BRANDON SCHOOL DIVISION

"Accepting the Challenge"

BRANDON SCHOOL DIVISION

January 5, 2011

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF THE REGULAR MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

TO BE HELD MONDAY, JANUARY 10, 2011 AT 7:00 P.M.

J. L. MILNE BOARDROOM, ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

1031 - 6TH STREET, BRANDON, MANITOBA

G.F. Barnes
Secretary-Treasurer

AGENDA

1.00 AGENDA/MINUTES:

1.01 Reference to Statement of Board Operations

1.02 Approval of Agenda

1.03 Adoption of Minutes of Previous Meetings

a) Regular Board Meeting, December 13, 2010.
Adopt.

b) Special Board Meeting, December 15, 2010.
Adopt.

2.00 GOVERNANCE MATTERS:

2.01 Presentations For Information

Community Drug and Alcohol Education Coalition Initiative – Y Revolution – T. Osiowy & L. Jardine.

2.02 Reports of Committees

a)	Finance Committee Minutes	(Buff)	L. Ross
b)	Divisional Futures & Community Relations Committee Minutes - December 10, 2010 - January 4, 2010	(Grey)	M. Snelling
c)	Personnel Committee Meeting	(Pink)	L. Ross
d)	Education Committee Meeting	(Green)	M. Sefton
e)	Policy Review Committee Meeting	(Pink)	P. Bartlette
f)	Other		

2.03 Delegations and Petitions

2.04 Communications for Action

a) Hugh Coburn, President, Manitoba School Boards Association, December 9, 2010, inviting nominations for the 2011 Manitoba School Boards Presidents' Council Award. The awards celebrates: exemplary service and outstanding achievement beyond the requirements of the position in the areas of trusteeship, classroom teaching, administration or educational leadership; demonstrated innovative thinking and personal initiatives directed at ensuring success for Manitoba students; lasting and pervasive impact on some facet of public education. The attached nomination form is to be forwarded to the MSBA office by Friday, February 11, 2010. (Appendix "A").

Refer Business Arising.

b) Carolyn Duhamel, Executive Director, Manitoba School Boards Association, December 21, 2010, enclosing a document which was presented to the NDP caucus members at a meeting held on November 9, 2010. The document articulates the key policy priorities which have been the focus of the association's advocacy efforts with these various organizations and agencies over the past several months. The Executive resolutions which appear in the regional meeting package reflect particular aspects of these policy priorities. The facilitated afternoon discussion on school board governance in Manitoba will provide the opportunity for all school boards to consider ways to advance this particular priority both at the provincial and local levels. To ensure a robust and fruitful exchange about these policy priorities at the January regional meetings, they encourage boards to review the enclosed document and the regional meeting materials prior to the regional meeting. (Appendix "B").

Refer Business Arising.

c) Ron Lemieux, Minister of Local Government, December 23, 2010, thanking the Board for the follow-up letter regarding the taxation of property owned by school divisions and noting the Division has asked for clarification about the taxation of vacant land owned by school divisions, and also requested that *The Municipal Assessment Act* be amended to ensure that an exemption is provided for such properties. Property tax exemptions under *The Municipal Assessment Act* are limited to those properties that provide a broad public

benefit. Schools are recognized as important public institutions and therefore have a long-standing property tax exemption. However, school divisions have always been required to pay property taxes on vacant land, given that such land is not currently being used as a school. The Brandon School Division may wish to review its existing land holdings to determine if its vacant land continues to be required for future program needs. Property tax exemptions are also limited recognizing the impact to taxing jurisdictions as well as property owners. Expanding property tax exemptions under the Act requires careful consideration of the impact on the property tax base of taxing jurisdictions, both municipal and school. The impact of exemptions on property taxes paid by all other property owners in the taxing jurisdiction also needs to be taken into account. (Appendix "C").

Refer Business Arising.

2.05 BUSINESS ARISING

- From Previous Delegation

Mr. D. Hardy, President, Brandon Teacher's Association, regarding staffing.

