



# 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, FEBRUARY 29, 2016.

## **PRESENT:**

Mr. M. Sefton, Chairperson, Dr. L. Ross, Vice-Chairperson, Ms. S. Bambridge, Mr. P. Bartlette, Mrs. P. Bowslaugh, Mr. G. Buri, Mr. G. Kruck, Mr. J. Murray, Mr. K. Sumner.

Mr. D. Labossiere, Secretary-Treasurer, Ms. B. Sangster, Recording Secretary, Ms. T. Curtis, Live Streaming Video Operator.

Senior Administration: Mr. Mathew Gustafson, Assistant Superintendent, Ms. Eunice Jamora, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer.

## **REGRETS:**

Dr. D. M. Michaels, Superintendent, Mr. G. Malazdrewicz, Assistant Superintendent, Ms. B. Switzer, Director of Human Resources.

## **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 2016-2017 Budget:

- 1) Ms. Alison Johnston, President, Brandon Teachers' Association, provided a submission on behalf of the Division's teaching staff. She began her presentation by noting that this is the third submission she has made at the Board table and that the President position comes with some "budget deliberation" experience. Ms. Johnston confessed to being confused with some of the information shared with Trustees. She spoke on the Preliminary Budget discussion document shared with Trustees citing a pupil/teacher ratio for the Division of 12.8 in comparison to the provincial average of 13.1. Ms. Johnston noted that, upon inquiry as to how many more teachers did Brandon School Division have 'over' this provincial average, the response of 14.6 was provided.

Ms. Johnston wondered what the point was in sharing that statistic and that it couldn't be to have the taxpaying public believe that class sizes in Brandon have an average of 13 students. Ms. Johnston added that she has been an employee of the Brandon School Division since 1989 and noted that in that time, just once has she had a class of 20 students or under.

Ms. Johnston stated that she spent time reviewing the FRAME 2015-2016 document and explained what she learned regarding the Pupil/Regular Instruction Teacher ratio and Pupil/Educator ratio. She noted that the calculation using this ratio would suggest that the Division would need to hire 14 frontline classroom teachers to reach the provincial benchmark of 16.7. Ms. Johnston noted that there are initiatives that are paid for by the public, including HALEP, Reading Recovery, Early and Middle Years literacy, etc.

Ms. Johnston quoted comments made by the Chair during the budget deliberations regarding Educator Ratio and wondered why the focus was on only one ratio and not both. She added that the Chairman's proposal of a reduction of 9 teaching staff would save the Division approximately \$800,000 in salaries and benefits. Ms. Johnston asked the Trustees: How do you cut established programs where a clear need has been identified for our students? And further, how do you choose which program to eliminate? What is the human cost for the students impacted by the decision?

Ms. Johnston made some observations regarding class size numbers and indicated that a cynic may logically query whether the current Divisional trend of multi-age classrooms is truly about pedagogy or merely a way to save having to hire two additional classroom teachers. She spoke on K-8 class size data, which notes that 64% of the classrooms have 21 students or more compared with 52% from the year before. She added that the high school statistics are even more telling with 127 classes having 26 students or more, which is 15 more classes than the year before.

Ms. Johnston stated that she has directed more teachers this year than ever before to Board Policy 5012 J – "Personal Leave of Absence for Professional Staff", noting the prime reason given for wanting to explore this leave is that the teacher wants to examine whether the workload with teaching can be a life-long career for them. She noted that Trustees on the Teacher Liaison Committee were informed at a meeting before Christmas break that the number of teachers requesting assistance through the Manitoba Teachers' Society Early Intervention program has increased dramatically throughout the province this year and Brandon School Division has not been immune from this trend.

Ms. Johnston concluded her presentation by emphasizing that the impact of a teacher reduction would not just be on the Division's bottom line, but it would also have a human impact and noted an increase in sick time costs from the previous year. She stated that if Trustees decide to implement the Chairman's proposal, that would make a grand total of 20 teaching positions that have been cut from the teacher complement in the past three budgets and asked how can this make sense?

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Johnston for her presentation.

