

Manitoba's Pre-Budget Consultation – An Education Perspective: Summary



Every fall, Manitobans have an opportunity to provide input into the next year's provincial budget. An online survey is often part of this process, asking citizens to provide comment on the programs and services that their tax dollars fund. **This year's online survey (available at https://forms.gov.mb.ca/prebudget_2018/index.html) includes an IMPORTANT section on "FUNDING EDUCATION".**

On the survey, a respondent **MUST** choose to "support" or "oppose" five proposals. The implication is that these proposals would help to control costs related to education. We believe this implication is false, and strongly **OPPOSE** each of the five proposals. **Full details and explanations for this view are provided in our detailed analysis.**

The Pre-Budget Proposal	Why we OPPOSE this proposal
Reduce the number of school divisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because this will result in no savings, higher costs, and decisions being made further away from local neighbourhoods and communities
Reduce senior management positions in school divisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because only three and a half cents of every dollar spent on education in Manitoba funds the work of senior management and school boards across all school divisions, and that work is critical to student success
Reduce the number of unionized education bargaining units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because all employees in Manitoba should have the right to negotiate their pay and working conditions, and reducing the number of unionized education bargaining units will not result in reduced salary costs.
Control the rate of overall education spending growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because over three quarters of every dollar spent on education has already been capped. Further tightening budgets will jeopardize programs, supports and services for kids.
Ensure value for money in education spending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because money spent on schools and children's futures is money well invested, and the return on investments in our kids and their education remains high in Manitoba.

Every Manitoban has a stake in the future of our children. As taxpayers, it is your right to speak up and be heard. Remaining silent should not be an option when it comes to how your tax money is used concerning our kids and their future.



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Manitoba's Pre-Budget Consultation – An Education Perspective: Analysis



Overview

Every fall, Manitobans have an opportunity to provide input into the next year's provincial budget. An online survey is often used in this process, asking citizens to provide comment on the programs and services that their tax dollars fund.

This year's online survey (available at https://forms.gov.mb.ca/prebudget_2018/index.html) features an **IMPORTANT** section on "FUNDING EDUCATION". On the survey, a citizen **MUST** choose to "support" or "oppose" a number of proposals, with the implication being that these proposals would help to control costs related to education. Unlike other sections of the survey, there is no opportunity for people to share their own suggestions or priorities for "Funding Education."

Responding to this survey

For reasons we will explain in this analysis, we would invite all Manitobans to **OPPOSE** every pre-budget survey proposal related to education.

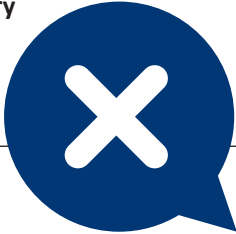
The Pre-Budget Proposal	Why we OPPOSE this proposal
Reduce the number of school divisions	<p>NO SAVINGS, BIGGER COSTS, DISTANT DECISIONS</p> <p>PUBLIC EDUCATION BELONGS TO EVERY COMMUNITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LESS IS NOT MORE when it comes to providing programs, services and supports for the sake of our children. • BIGGER IS NOT BETTER. Eliminating some school divisions means creating larger school divisions out of the rest, making it more difficult and even more costly to provide programs, services and supports. • DECISIONS ARE FURTHER AWAY FROM LOCAL COMMUNITIES. Fewer school boards mean decisions would become distant from the very communities that these decisions will impact. • DOLLARS WOULD BE SPENT TO SAVE PENNIES. In 2001-02, twenty school divisions were eliminated by Manitoba's former Government. Their target: millions of dollars in savings... BUT In 2005, an independent study written by the Frontier Institute for Public Policy found that eliminating 20 school divisions resulted in virtually no savings. Bigger school divisions meant bigger costs. The time spent on the elimination process would have been better invested in meaningful education reform. In the end, the only real impact was to remove ownership of public schools from local neighbourhoods and small town communities.