- From Board Agenda

a) Correspondence from Hugh Coburn, President, Manitoba School Boards Association, from Communications for Action 2.04a), inviting nominations for the 2011 Manitoba School Boards Presidents' Council Award.

b) Correspondence from Carolyn Duhamel, Executive Director, Manitoba School Boards Association, from Communications for Action 2.04b), enclosing a document which was presented to the NDP caucus members at a meeting held on November 9, 2010 and encouraging boards to review the enclosed document and the regional meeting materials prior to the regional meeting.

c) Correspondence from Ron Lemieux, Minister of Local Government, from Communications for Action 2.04c), thanking the Board for the follow-up letter regarding the taxation of property owned by school divisions and providing clarification about the taxation of vacant land owned by school divisions, and the division's request that *The Municipal Assessment Act* be amended to ensure that an exemption is provided for such properties.

- MSBA issues (last meeting of the month)

- From Report of Senior Administration

a) School Reports - NIL

b) Learning Support Services Presentation – Literacy – C. Nevill

c) Presentation of the Implementation of BSD Strategic Plan (2008-2011) Quarterly Report – December 13, 2010 (Deferred from December 13, 2010 Board Meeting).

d) Items from Senior Administration Report

2.06 Motions

01/2011 That the current audit contract with BDO Dunwoody be extended for the 2010/2011 fiscal year in the amount of $18,000 and the audit services to be retendered in 2011.

02/2011 That the Visual Performing Arts program – Sanctuary – "Hope for Darfur" at École Neelin High School be nominated by the Board of Trustees for the Manitoba School Boards Association 2011 Premier Award for School Board Innovation.

2.07 Bylaws

1st Reading
That By-Law 1/2011 being a by-law to regulate the proceedings of the Board of Trustees of the Brandon School Division and repealing By-Law 1/2009 passed January 26, 2009 be now read for the first time.

1st Reading
That By-Law 2/2011 being a borrowing by-law in the amount of $1,512,700.00 upon the credit of the Division by the issue and sale of a debenture to meet partial costs for construction of the following projects: Meadows School Grooming Room; Crocus Plains Roof Replacement; Crocus Plains Air Condensing Unit Replacement; Green Acres Roof Replacement; Kirkcaldy Chilled Water/Heat Exchanger; and Valleyview Emergency Roof Replacement be now read for the first time.

2.08 Giving of Notice

I hereby give notice that at the next Regular meeting of the Board of Trustees I, or someone in my stead will introduce By-Law 3/2011 for the purpose of authorizing the borrowing of monies upon the credit of the Division to meet expenditures for current operations for the fiscal period July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011.

2.09 Inquiries

2.09a) Public Inquiries (last meeting of each month – max. 15 minutes)

2.09b) Trustee Inquiries

3.00 ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION:

3.01 Report of Senior Administration

Receive and File.

3.02 Communications for Information

a) Drew Caldwell, MLA, Brandon East, December 7, 2010, acknowledging receipt of the Board's letter of November 30, 2010 seeking a meeting with Minister Allan and other officials to discuss the PSFB decision-making process. He notes he has been in communication with the Minister's office in this regard and staff will follow up with Dr. Michaels to arrange a suitable date to meet.

Receive and File.

b) Terry Osiowy, Principal, Crocus Plains Regional Secondary High School, December 10, 2010 noting on Friday, November 26, 2010 the Culinary Arts teacher, Mr. Paul Lemire, and students from the schools Culinary Arts program showcased their talents at the Brandon Regional Health Centre Foundation's Annual Rise'n Shine Breakfast in support of the Tree of Lights Campaign. The students served approximately 380 guests with many guests commenting on the professionalism and friendliness of the students. According to the Executive Director the students were extremely helpful and truly ran the event following their arrival. The Board of Trustees of the BRHA appreciated the teacher's professionalism and the "extras" that were brought to the event.

Receive and File.

c) Terry Osiowy, Principal, Crocus Plains Regional Secondary High School, December 10, 2010, advising of the school's successful "Operation Christmas Child" program organized by the school's student council. On November 22, 2010 the student council delivered 95 filled shoe boxes to the Richmond Park Mennonite Brethren Church as part of the school's campaign to promote volunteerism, generosity and global awareness amongst the students.

Receive and File.

d) Barb Gribben, Secretary, CUPE Local 737, December 10, 2010, advising of the elected Executive Officers for CUPE Local 737 for 2011.

