

AMALGAMATION UPDATE

A NEWSLETTER ABOUT MANITOBA SCHOOL DIVISION AMALGAMATIONS

Volume No. 2

March 6, 2002

Since announcing the amalgamation of school divisions in early November, substantial progress has been made by trustees and administrators working together to implement these important changes.

Most have now agreed on names for their new school divisions, and on ward structures through which the new board members will be elected. To date only two groups have requested the services of an arbitrator to resolve this matter.

This represents remarkable progress during an interval in which boards are also dealing with the challenges of establishing budgets for the coming school year.

My office and staff of the Department of Education, Training and Youth continue to be available to assist in implementing these amalgamations. To everyone involved, my sincere thanks and congratulations for the commendable work to date. Your efforts will help ensure that the new school divisions to be established later this year will enjoy every opportunity to achieve extraordinary success in serving their students and communities.

Honourable Drew Caldwell, Minister
Education, Training and Youth

New Amalgamation Identities Achieved

In recent weeks, several school boards have announced the success of their cooperative efforts in agreeing upon a new school division name. The Minister has appreciated being advised of the selection of these new names and looks forward to hearing of the new identities of amalgamating divisions not yet announced. New identities announced at the time of release of this publication include:

Border Land School Division

Boundary, Rhineland, Sprague & Red
River School Divisions

Louis Riel School Division

St. Vital & St. Boniface School Divisions

Mountain View School Division

Dauphin-Ochre, Duck Mountain &
Intermountain School Divisions

Pembina Trails School Division

Assiniboine South & Fort Garry School
Divisions

<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/metks4/parent/amalgamation>

New Amalgamation Identities Achieved (continued)

Red River Valley School Division
Red River & Morris-Macdonald School
Divisions

Southwest Horizon School Division
Antler River & Souris Valley School
Divisions

Congratulations to boards on achieving consensus on new division names! Best wishes are extended as amalgamating partners build upon the excitement of their new identities!

No Numbers in School Division Names

The practice of using numbers as part of the public and corporate names of school divisions will be discontinued. As amalgamating school divisions confirm new identities, numbers will simply not be included as part of the new names.

Divisions unaffected by amalgamation should discontinue using a number as part of their public names as expediently as possible; however, it is expected that

this will occur as part of a normal process of replacing or reordering items and material stock, such as letterhead etc.

The corporate names of all school divisions will become effective when the Bill amending The Public Schools Act is proclaimed and accompanying regulations are registered and gazetted.

School Board By-laws — Division Names, Ward Structure and Trustee Representation

As amalgamating school boards achieve consensus on a new name, ward structure and number of trustees (not fewer than five or more than nine, notwithstanding two exceptions where the maximum is 11 trustees), boards are advised to pass parallel by-laws affirming these decisions. As set out in Section 57(7) of The Public Schools Act and as contemplated by Section 6 of The Local Authorities Elections Act, by-laws reflecting decisions of this nature must be approved in writing by the

Minister of Education, Training and Youth.

By-laws must receive three readings and have been passed by the respective boards before they are forwarded for approval.

The Minister looks forward to receiving these by-laws and will support the collaborative efforts of amalgamating boards by expediently reviewing and returning approved by-laws.

Differential Mill Rates

Boards are reminded to carefully review the implications of setting their 2002 Special Levy in respect of any potential need for differential mill rates for the amalgamated division. Under existing legislation, the 2002 tax year forms the base year for differential mill rates. During the following three-year period (2003 – 2005), differential mill rates under the amalgamated division cannot exceed the highest mill rate set by any partner division in 2002 until the rates

are harmonized.

Amalgamating divisions need to pay close attention to this legislative provision and should be working with their partners to review any differential mill rate implications relative to finalization of 2002/2003 budgets and the allocation percentages used to apportion the 2002/2003 special requirement to the 2002 special levy.

Severance costs excluded from administration cost caps

School boards are advised that there is no expectation that the announced school division administration cost limits will apply to severance package costs that may arise as a direct result of amalgamation. Further information about reporting these costs will be

included in the instructions section of the financial statement to school divisions. Boards are also reminded that the requirement to meet the administration limits does not occur until 2003/04.

Reminders

- All school boards are reminded that a by-law will also be necessary to appoint electoral officials (enumerator, revising and returning officers). Ministerial approval of these by-laws is not necessary.
- School boards are encouraged to responsibly consider and exercise authority to enter into contractual

obligations and employment agreements during the process of amalgamation. These decisions can clearly impact the long-term obligations of amalgamating school divisions. An approach of consensus among the involved boards should be used before contractual and employment obligations that endure beyond the life of current boards are undertaken.

Elections Manitoba contacts

The preparation of accurate voters lists for the October 23 school board election may be aided by the enumeration conducted for the provincial election held on September 21, 1999.

Returning officers appointed by school boards may contact Elections Manitoba to request a copy of the 1999 voters list in either electronic or paper format. It may also be possible to develop customized voter list information if Elections Manitoba is provided with a

good description of your school division boundaries. A release must be signed before Elections Manitoba can provide this data. The Statement of Votes, which contains polling subdivision maps for the 57 electoral divisions in Manitoba and identifies the number of registered voters by area, is also available on request.

To obtain this data, contact Elections Manitoba at 945-3225 or toll-free at 1-800-282-8069.

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth contacts

Questions about the amalgamation initiative should be directed to:

Brian Hanson
Director
Education Administration Services
Room 507 - 1181 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg MB R3G 0T3
945-7391

Steve Power
Director
Schools' Finance Branch
Room 511 - 1181 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3G 0T3
945-0515