

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Readers are encouraged to refer to specific chapters of this report for background and details on each category of recommendations. Brief notes on the rationale for each recommendation are provided. However, in order to comprehend the full context and intent, it is necessary to understand the history and dynamics of societal change. This must include physical and political geography of Manitoba and other factors that contribute to the formulation of recommendations regarding the size and number of divisions and the governance system that will manage them in the future.

### A. PRINCIPLES USED IN FORMULATING RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout its deliberations the Commission was cognizant of its primary principles and these will be evident in the specifics and intent of every recommendation. The goal was to recommend the best governance structure which would:

- (a) further education excellence;
- (b) facilitate effective and efficient program delivery and development in the public school system;
- (c) facilitate the goals of education of the Province and ensure that education reflects principles such as equity, openness, responsiveness, excellence, choice, relevance and accountability;
- (d) ensure flexibility in student movement between and among divisions and districts;
- (e) acknowledge the increasing applicability of technology to facilitate program delivery;
- (f) foster partnership between/among government, community, parents, labour, business and industry; and
- (g) receive public acceptance.

Recommendations totalling 43 are numbered consecutively and are grouped by category. The numbers in parenthesis at the end of each are the page numbers in this report, to which reference can be made to find further details on that topic.

### B. STRUCTURE OF EDUCATION GOVERNANCE

#### Department of Education and Training

1. The Commission recommends that the Minister and the Department of Education and Training adopt a strong leadership role in articulating a vision for the future and

establishing education policy for the Province. These should be communicated to all citizens of Manitoba and followed up to ensure that the necessary and desirable standards included in those policies are achieved (P. 87, 96, 98)

The primary, but not exclusive focus should be to:

- (a) establish jointly approved curricula with the Western Canadian Provinces and others;
- (b) assist Manitoba school divisions with implementation of these curricula;
- (c) set acceptable standards of achievement for students and require accountability on the part of the school divisions and staff in assisting students to achieve those standards;
- (d) ensure the viability of appropriate training for, and subsequent certification of public school teachers;
- (e) provide sufficient funding to finance the provision of an equitable level of education to all students in the Manitoba public school system.

Manitobans are expecting the Minister and the Department to provide visionary leadership that will allow all sectors of the public school system to work towards common goals that place the welfare of students as top priority. There is public support and demand for improved standards and accountability at all levels in the system.

There is an urgent requirement for the Department to provide this form of leadership in the organization and implementation of distance education. The Commission is concerned that, without a dynamic coordinated approach, the small number of devoted individuals attempting to integrate available technology into the education delivery system may not succeed.

### **School Boards**

- 2. The Commission recommends that governance of public education by boards of publicly elected school trustees be reaffirmed. (P. 92, 93, 96, 98)
- 3. The Commission recommends that school boards be elected on the basis of a ward system. (P. 92, 93, 96, 98)
- 4. The Commission recommends that wards have similar numbers of electors as presently set out in the Public Schools Act inclusive of the maximum 25% deviation rule with exceptions approvable by the appropriate authority for Northern and remote locations where strict application of the rule would eliminate the possibility of local representation on the school board. (P. 92, 93, 98)
- 5. The Commission recommends that school boards have a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 9 trustees, except for Frontier School Division and the new Francophone School Division

which should continue with 10 and 11 trustees respectively, due to their extensive geographic areas. (P. 92, 93, 98)

6. The Commission recommends that school boards have local autonomy, within the limitations of provincially approved curricula and standards, and be responsible and accountable for operation of their school divisions. (P. 96, 98)
7. The Commission recommends that school boards continue to have local special levy taxing authority as long as property is used as a source of education funding. (P. 98)
8. The Commission recommends that school boards maintain the right to select and employ their senior staff. (P. 93, 94, 98)
9. The Commission recommends that school boards restrict their role to one of establishing local educational and administrative policy and allow professional administrators to manage the system. (P. 96)

The Commission believes the best form of governance accountability can be achieved through democratic election of local representatives. To be effective in providing its choice of education programs within provincially approved curricula, the board should have special levy taxing powers to finance those things it feels are appropriate to its area. A key element in local responsibility is the ability to select, hire and remove, if necessary, its educational and administrative leadership. However, boards must be careful to set policy, and once set, allow its staff to manage the system and implement the policy. Trustees must avoid being drawn in to the daily administration of divisions.