Receive and File.

e) Dianne Zuk, Chair, Board of Trustees, Pembina Trails School Division, December 13, 2010, nominating Jacquie Field as a candidate for the position of Manitoba School Boards Association Vice-President for Boards over 6,000 students.

Receive and File.

f) Hugh Coburn, President, Manitoba School Boards Association, December 13, 2010, addressed to The Honourable Nancy Allan, Minister of Education, referencing the MSBA meeting with the NDP Caucus members on November 9, 2010 and enclosing a copy of an August 2010 Court ruling regarding education property tax exemption status from the Manitoba and Saskatchewan Tax Reporter. They noted they are extremely concerned about the precedent setting nature of this ruling and the potential implications for Manitoba public schools. Given the large number of business enterprises providing some form of education or training programs for their staff, it is conceivable that there will be many more such property tax exemptions in the future with consequent reductions in tax revenues available to support programs and services in local schools. They ask the Manitoba Government to review this case and take appropriate steps to address the matter as speedily as possible.

Receive and File.

g) Ms. Della Perih, Vice-Chairperson, Board of Trustees, Mountain View School Division, December 14, 2010 nominating Mr. Floyd Martens as vice-president of the Manitoba School Boards Association.

Receive and File.

h) Carolyn Duhamel, Executive Director, Manitoba School Boards Association, December 21, 2010, enclosing the 2011 Regional Meeting Agenda packages and asking that they be distributed to all trustees as soon as possible.
Receive and File.

i) Deacon John MacKenzie, President, Western Manitoba Seniors Non-Profit Housing Co-Op, December 23, 2010, accepting the Board's apology for the recent mishandling of their $5,000 deposit. They also appreciated the apology in the interview on CKLQ radio, and the letter written to the editor in the December 23, 2010 Brandon Sun. The Board's quick attention to solving the matter is appreciated.
Receive and File.

3.03 Announcements

a) Facilities/Transportation Committee Meeting – 9:30 a.m., Tuesday, January 11, 2011, Board Room. **(Note Time Change)**

b) Personnel Committee Meeting – 11:00 a.m., Tuesday, January 11, 2011, Board Room.

c) Finance Committee Meeting – 2:00 p.m., Thursday, January 13, 2011, Board Room.

d) Divisional Futures and Community Relations Committee Meeting, 11:30 a.m., Friday, January 14, 2011, Board Room.

e) Special Board Meeting – Preliminary Budget Meeting – 7:00 p.m., Monday, January 17, 2011, Board Room.

f) MSBA Region 1 Collective Bargaining Meeting – 9:00 a.m., Tuesday, January 18, 2011, Minnedosa, Manitoba.

g) Division/Chamber Ad-Hoc Committee Meeting – 11:30 a.m., Tuesday, January 18, 2011, Board Room.

h) Education Committee Meeting – 11:00 a.m., Wednesday, January 19, 2011, Board Room.

i) Workplace Safety and Health Committee Meeting – 1:00 p.m., Wednesday, January 19, 2011, Board Room.

j) MSBA Region 1 Meeting – 9:30 a.m., Monday, January 24, 2011, Elkhorn Resort and Conference Centre.

k) NEXT REGULAR BOARD MEETING – 7:00 p.m., Monday, January 24, 2011, Board Room.

4.00 IN CAMERA DISCUSSION:

4.01 Student Issues

- Reports

- Trustee Inquiries

4.02 Personnel Matters

- Reports

a) Confidential #1 – Personnel Report.

- Trustee Inquiries

4.03 Property Matters/Tenders

- Reports

- Trustee Inquiries

4.04 Board Operations

- Reports

- Trustee Inquiries

5.00 ADJOURNMENT

MANITOBA
School Boards
ASSOCIATION

Appendix A

LEADERSHIP, ADVOCACY AND SERVICE FOR MANITOBA'S PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS

December 9, 2010

TO: *All School Boards*
MB Education, Citizenship and Youth
Manitoba Teachers' Society
MB Association of School Superintendents
MB Assoc. of School Business Officials
MB Association of Parent Councils
MB Schools Improvement Program
Faculties of Education

FROM: Hugh Coburn, President

RE: Presidents' Council Award

On behalf of the Manitoba School Boards Association Executive, I am pleased to invite nominations for the 2011 Manitoba School Boards Presidents' Council Award. Successful student learning in Manitoba public schools is dependent upon and supported by the contributions of many people - **parents and community partners, support staff, teachers, administrators, and trustees across the province**. This award is intended to recognize significant contributions to public education from all of these sectors.

