an additional \$10,074,972 would be added to the Division "coffers". She noted that the neighboring divisions invest much more per student: Park West \$2,442 more per student; Southwest Horizon \$2,225 more per student and Rolling River \$2,186 per students. With these figures in mind, Ms. Johnston asked, "Is it fair or accurate to assert the position that the Brandon School Division is asking for a Cadillac education for Brandon students?"

She noted historically the Trustee have examined their budget and directed the dollars be invested in services for students. The pupil-teacher ratio and the variety of innovative programs support this fact. At the October 15 Board meeting, Trustees passed a motion to examine staffing, programming and enrollment efficiencies. Ms. Johnston believes that the Division is already an efficient operation noting that the Brandon School Division ranks 31 out of 36 on operating expenses per student.

Ms. Johnston then spoke to the proposed elimination of 11 FTE positions. She asked the Board "What if 11 teachers do not retire this year? What if nobody retires? Then what?" Ms. Johnston noted that term contracts or teachers in their first and second year of their career would be released. As these teachers make less money, then it would likely require the loss of 16 teachers in the Division to meet the proposed \$800,000 budget reduction. Ms. Johnston also addressed the possible impact of removing 9 FTE positions from pupil teacher ratio. She provided feedback on the elimination of one position from the divisional learning support services and one position from the school community transition program at the high school level.

Ms. Johnston noted that at the February 24, 2014 meeting of the Board of Trustees, Trustee Bowslaugh asked her how Trustees should respond to ratepayers who are expressing concern in regards to tax increases. Mrs. Bowslaugh referenced a public letter submitted to the Board on this matter. Ms. Johnston noted she would like to take the opportunity to address this question and provided a statement noting the changes, diversity, needs and pressures which have evolved over the years in the

classroom as society's expectations with respect to education and the dynamics of the family unit have changed.

Ms. Johnston concluded her presentation by noted the Brandon Teacher's Association is in opposition to the proposed 2014-2015 budget. The Association would like the Board to continue to meet their educational goals with even more investments in the classroom. At the very least, the Brandon School Division should have a status quo budget that maintains the September 2013 staffing levels and also sustains previous investments in programming and support. This, she offered, would be a platform that any Trustee could easily defend with the electorate in October.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Johnston for her presentation. Trustee Kruck, via conference phone, requested clarification regarding Ms. Johnston's statements about a possible reduction from 11 FTE to 16 FTE positions.

- C) Mr. Jamie Rose, President, of CUPE Local 737 spoke on behalf of the 500 support staff members in the Division. He spoke in support of a Status Quo budget. A budget, he noted which was overwhelming supported by the public survey conducted by the Division. He noted the Union felt cuts will jeopardize students' futures as well as the future of Brandon. With enrollment on the rise, cutting staff will negatively impact the students of the Division. Mr. Rose noted one percent was the difference between keeping vital positions and programs that engage students and keep them motivated to attend school. Therefore, the Union felt the cuts that the Board was proposing were not in the best interest of the students of the Division. Mr. Rose concluded his presentation by noting that the negative impact on the students of the Division will not only affect students next year, but in years to come.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Rose for his comments.

- D) Mr. Ron Chambers, Taxpayer, thanked the Board for giving him the opportunity to speak. He noted he had some questions which he wished to ask the Board regarding the proposed budget:
- "How much was last year's Trustee Travel Budget?"
 - "Did you travel outside Canada for your Meetings?"
 - "Where will you go this year?"
 - "When on School Board Travel, did spouse or other go along?"

Trustees noted that the cut in travel budget was for the Division's Professional Development. They confirmed the Professional Development Budget was approximately \$760,000 of which \$100,000 was for travel and the Board had proposed to reduce this budget line by \$40,000. Trustees noted that some Professional Development for staff does take place outside of Canada. They also confirmed that Trustees also travel and the next meeting the Board was attending was in Winnipeg in March.

Mr. Chambers also expressed concern regarding the citing of Brandon School Division buses in business parking lots throughout Brandon during the day. He noted buses have been seen at Home Depot, Superstore, Wal-Mart and even the Green Spot. He asked why Division employees were using school buses as personal vehicles.

The Chairperson noted that he did not have an answer to this question.

Mr. Chambers concluded his presentation by noting that people on a fixed income cannot afford any further tax increases. Between City taxes, increased PST and school board taxes people can no longer afford to live in their own houses.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Chamber for his presentation.

- E) Mr. Ed Kostecki, Retired Teacher and Taxpayer spoke to the Board of Trustees regarding the proposed budget. He noted that he had been a teacher for 35 years and a principal. He had been retired for 22 years and his pension has not increased much during that time. He advised today's young teachers to save their money.

Mr. Kostecki noted that many seniors were on fixed incomes and lost half of that income when they became widows or widowers. He suggested the public needs to petition the Government to fund education fully.

Mr. Kostecki also noted that when he was teaching, teachers did not get big salaries and had to educate up to 36 students in a classroom. He noted that he felt the old system worked. Students were educated. He stated the old education system "got us to the moon".

He concluded his presentation by asking the Board to be concerned about the effects of increased taxes on other people and asked that they hold the line on taxes.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Kostecki for his comments.

The Chairperson thanked all present for making presentations. He then asked the Vice-Chairperson, Mr. Jim Murray, to read into the record a letter which had been sent to Trustees by a member of the public who was unable to attend the meeting.

- Mrs. Sandra Koch-Gensiorek, February 16, 2014, expressing concern about limiting the number of credits a student can take in his/her high school career. She asked if limiting students to 34 to 38 credits would mean they could no longer obtain a dual diploma. She felt there were instances where a dual diploma in academics and vocational gave the student a step up in university. Students wishing to go into civil engineering have an advantage if they have an 85% plus average in academics but also a diploma in drafting. She also expressed concern about cutting non-compulsory classes with fewer than 15 students. She asked if these were vocational courses that students not taking the academic stream require for graduation. She felt these students could be affected, as well as academic students who would be limited in options that provide valuable experiences for the work world. She asked the Board to seriously look at the IB program in Neelin, especially since there were already AP courses being offered. She also asked the Board to consider cuts to out-of-province training for teachers noting Skype or Tela Links could be used. She also suggested there be no more Board retreats.

Prior to closing the meeting the Chairperson again thanked those who attended the meeting, made presentations and provided feedback.

Mr. Murray – Mr. Karnes

That the meeting do now adjourn (7:35 p.m.).

Chairperson

Secretary-Treasurer