#### **Superintendents/Secretary-Treasurers**

10. The Commission recommends that the Public Schools Act be amended to require each school division to have a single Chief Executive Officer, appointed by and responsible to the board of trustees. (P. 93, 94, 98)
11. The Commission recommends that the Chief Executive Officer be accountable for the entire operation of the school division including both educational and financial matters. (P. 93, 94, 98)
12. The Commission recommends that the staff member directly responsible for the business management/accounting function be subject to minimum standards of qualifications to be set by the Minister after consultation with and recommendations from MASBO, MASS and MAST. (P. 93, 94, 98)

Today's school divisions are complex public organizations and it is important that modern management structures be utilized. The Commission suggests that accountability can best be achieved by having one individual responsible to the school board for all operations. This does not mean that they need be the educational leader and business manager simultaneously. However, the individual appointed by the board to fill this role should account for all school

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division operations. The staff member providing the business management, accounting or secretary-treasurer expertise should have minimum accounting credentials to be able to assure the trustees and the public of his/her competence to perform the required job. Training programs should be established to allow existing staff to acquire these standards and new appointments should be made based on those minimum qualifications either existing or being obtained within a reasonable period of time.

**Schools (Principals, Teaching Staff, Advisory Councils)**

13. The Commission recommends that school principals be responsible and accountable for the operation of their schools including both educational and financial matters. (P. 95, 99)
14. The Commission recommends that improved training options and requirements be established for individuals aspiring to education administration positions, to ensure that management skills are appropriately blended with educational leadership. (P. 30, 95, 99)
15. The Commission recommends that schools be recognized as community facilities providing primarily education services, but also appropriate health, recreational and social services where such services can be delivered effectively and economically in schools. (P. 99)
16. The Commission recommends that services to Manitoba students be integrated across provincial department lines together with rationalization of provincial funding to ensure that all services to children of school age are delivered at the most appropriate site and at the most efficient cost. (P. 33, 99)
17. The Commission recommends that school advisory councils be authorized by enabling legislation which would allow for their establishment if requested by parents of school children. (P. 94, 95, 99)
18. The Commission recommends that the school advisory council, when formally constituted, to be composed of: parents and community members, the school principal, representatives of the teaching staff, support staff, students (where appropriate) with the number of parents at least equalling the total number of the other members of the council. (P. 94, 95, 99)
19. The Commission recommends that the role of the school advisory council be primarily advisory to the principal and through him/her to the board respecting any issue related to the operation of the school. Topics that should be included within its scope are:
  - communication and coordination among all people related to the school
  - creation and distribution of the local school budget
  - school objectives and educational priorities
  - curriculum and program offerings
  - scheduling, school calendar, school opening and closing hours
  - before and after school and noon hour operational practices
  - timing of exams, extra-curricular activities and field trips
  - student discipline and behavior
  - attendance and truancy enforcement policy
  - fund-raising priorities and approaches
  - community access to school facilities
  - school based non-educational services such as health, recreational, social and nutritional

- parent-school interaction and parental access to information
  - reporting methodology of student achievements and standards
  - effectiveness of the school in meeting its objectives
  - staff selection if board policy encourages same
  - other issues referred by the board or principal. (P. 94, 95, 99, 100)
20. The Commission recommends that teachers, as the single most important component in the delivery of education, be encouraged to participate in the operation of the school and as full members of the school advisory council. (P. 99, 100)

For students and their parents the local school and what happens therein is their highest priority. Principals must have the opportunity and obligation to be more accountable for their entire school operation. This requires administrative skills beyond that expected of classroom teachers. Qualities that make a teacher effective are not always the same as the qualities required of a good principal. Parents, teachers, students, support staff and the principal must, and must be allowed to, take a more active role in determining the operation of the school. A collegial approach is seen as the most appropriate. Schools should be focal points of community activity. It is appropriate to consider delivery of non-educational services in conjunction with, but not as a replacement of, basic education. The key to this will be the rationalization of funding and staffing in order to prevent the expectation that school divisions and teachers provide all services with only an education budget.