More specifically, the Manitoba School Boards Association Presidents' Council Award celebrates:

- exemplary service and outstanding achievement **beyond the requirements of the position** in the areas of trusteeship, classroom teaching, administration or educational leadership;
- demonstrated innovative thinking and personal initiatives directed at ensuring success for Manitoba students;
- lasting and pervasive impact on some facet of public education.

The presentation of the Award will be made at the Manitoba School Boards annual Convention to be held on March 17, 2011. The award may not be awarded posthumously.

The Manitoba School Boards Association invites member school boards, education partner organizations and other groups or agencies actively involved in the public education system to submit nominations for the 2011 Manitoba School Boards Association Presidents' Council Award. Where a nominee is not selected to receive the award in any given year, the nomination may be re-submitted for consideration in subsequent years. Nominations and supporting documentation received by the Association will be deemed confidential information for the sole use of the Selection Committee.

The Selection Committee consists of the current Manitoba School Boards Association President and Vice-Presidents, as well as the three most immediate Past Presidents who are active trustees. The Executive Director of Manitoba School Boards is an ex-officio member of the Selection Committee.

Nominations for this award will be received in the office until ***Friday, February 11, 2010***. Thank you.

HC/ak

204(a)

191 PROVENCHER BOULEVARD, WINNIPEG, MANITOBA R2H 0G4 | 204.233.1595 | TOLL FREE 1.800.262.8836 | FAX 204.231.1356 | WWW.MBSCHOOLBOARDS.CA

MANITOBA
School Boards
ASSOCIATION

NOMINATION FORM

for the Manitoba School Boards Association

"PRESIDENTS' COUNCIL AWARD"

2011

NAME OF NOMINEE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

_____

_____

_____

PHONE: _____

NOMINATED BY: _____

Supporting rationale for nomination: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

(use additional sheet if required)

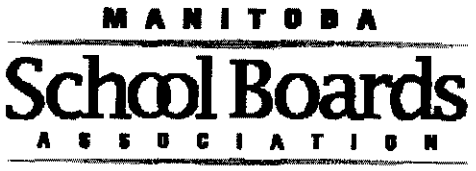
Please forward to the Manitoba School Boards Association office by:

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2011

ATTENTION: BARB UNRAU

191 Provencher Boulevard, Winnipeg, MB R2H 0G4 • (204) 233-1595 • Toll Free 1-800-262-8836 • Fax (204) 231-1356 • www.mast.mb.ca

Appendix B



December 21, 2010

"ACTION REQUEST"

MEMORANDUM

TO: **ALL SCHOOL BOARDS**
cc Provincial Executive

FROM: Carolyn Duhamel, Executive Director

RE: **Association Policy Priorities and Advocacy Activities**

Throughout the course of the year, your provincial association representatives endeavour to meet with education partners, organizations, government department officials, and provincial caucuses to advance the policy priorities of public school boards in Manitoba. The attached document which was presented to NDP Caucus members at the meeting held on November 9, 2010 articulates the key policy priorities which have been the focus of the association's advocacy efforts with these various organizations and agencies over the past several months.

The Executive resolutions which appear in your regional meeting package reflect particular aspects of these policy priorities. **The facilitated afternoon discussion on school board governance in Manitoba** will provide the opportunity for all school boards to consider ways to advance this particular priority both at the provincial and local levels.

To ensure a robust and fruitful exchange about these policy priorities at the January regional meetings, **we respectfully encourage all boards to review the attached document and the regional meeting materials prior to the meeting itself**. In the interim, please feel free to call or e-mail me with any questions you may have about these materials.

On behalf of your Provincial Executive and association staff, I wish you all a safe and restful holiday period. We look forward to meeting with you all over the course of our upcoming January meetings.

