

## **VIII. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

Change of any kind can create anxiety and change without proper planning can be traumatic. The Commission has given considerable thought to the methodology for achieving change with a minimum of disruption and the highest opportunity for success.

### **IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE**

The most critical component of this implementation plan involves the immediate creation of a multi-disciplinary Implementation Committee. Due to the magnitude of the task, it will be necessary to have a small group of permanent staff throughout the implementation period supplemented by appropriate departmental staff and representation from the major education associations. The Commission has consulted with the associations concerning an implementation plan for whatever changes are approved and they are not only supportive of such a plan but they are most anxious to participate in a constructive way. Due to its important role, the Schools' Finance Branch of the Department should have high level representation on the Implementation Committee.

The major education associations (MAST, MASS, MASBO and MTS) should be invited to have full participation membership on the Implementation Committee. They have provided the Commission with valuable advice and cooperation throughout the review and a continuing cooperative approach to future changes will result in success. At various appropriate times advice should also be sought from other non-union school division staff and from unions or associations which represent many non-teaching staff around the Province.

### **DIVISIONAL WORKING GROUPS**

As soon as the Minister of Education and Training announces the intentions with respect to implementation of changes that involve existing school divisions and districts, working groups should be formed at the division level incorporating elected and administrative representatives from each of the affected divisions or districts. For example, if three existing divisions or districts were slated to become one division, then a working group consisting of a trustee and administrator from each of those three divisions should constitute a planning committee to work towards the forthcoming changes. If this is done early in the process, many of the problems that change engenders could be minimized. There would be a requirement for the creation of new ward boundaries within the new division and it is suggested that this process should be initiated

immediately upon announcement of direction by the Minister. There are numerous other planning issues that will need to be addressed prior to inauguration of the new divisional school board. These working groups should work in close conjunction with the provincial implementation committee in planning for orderly transition.

#### PHASE IN OF RECOMMENDATIONS

While the Boundaries Commission Review process has been an incredibly concentrated, comprehensive and taxing process, it is actually the easiest part of the transition period. It is always the implementation phase of proposed change that is the most difficult to accomplish. Change in the education system will be made more difficult by the fact that most divisions and districts are now struggling to maintain their present operations. There is little time and resources available to devote to the dynamics of change itself. The Department of Education and Training will be severely taxed to provide the necessary leadership and support for this process as well. There is no doubt that in order to achieve success, additional interim resources will need to be assigned to this process. It is not achievable by part-time work of individuals with other higher priorities.

In order to achieve success, the Commission is recommending that the process be broken down into manageable portions. This should involve a 3 year phase in period with the major components delineated as follows:

- Phase 1. Administrative and regulatory changes relating to making boundaries more permeable, simplifying the residual fee system, and increasing choice of schools for students and parents. These regulations should be implemented in year 1 irrespective of whether or not the changes recommended in phases 2 and 3 proceed immediately.
- Phase 2. Reduction of the 10 Winnipeg school divisions to 4 should be implemented at year 2 in the process. It would be physically impossible to approach changes throughout the entire province simultaneously considering the resources available to accomplish the change and the magnitude of the job. It is therefore recommended that the Implementation Committee's efforts be focussed firstly in the Winnipeg area. Depending upon the timing of a Government decision in this regard, year 2 will likely fall between the normal 1995 and 1998 election years. If year 2 is in the fall of 1996 then it is suggested that Winnipeg based school division trustees be extended for one year and that election of trustees for the new division be held just prior to initiation of the new divisional operations. If year 2 becomes the fall of 1997 then it is suggested that trustees elected in 1995 be elected for two year terms only, followed by election of the new board.
- Phase 3. Changes in areas of the province beyond the Winnipeg based school divisions should be implemented in year 3 of the process. This will allow for a longer planning period in areas where complications and consequences are greatest. It will also allow for the Implementation Committee to have developed its

knowledge and processes in a concentrated zone within the Winnipeg area prior to addressing the more complicated problems of assimilating rural divisions and districts. Rural and northern jurisdictions will have more opportunity to determine how changes to educational governance are accomplished in their areas and also how potential negative socio-economic impacts can be minimized.