### C. PERMEABILITY OF BOUNDARIES

21. The Commission recommends that school division boundaries no longer be the primary factor in determining student/parent choice of schools. (P. 77-80)
22. The Commission recommends that school division boundaries be used only for administrative and tax collection purposes. (P. 77-80)
23. The Commission recommends that parents and students be allowed to exercise increased freedom to choose the school to be attended, such increased choice to be restricted only by the following limitations:
- parents/students to serve notice of desired school choice by at least March 30 for the following September school term, in order that both the home and the receiving divisions may plan for staffing, space, bussing, and any other requirements;
  - proposed receiving division to determine if space is available at the proposed school;
  - home division to be responsible for transportation if the school of choice is the closest appropriate school in that division;
  - the receiving neighboring division to be responsible for transportation if the school of choice in the neighboring division is closer than the closest appropriate school in the home division;
  - the parent/student to be responsible for transportation if the choice of school is any other than the closest in the home division or a closer school in a neighboring division;

- allocation of regular and transportation grants and residual fees as set forth in recommendation no. 25. (P. 77-80)
24. The Commission recommends that negotiations be undertaken at the Minister/Deputy Minister level between Manitoba and Saskatchewan initially, and Ontario subsequently, for the purpose of reducing the barriers to education caused by the existence of provincial borders. The intent is to ensure that the same permeability of provincial boundaries is achieved as these recommendations would provide relative to Manitoba school division boundaries. (P. 25)

One of the major improvements that can be made to the present system is to remove the impediments that boundaries constitute in their present form. As fences that keep students in and brick walls that keep students out, they present one of the most frustrating and antagonizing aspects of education governance. By simplifying and expanding school choice and minimizing the negative effects of divisional boundaries, the boundaries themselves can be made more permanent and more coincident with other service confines such as municipal boundaries. This could make property taxation more understandable. It can also simplify and reduce the costs of preparation for and conduct of both municipal and school board elections.

#### D. RESIDUAL FEES (Tuition Fees for Non-Resident Students)

25. The Commission recommends that a simplified system of residual fees be implemented to complement the improved freedom of choice of schools and reduced impediments in crossing school division boundaries, including the following components:
- the division which educates a student would receive the base grant from the Department of Education and Training;
  - the division responsible for and actually transporting an eligible student would receive the transportation grant, regardless of the student's home division;
  - regionally established residual fees to be determined in consultation with MASBO and the Minister's Advisory Committee on Education Finance would be electronically transferred between divisions at the Schools' Finance Branch;
  - special levies raised in the home division would be retained. (P. 81-84)

This simplified form of transferring resources from generating source location to the division that provides the education will remove even more of the impediments that existing boundaries create. There would be no debate about whether or not residual fees are charged or paid, how much they are and who pays them. It would improve equity and ensure that the division making the effort to educate the student is appropriately funded, without proliferation of inter-divisional accounting or negotiations at the borders themselves. These changes, in tandem with the improved permeability of boundaries would help remove many of the antagonisms in the existing delivery system.