CD/bu
Attachment

2.04 b)

Presentation to members of the NDP Caucus

November 9, 2010

MANITOBA
School Boards
ASSOCIATION

LEADERSHIP, ADVOCACY AND SERVICE FOR MANITOBA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Presentation to members of the NDP Caucus

November 9, 2010

The attached brief outlines some of the major issues before the Manitoba School Boards Association and its member school boards in K-12 public education in our province. The issues are presented in two broad categories – student learning needs and education governance.

The issues and recommendations as presented are not intended to be exhaustive in their scope. Rather, they are offered as an invitation to dialogue and collaboration with the province in strengthening our public schools and in ensuring a more robust citizen participation in shaping education for Manitoba children and youth.

Student learning needs

Newcomer students

Aggressive provincial immigration targets of recent years have had and continue to have significant repercussions for Manitoba public schools. The numbers of students requiring intensive supports in the areas of English language learning and social adaptation and acculturation to the Manitoba context have grown exponentially in some regions of the province. Refugee students and those from war-affected countries present additional challenges in that often these students have had no or only minimal formal education and bear the emotional and psychological scars that come with extreme trauma in the formative years.

In many instances, schools' challenges in working with newcomer students are compounded by family circumstances where parents themselves may speak neither official language, where housing is unstable and substandard, and employment opportunities are limited. In these cases, parent's ability to work with the school and to participate actively in their child's education is seriously compromised.

School boards working with the provincial government and with community agencies have implemented a wide range of programs and services to meet the needs of newcomer students, often extending such supports and services to entire families as well. The resulting heavy draw on human, physical and financial resources of school divisions is creating extreme pressure on both school boards and divisional personnel. There are growing concerns among trustees and educators about the capacity of school systems to sustain and expand required programming and services for newcomer students.

Over the past year, the Manitoba School Boards Association (MSBA) and the Student Services Administrators Association of Manitoba (SSAAM) have convened meetings of all major stakeholder organizations to collaborate on addressing the challenges of student services for special needs students in our public schools. This issue of meeting the academic and adaptive needs of newcomer students is one of common concern for all organizations. Together we have identified two key strategies that the MSBA fully supports in meeting this challenge:

(a) that the province of Manitoba create a mechanism for enhanced interdepartmental collaboration in working with community agencies and school divisions to address the challenges for schools and school divisions as a result of immigration to our province; and

(b) that regional wrap-around settlement support services centres be established to meet the needs of newcomer families at the community level.

Early years programming in schools

For the past decade, the Manitoba School Boards Association has worked closely with the Manitoba Child Care Association, Healthy Child Manitoba and education partner associations to

enhance linkages and collaboration between the public school system and pre-school learning and care providers. Emerging early years research over this time frame has contributed to a dramatic shift in school boards' perceptions about early learning and care and in their willingness to take on responsibilities in this area, albeit outside of their mandate as prescribed in *The Public Schools Act.*

Currently, about 43% of licensed child care spaces are located in the public schools of this province. Many school divisions have established community outreach initiatives targeting families of newborns and vulnerable pre-school populations within their respective jurisdictions. Some school divisions offer targeted full day kindergarten programs and a smaller number provide nursery school programming as well. These divisional initiatives, for the most part, are funded through local property tax levies.

Notwithstanding these developments, challenges remain in advancing the integration of pre-school and school system programs and services in Manitoba. While a number of provinces have moved to incorporate pre-school and K-12 learning within a single government department, in our province these are housed within two separate ministries. Where child care centres and schools are co-located, communications and collaboration across ministries can sometimes be a significant stumbling block, as demonstrated this past year in light of new provincial policy direction with regard to controlling visitor access to child care centres.

On a related point, the legal mandate of school boards currently does not encompass pre-school learning and care. And while government policy makes financial provision for the creation of child care centre infrastructure in schools, no such provision exists in support of programming and its associated costs. This factor combined with the pressure which school boards are facing to reduce or limit the draw on local property tax revenues in support of education constitutes a significant disincentive for school boards contemplating program and service extensions to pre-school age populations. The Manitoba School Boards Association appreciates the efforts of the provincial government in recent years to strengthen early learning and care in our province. The Association is grateful for the opportunity to participate actively in the Provincial Healthy Child Manitoba Advisory Committee and the Child Care Regulatory Review Committee. We value as well new opportunities which emerge as with the Child Care in Schools working group involving the Manitoba Child Care Program, the Manitoba Child Care Association and the superintendents and school business officials of our public school divisions. This said, the Association encourages the Government of Manitoba to give consideration to the following issues:

(a) acceleration of government initiatives and improvements to the early learning and care sector;

(b) articulation of criteria for the recognition of and financial support for school division initiated full-day kindergarten and nursery programs; and

(c) exploration of the merits and/or disadvantages to housing pre-school and K-12 sectors within a single provincial government department.