- 2) Mr. Jamie Rose, President of CUPE Local 737, spoke on behalf of support staff members at the Brandon School Division. He thanked the Board for holding these important consultations on the 2016 budget. Mr. Rose stated that this budget presents numerous new and expanding programs that he believes should be applauded, adding that in addition to a new school, the Board is considering expanding full day Kindergarten as well as supporting the Off-Campus programs and providing support to Indigenous students. Mr. Rose added that the Division is also investing resources into initiatives that address bullying in our schools – an issue that is not found in Brandon alone, and he applauds efforts to ensure the safety of the Division's students.

Mr. Rose spoke to the placement of video cameras on school buses. As a bus driver himself, Mr. Rose knows and understands the importance and value of safety on our buses, and drivers are

often put in situations where they have to address an incident on the bus, while at the same time operate the vehicle safely. He stated that this is the greatest challenge as a bus operator and that it doesn't have to be that way. Mr. Rose stated that installing cameras inside the buses will do very little to relieve this stress on drivers. He added that a camera will not capture instances of bullying or vandalism and will not reduce the impact incidences may have on drivers.

Mr. Rose indicated the resources would be better used by placing monitors on the buses, rather than cameras, as having another adult on the bus would provide immediate security for the driver, and would be able to address issues in real time, rather than after the fact. He added that having a monitor on the bus would act as a stronger deterrent than a camera, and would be able to intervene on the spot to diffuse any situation.

While Mr. Rose agrees with cameras to capture vehicles failing to respect the bus stop-arm, cameras inside the bus will not achieve the intended results presented by the Division.

Mr. Rose applauded the Division for investing in filling 10 Educational Assistant positions in the upcoming year as they provide increasingly valuable services in the classroom and to the teacher and are crucial in providing care and support to students with the most needs.

Mr. Rose indicated that CUPE is pleased to see additional funding being allocated to Professional Development for support staff and thanked the Human Resources Department, Senior Administration and Trustees for providing the February 26 Professional Development Day. He noted this was well received and supported by the Local 737 Members.

Mr. Rose commented on the proposal to allocate \$150,000 to an external body to review the Job Evaluation Process, adding that past practice is to hold a Joint Job Evaluation process with the union and the employer. He noted that CUPE National has resources for a Job Evaluation process, which the Union would like to explore at a fraction of the cost or no cost.

Speaking on the budget as a whole, Mr. Rose noted that Local 737 is proud that the provincial government has consistently provided funding increase to support education in Brandon, which is key to the success of the students.

In closing, Mr. Rose noted that everyone cares about the quality of education the students receive and believes in the value of the wonderful School Division.

Trustee Bowslaugh noted that she found the information on bus cameras very interesting and wondered if all the bus drivers had been questioned regarding this topic. Mr. Rose responded that the majority of drivers feel a monitor is required on the bus. Trustee Kruck asked if the monitors are not an option, would the drivers want the cameras or not? Mr. Rose responded that the cameras would be awesome if that is all that is available. Trustee Sumner asked how many buses are in need of monitors to respond to incidents on buses. Mr. Rose responded that five (5) buses need monitors.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Rose for his comments.

- 3) Mr. Jordan Ludwig, Chair of the Brandon Chamber of Commerce, introduced himself and noted that the Brandon Chamber of Commerce is a not-for-profit organization that represents over 600 member business in the community and also lobbies on behalf of all businesses and those taxpayers that do not have a voice. Mr. Ludwig thanked the Board for the opportunity to provide input on the Brandon School Division's 2016-2017 Budget as proposed and added that the

Chamber appreciates the information provided through the Division's website, through public consultations and stakeholder meetings between the Chamber and the Division. Mr. Ludwig noted that the Chamber is champions of the Brandon School Division, champions of education, and champions of a highly skilled workforce. He noted that a quality education positively impacts the future prosperity and success of our city. Mr. Ludwig stated that right now, the business taxpayer is telling the Brandon Chamber of Commerce that they have had enough and notes that the math shows that there was a 21.3% increase in the education portion of property taxes from 2011 to 2015. He stated this does not account for the proposed increase of 5.4% as proposed in the 2016-2017 Budget; this is out of step with inflation and Division expenditure per pupil is growing year over year.