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### E. ADMINISTRATION, PERSONNEL MATTERS AND DISTRIBUTION OF ASSETS

26. The Commission recommends that any changes to school division/district boundaries be undertaken with great respect for the anxiety such changes will create. Actions to be taken to minimize that anxiety and respect the rights of individuals in the system should include:
- long term notice by the Minister of intended changes allowing for appropriate planning by affected parties;
  - negotiation of future collective agreements, mindful of planned change dates and a need to correlate expiry dates of new contracts;
  - allowance for contracts which extend beyond the implementation dates of the creation of new divisions to accompany their members into the new division. The new employer should respect the provisions of the contracts until their expiration at which time new agreements should be achieved through collective bargaining;
  - assurances that divisions with non-union, non-teaching staff treat those staff members fairly in the absence of collective agreements;
  - recognition that senior staff, who may be most affected by change, have not themselves initiated the changes and that special considerations may be required during transition periods. (P. 101-105)
27. The Commission recommends that the pension benefits of non-teaching employees not be adversely affected as a result of any change to division boundaries and that consideration be given by all new divisions to the establishment of a single defined benefit pension plan for all non-teaching employees. (P. 101-105)
28. The Commission recommends that assets including schools and any surplus funds at the time of implementation of a new division accompany divisions and districts into the new division. Where existing divisions are dissected such that schools change divisional affiliations, then portioning of assets will be required. This should be accomplished by fractionating the portioned special levy assessment in accordance with the areas being realigned. This should apply as well to revenue received from the sale of administration or service buildings which are rendered surplus by the formation of new school divisions. A 5 year limitation should be placed on this arrangement. (P. 104, 105)

Any form of change will cause disruption and anxiety. Change handled insensitively will only amplify the problems. Long term notice and clear statements of intents will help minimize the problems and allow individuals to participate constructively in the process.

### F. TAXATION AND ASSESSMENT

29. The Commission recommends that as long as property continues to be a source of education funding, then all property, including that within parks, should be assessed, included within school division boundaries and taxed for both the education support levy and the local special levy. (P. 67-74)

An inequity exists now since property in parks is not assessed and taxed on the same basis as other property. The Commission is not commenting on the appropriateness of property as a source for education funding in making this recommendation. This relates only to the innate unfairness of the existing application. This recommendation would also incorporate over \$31,000,000 worth of assessed property into school divisions. These properties are presently subject to the provincial education support levy but escape the special levy for local school divisions. Eliminating these anomalies would render the system more equitable.

#### G. SCHOOL CLOSURES

30. The Commission recommends that regulations be passed requiring school boards to have a 2/3 majority vote in order to close any school during the implementation period of the Boundaries Review Commission's recommendations and for a further period of 3 years following the date of inauguration of the new divisions. (P. 61, 121)

The Commission is concerned that some may incorrectly interpret that integration and reduction of school division administrations and school boards will necessitate or directly cause school closures. This is not the case and the Commission is definitely not advocating either school closures or increased bussing of students. Such decisions should be made by local school boards based on sound logic pertaining to each situation individually. Rationalization of senior management and school trustees is possible without negatively affecting schools. In fact, all of the Commission's recommendations are designed to help maintain viable schools and the valuable student/teacher relationships that form the basis of our education system. Properly implemented, the recommendations can lead to maintenance of more students closer to home than would be possible by perpetuating the present system.

#### H. SCHOOL DIVISION RESTRUCTURING

31. The Commission recommends that over a 3 year period, the 57 existing school divisions and districts in Manitoba be reduced to 21 as detailed on the maps immediately following this section and in accordance with the implementation plan included in section VIII. (P. 106-124)
32. The Commission recommends that the 10 Winnipeg area school divisions be reduced to 4 using primarily the Red and Assiniboine Rivers as natural boundaries, and integrating St. Norbert, St. Adolphe, Ile-des-Chênes and Lorette areas within the 4 new divisions (P. 106-112)
33. The Commission recommends that the 34 divisions and districts beyond Winnipeg (excluding the new Francophone Division, Frontier and Northern divisions) be reduced to



13, these new divisions to follow as closely as possible groupings of municipal boundaries and to incorporate whole existing divisions wherever practical. (P. 112-121)