Mental health issues in schools and communities.

There is a significant body of research confirming that mental health issues are increasingly common and widespread within modern societies and that this trend impacts children and youth as much as it does the adult population. Twenge's research (cited in *The Spirit Level*, Wilkinson and Picket, 2009) indicates that "by the late 1980's the average American child was more anxious than child psychiatric patients in the 1950's." The authors go on to point out that among adolescents, rises in anxiety and depression are often accompanied by behavioural problems including crime, alcohol and drugs. A quick read of newspaper headlines or the evening television news on any given day corroborates these general trends.

School personnel are increasingly challenged in attempting to provide mental health counselling and supports for students in our public schools. Qualified staff with the requisite qualifications and expertise are often in short supply. Wait times are frequently unacceptably long for response and service through external providers. And while the cases of extreme disruption in schools occasioned by very troubled students may be few, the repercussions of a major incident can be far reaching and hugely destabilizing for the entire school population and its communities.

Recognizing and appreciating the fiscal challenges before the province, the MSBA nonetheless offers the following recommendations:

(a) greater provincial investment in prevention measures to promote positive mental health at the community level;

(b) greater investments in training programs to address the need for qualified mental health workers in schools and communities; and

(c) increased financial support for school division programming that promotes and supports mental health wellness for school-aged students.

Education governance

Provincial and local decision-making authority

Over the past decade we have witnessed an increasing tendency toward the centralization of education decision-making in provincial and territorial ministries of education. In some instances, the shift has been both dramatic and sudden. In Manitoba, the change has been more gradual but nonetheless evident as demonstrated by provincial policy direction in multiple areas – school division consolidations, administrative expenditure limits, reserve holdings policy, school year and school calendar, property tax levies, program offerings, school configurations, and more recently promotion/retention issues, marking of late assignments, report card formats and scheduling of divisional professional development days.

The Manitoba School Boards Association and its member school boards recognize and accept that stakeholders should be meaningfully involved in the decision-making process and that any

and all of these issues can be extremely controversial in the public arena. We also understand and accept that constituents when unhappy with school board decisions in these areas will not hesitate to call upon provincial representatives and government departments to intervene.

Our concerns with regard to these matters are four-fold:

(a) Given the diversity and the competing interests within school communities on any one issue, what constitutes consensus, permission or agreement for the school board to act?

(b) Critics and opponents of a particular action or decision are generally more vocal and more aggressive than are supporters with the result that the tyranny of the minority often prevails.

(c) There is growing confusion in the public arena as to the role of school boards and an increasing blurring of the delineation between provincial government and local school board authorities on important education matters.

(d) As education decision-making becomes more centralized within provincial ministries of education, and as school division jurisdictions become larger, community voice and participation are diminished.

Shared responsibility and shared accountability between provincial and local authorities for Manitoba's public education sector is something which the MSBA and its member school boards value and support. In identifying the concerns outlined above, it is not our intention to be critical but rather to invite a dialogue with the province to ensure a balance and a clarity of roles which fosters responsible and informed citizen involvement in the education of Manitoba children and youth.

Education property taxation

Looking ahead to the 2011 provincial election, it is almost certain that the issue of education property taxation will be focal point for those individuals and organizations that favour its elimination. Regrettably and notwithstanding the efforts of the MSBA and its members to create some greater understanding of this issue with the general public, the critics and the nay-sayers tend to garner more air time and print attention than do we.

This said, the Association and its membership will continue to advocate strongly for the retention of school board taxing authority in Manitoba. This stance is based on the following evidence.

(a) Local dollars mean local choices in program and service options and enhancements not supported from provincial revenue sources.

(b) Centralized funding models tend generally to be more prescriptive about where and how dollars are spent, reducing the flexibility of school boards to shift resource allocations in response to new or emerging needs.