Mr. Ludwig indicated that Manitoba is below average in math, science and reading skills when compared to the rest of Canada. He indicated that the Brandon Chamber of Commerce remains focused on outcomes and asks for a reprioritization of spending, focused on improving Manitoba's ranking in core competencies of math, science and reading skills. Mr. Ludwig recognizes that these are Provincial averages and not a direct comparison of the Brandon School Division but he feels the Chamber's message still holds weight. He noted that the Chamber understands that some of the Division's budget woes come from provincial funding levels, and that 85% of the Brandon School Division budget is spent on salary and wages. Mr. Ludwig acknowledged that the Division has little or minimal control over what a teacher makes as the Division needs to remain competitive and teachers need to have reasonable compensation for their contributions to help educate our children. He stated that making sure that every dollar is spent effectively, efficiently and with an eye to ensuring that students are excelling in core competencies.

Mr. Ludwig indicated that the Brandon Chamber of Commerce values their working relationship with the Brandon School Division, and views the Division as an important partner in ensuring the common goals for students in the community are met. He added that the economic climate is forcing us all to do more with less, and that it's important that the School Division has the best interests of the local taxpayer in their heart and considers their ability to pay.

In closing, Mr. Ludwig stated that the Chamber of Commerce urges the Division to please revisit the budget, make hard decisions on eliminating things they can do without so that Brandon can remain an affordable place to live, work and raise a family. He commended the Board on their hard work and noted it is not an easy job.

Trustee Sefton thanked the Chamber for being champions of the School Division and noted he appreciates the Chamber's support.

Trustee Sumner asked if there is any specific feedback for the Board regarding the budget. Mr. Ludwig responded that the Chamber has not gone through the budget line by line as they don't have inside knowledge and full understanding of the budget. He would like to see the increases more in line with inflation, and noted that due to the economic climate not everyone in our community has a lot to spare right now. He added that as long as the Board remains cognizant of that fact when the Trustees take another look at the budget, that would be somewhere reasonable to fall.

Trustee Bowslaugh spoke on the property tax carryover and asked Mr. Ludwig to comment on this amount. Mr. Labossiere, Secretary-Treasurer, provided the 2015-2016 carryover amount which was 3.74%. Mr. Ludwig responded that he knows that while the Division is tied on the 3.74%, there is still 1.74% in there that may still have some wiggle room on and encourages a hard eye when taking another look at the budget.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Ludwig for his presentation and comments.

- 4) Ms. Becky Rystephanuk, parent, representing King George School, spoke on the importance of full day Kindergarten and the strong foundation it will build for the children. She noted with EDI scores low, full day Kindergarten would improve this. Learning through play is a sentence she often hears in the Kindergarten classroom. She added that through play children learn trust, empathy, and will demonstrate a willingness to take responsibility. When students have a purpose, they are motivated to read and write - even asking questions is an important skill to develop. Ms. Rystephanuk indicated that through play-based learning, and small group instruction, the children will engage in healthy physical activities and develop socially and emotionally through interaction with their friends and the educators who guide them. She stated that when King George School offered all day Kindergarten in 2013-2014, it proved to be quite successful and the students' readiness for grade 1 was more primed.

Ms. Rystephanuk asked that the Board please consider this investment in early childhood education and give the students the best head start possible. She added that full day Kindergarten will be helping the youngest learners develop the valuable skills that will give them every opportunity to succeed. She indicated that while the majority of the Board of Trustees are in favour, she attended the meeting to convince for a full vote. She concluded by stating that "the time is now, the results are in our favour, let's put our children first, it will be worth it".

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Rystephanuk for her comments.

- 5) Ms. Danielle Carriere, representing Valleyview Centennial School, agreed with everything that Ms. Rystephanuk said and indicated that both schools need full day Kindergarten. She stated that the children need it and added that she has a child who will be going to Valleyview in 2 years and asked that the Board please keep this item approved.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Carriere for her comments.

Trustee Sefton thanked everyone for coming and speaking to the Board regarding the budget. On behalf of those who spoke, thank you to the support systems that were in attendance. We appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts with the Board. The next steps are at the Monday, March 7 Board meeting, where the budget will be approved. He indicated that there will likely be some amendments and debate around the Board table, but by the end of meeting there will be a budget which has to be submitted to the Province by March 15.

Mr. Buri – Dr. Ross

That the meeting do now adjourn (7:37 p.m.).

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Chairperson

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Secretary-Treasurer