If year 3 were to be the fall of 1997 then it is suggested that the trustees elected in 1995 be in office for two year terms followed by an election of the trustees for the new divisions just prior to initiation of operations. If the process is delayed at the front end, it is conceivable that elections for the new rural and northern boards could coincide with the 1998 elections.

The review process has already extracted a toll in personal anxiety. Many people in the education system are waiting with great anticipation for the results of this review and the Government's response to it. It is recommended that the Minister of Education and Training and Cabinet determine the future direction as soon as is practically possible and announce those intentions with timelines attached. Change itself creates problems. Anticipation of change without direction creates even worse problems. The time is right for expeditious and clear leadership in this context.

#### VOLUNTARY CHANGE

During the review process, the Commission encountered advice with respect to allowing change to take place by itself i.e., voluntary rationalization. While this type of process is more democratic and participatory, it is even more evident that voluntary change very seldom happens. There are no major impediments at the present time preventing divisions from rationalizing on their own. However, stationary inertia and turf protection has preempted any logical rationalizations. This experience is evident across Canada and indeed across North America. It is therefore important for the Minister to adopt a process whereby the goals are clearly stated and those most affected be allowed to participate in management of the process by which change is achieved. Goals complete with timelines are likely to be the most successful.

#### ACCELERATED RATIONALIZATION

Within the implementation plan consideration should be given to allowing acceleration of integration in advance of the primary 3 year plan. It is likely that some areas will recognize the benefits and necessity of integration and will want to move more quickly than the plan schedule. This can be accomplished by inter-divisional cooperation, shared service agreements and joint staffing arrangements even in advance of the formal integration process. The Commission has seen evidence of this already and forward thinking should be encouraged. Some complications could precipitate creative tasks for sections of the Department such as the Schools' Finance Branch if they are required to work with several variations of the system simultaneously.

However, use of a positive proactive attitude by competent staff can overcome these problems in the interest of the ultimate goal of ensuring that all possible resources are channelled as closely to the classroom level as is achievable.

#### DISPUTE RESOLUTION COMMITTEE

It is inevitable that throughout a 3 or 4 year implementation period a number of issues will arise which will require resolution beyond the capability of the participants. Experience during the implementation of the new Francophone School Division in Manitoba has shown that there are a number of issues that can cause considerable problems. It would be expeditious if resolution of these issues could be accomplished without resorting to the legal process. It is therefore recommended that a special Dispute Resolution Committee be formulated to resolve disputes between and among divisions and districts leading up to the implementation of the new divisions and districts and for one year following the final phase. Under the present legislation, such disputes would have to be settled by the Minister of Education and Training. The Minister's role should be reserved for extremely serious situations and the majority of issues should be dealt with by a Dispute Resolution Committee.

#### BOARD OF REFERENCE

The Board of Reference has been suspended throughout the period of operation of the Boundaries Review Commission. Implementation of changes to school division boundaries as recommended by the Commission will require at least 3 years to implement properly. In the meantime, there are numerous situations where individual property owners wish to achieve changes that can only be accommodated by a functional Board of Reference. As of November, 1994 there were at least 15 pending applications for the Board of Reference. Each of these situations is very important to the property owners and their children and they should be dealt with expeditiously. It is therefore recommended that the Board of Reference be reconstituted immediately upon the termination of the Boundaries Review Commission. If the Boundaries Review recommendations are adopted, the necessity of moving boundaries will be reduced in the future. Boundaries will become more permanent and choices of school location will be based more on common sense than the actual existence of a line on a map. The role of the Board of Reference will thus be substantially reduced and there may be very little requirement for continued existence in its present format after implementation of the recommendations contained in this report. There will, however, always be a requirement for a mechanism for achieving desired alterations to boundaries.