(c) Where school boards have lost taxing authority in their respective jurisdictions, this change has often necessitated significant program and service reductions in schools.

(d) Eliminating school board taxing authority does not necessarily eliminate property taxation as a funding source for K-12 public education. In addition to Manitoba, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Quebec still use property tax revenues to a significant degree to resource public school expenditures in each province.

In 2001, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees collaborated with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities to create the AMM Task Force Report entitled *Rethinking Education Funding: Challenges and Opportunities*. The Association participated actively as well in the Minister's Working Group on Education Finance whose report was completed in 2004. Both reports support retention of taxing authority for elected public school boards albeit with recommendations for some fundamental rethinking and reconfiguration of Manitoba property tax structures. The Manitoba School Boards Association would welcome dialogue with provincial and municipal government representatives to explore possibilities in this regard and respectfully suggests that such a direction might be seen as a progressive step by those opposed to Manitoba's current education financing structure.

School trustee elections and representation

The 2010 round of school trustee elections has resulted in a turnover rate of approximately 33% which has been the norm for school trustee elections over the past decade. The numbers of acclamations and vacancies are not radically different from previous elections but the loss of several long service, very knowledgeable and well-experienced trustees in school divisions across the province will create some very real challenges for particular school boards in the new term of office.

In reviewing election results at its recent meeting, the provincial Executive of the MSBA identified as a significant topic for further exploration and discussion the issue of aboriginal and visible minority representation in local education governance. The Association is gathering information about how this matter is addressed in other provinces and will pursue discussion with its membership and other organizations and agencies who may have interest in this issue. We will gladly share with the provincial government our findings on this topic and any recommendations which may emerge from them.

Looking ahead to school trustee elections in 2014, there are two important matters for our reflection and planning as a school boards association. For individuals interested in standing for election as school trustees, the challenges of time commitments and electoral expenses can be quite significant. All too often these realities are strong disincentives for prospective candidates. For school boards, the conduct of trustee elections across large geographic areas is often problematic. Where a school division's territory encompasses multiple municipalities – 13 in the Fort la Bosse School Division and 16 in the Rolling River School Division – partnering with

municipal authorities can be a major hurdle. Constituents who must vote for municipal council at one polling station and for school trustee(s) at another, is some cases a good distance away, too often choose not to participate at all in school trustee elections.

It is unclear at this point what strategies and actions might alleviate these particular problems with regard to candidate members and voter participation in school trustee elections. The Association will work with its membership and other levels of government to explore possible solutions to these dilemmas.

CD/bu

Appendix C

RECEIVED
JAN 04 2010

MINISTER OF
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Room 301
Legislative Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba CANADA
R3C 0V8
General Office: (204) 945-3788
Fax: (204) 945-1383

DEC 23 2010

George Buri
Chairperson
Board of Trustees
Brandon School Division
1031 – 6th Street
Brandon MB R7A 4K5

Dear George Buri:

Thank you for your follow-up letter regarding the taxation of property owned by school divisions. The Brandon School Division Board has asked for clarification about the taxation of vacant land owned by school divisions, and also requests that *The Municipal Assessment Act* be amended to ensure that an exemption is provided for such properties.

Property tax exemptions under *The Municipal Assessment Act* are limited to those properties that provide a broad public benefit. Schools are recognized as important public institutions and therefore have a long-standing property tax exemption. However, school divisions have always been required to pay property taxes on vacant land, given that such land is not currently being used as a school. The Brandon School Division may wish to review its existing land holdings to determine if its vacant land continues to be required for future program needs.

Property tax exemptions are also limited recognizing the impact to taxing jurisdictions as well as property owners. Expanding property tax exemptions under the Act requires careful consideration of the impact on the property tax base of taxing jurisdictions, both municipal and school. The impact of exemptions on property taxes paid by all other property owners in the taxing jurisdiction also needs to be taken into account.

In closing, I would like to again thank the Brandon School Division for sharing its views about property taxation, and appreciate the opportunity to respond.

Sincerely,

Ron Lemieux
Minister

c: The Honourable Greg Selinger
Honourable Nancy Allan
Drew Caldwell, MLA

2.02(c)