34. The Commission recommends that the 7 northern and remote divisions and districts be integrated to form 2 new divisions, with separate financial arrangements and special levy rates in each community, recognizing special contracts that exist with major employers in some centers. (P. 122-124)
35. The Commission recommends that Frontier School Division remain basically unchanged with the exception that Falcon Beach School be transferred to the new South-East School Division. (P. 122-124)
36. The Commission recommends that the Special Revenue Districts of Pine Falls, Pointe du Bois and Whiteshell be integrated into the new Agassiz-Lord Selkirk School Division with recognition of the special financial arrangements existing at each location. (P. 122-124)
37. The Commission recommends that the remote school district of Sprague be integrated into the new South-East School Division. (P. 124)
38. The Commission recommends that the new Francophone School Division continue in the format legislated in 1994. (P. 88-90)

The implications of changes to the number of school divisions were discussed at length in Chapter VI entitled *Future Educational and Financial Implications of Change*. In the Winnipeg case the Commission recommends 4 divisions using mostly natural boundaries in order to achieve simplicity, balance and symmetry. While reduction to one division had the highest potential for both educational improvements and financial savings, the overriding need to provide balance and to mitigate the negative results of dominance became paramount.

With the exception of Elmwood, Ward 1 of Winnipeg No. 1 (South of the Assiniboine River), Brooklands and St. Norbert, divisions would be integrated as whole divisions. St. Norbert is a part of Seine River School Division No. 14 although it is an integral portion of the City of Winnipeg. The other 3 areas would be integrated with more logical neighborhoods. Additionally, St. Adolphe, Ile-des-Chênes and Lorette would be incorporated as an integral part of the new Winnipeg South-East School Division. Their relationship with St. Vital and St. Boniface is seen as more appropriate than with the South-East School Division (incorporating Hanover, Boundary, Sprague, and rural portions of Seine River and Red River) due to their proximity to the City, strong French Immersion programming and the fact that many elementary students from this area attend Winnipeg high schools (most of St. Adolphe).

In the rural area the consequences of status quo will be very negative educationally if allowed to continue. While the socio-economic impacts of change would also be negative in areas of reducing population, the Commission is recommending the choices that have the best

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educational promise for students, who all agree, must be the primary focus in this process. The few rural areas that are growing can benefit from the economies of scale that accompany growth. In most cases, divisions would be integrated relatively intact as was suggested by many presenters. However, boundary lines have been straightened and wherever possible are coincident with municipal boundaries in order to achieve a higher level of understanding, rationalization of taxation and increased simplicity in preparation for and conduct of elections.

In Northern Manitoba, smaller districts could benefit from integration with larger centers, as part of a larger school division. Each community would be allowed to maintain its individuality through separate financial arrangements and a variation of school-based management, utilizing a strong local school advisory council. The Commission did not see merit in extending the Frontier School Division to other areas, especially to those with a local assessment and tax base, since Frontier serves primarily areas without such a base.

#### I. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

39. The Commission recommends that the Minister initiate the creation of a multi-disciplinary Implementation Committee immediately after the decision to proceed with implementation of the recommendations made respecting division restructuring. (P. 156-159)
40. The Commission recommends that, upon activation, the Implementation Committee consist of a small group of full-time staff with effective, knowledgeable leadership to be based in the Department of Education and Training, supplemented by representation from the major education associations, together with advice from other pertinent unions and associations representing non-teaching staff at appropriate times during the implementation period. (P. 156-159)
41. The Commission recommends that the implementation plan, as detailed in Section VIII of this report, be adopted including a 3 year phase-in period in order to allow for appropriate planning to take place and in order to accomplish the changes at the lowest possible cost, both in terms of human anxiety and financial resources. (P. 156-159)
42. The Commission recommends that the Board of Reference be reactivated in its present form immediately upon dissolution of the Boundaries Review Commission and that it continue to perform its functions relating to transfer of lands between and among school divisions until and unless it is no longer required. (P. 159)
43. The Commission recommends that regular reviews of school division boundaries be legislated so that they are automatically required and conducted every 10 years.