The Pre-Budget Proposal	Why we OPPOSE this proposal
<p>Reduce senior management positions in school divisions</p>	<p>THREE CENTS ON EVERY DOLLAR SPENT ON EDUCATION IN MANITOBA FUNDS THE WORK OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOL DIVISIONS</p> <p>HALF A CENT ON EVERY DOLLAR SPENT ON EDUCATION IN MANITOBA GOES TO FUND THE WORK OF LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under Budget 2018, the maximum amount that divisions can spend on administration, which includes many senior management positions, was reduced by 15 percent. • Bill 28, The Public Services Sustainability Act, was passed in 2017. If proclaimed by the government, this law would freeze the pay and benefits of all school division employees, including those of senior management, for two years. • By any standard, school division administration is already lean. Further, arbitrary cuts risk negatively impacting students and programs.
<p>Reduce the number of unionized education bargaining units</p>	<p>ALL EMPLOYEES IN MANITOBA SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO NEGOTIATE THEIR PAY AND WORKING CONDITIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School boards across Manitoba have been faced with many difficult decisions over the years when it comes to the pay and benefits of our staff. But taking teachers and other staff away from the classroom in order to negotiate is not one of these. In more than three-quarters of Manitoba’s school divisions, negotiations with teachers occur after classrooms let out for the day. • Many provinces in Canada have removed the right of local school boards to negotiate directly with their teachers. In 2018, Manitoba announced its intention to move from local to provincial bargaining, which will effectively create only one bargaining unit for all teachers. • Reducing the number of unionized education bargaining units will not result in reduced salary costs. Collective agreements will need to be harmonized, and based on past experience, that often occurs in an upward direction.



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The Pre-Budget Proposal	Why we OPPOSE this proposal
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Control the rate of overall education spending growth

A FUNDAMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY OF SCHOOL BOARDS IS BALANCING AVAILABLE FUNDING WITH STUDENT NEEDS


YET, OVER THREE QUARTERS OF EVERY DOLLAR SPENT ON EDUCATION HAVE ALREADY BEEN CONTROLLED OR CAPPED

- Under Budget 2018, provincial support for schools will be reduced by **over \$60 million** over the next five years. This equates to nearly two full weeks of school funding.
- Under Budget 2018, **the maximum amount that divisions can spend on administration was reduced by 15 percent.**
- When proclaimed, Bill 28, *The Public Services Sustainability Act*, will freeze **all school employee pay and benefits for two years.**
- Combined, **these measures already control spending growth for 80 cents of every dollar spent on public education in Manitoba.**



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Ensure value for money in education spending



MONEY SPENT ON SCHOOLS AND CHILDREN’S FUTURES IS MONEY WELL INVESTED

Of each dollar spent:

- **80 CENTS** goes directly to the frontline, to pay for the teachers and support service workers.
- **10 CENTS** goes to operations and maintenance, to provide supplies, to fix and repair schools, and to keep the heat and lights on.
- **4 CENTS** goes to transporting kids to and from school, including maintaining and fuelling the bus fleet.
- **3 CENTS** pays for qualified administrators to meet the needs of changing, demanding, and fast-paced school divisions.
- **HALF A CENT** supports the work of locally elected school boards, who ensure that local voices and local choices are protected when it comes to meeting the needs of each community’s children.
- **ANY REMAINING FUNDS** are used to deliver programming for local communities and to operate Adult Learning Centres.

What do Manitobans get in return from these investments?

- **MANITOBA OFFERS FIRST CLASS EDUCATION:** 8 out of 10 students perform at or above required grade level standards on national and global exams in reading, math and science— a comparable standard of academic performance as in most every other province.
- **MANITOBA IS IMPROVING:** On the last national exam in reading, math and science, only Manitoba’s students showed a marked performance improvement in comparison to other provinces.
- **MANITOBA’S STUDENTS ARE WORLD LEADERS:** Nearly 100 percent of our students graduate on time or within a few years after high school. Most of these students go on to complete university or college studies. Some go directly into the workforce, filling important gaps given Manitoba’s labour shortage. Our kids contribute skill, knowledge and capital that fuels Manitoba’s economy.



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Some additional facts

Here are some more facts and ideas for you to think about before answering the questionnaire, based on some statements that have been made on the questionnaire:

The facts on school taxes

FACT: Across Canada, every province collects property tax to fund education, and this results in overall tax contributions from citizens that are comparable to those right here in Manitoba.

Why then does the pre-budget survey say that Manitoba is “last” province to collect school property tax?

FACT: Because only in Manitoba is accountability and oversight for your education property taxes owned at the local level, with all tax dollars collected kept in communities. In other provinces, property taxes for education are directly deposited into the Government’s own bank account. Eliminating school divisions does not mean less school tax on properties.

Unequal funding based on tax revenue

FACT: Unequal funding between school divisions does in fact occur because of current available local tax resources across every community. In 2018 however, the Province announced the elimination of \$61 million in funding to support public education over the next five years. If fully implemented, this decision will take away almost two full weeks of operating funding from the public education system during the school year, impacting 92 percent of all school divisions. For them, addressing existing inequalities in funding will become an even greater challenge.

Duplication of costs across school divisions

FACT: Pre-budget 2019 suggests a possibility that less is more when it comes to cost savings in education. Fewer divisions, less senior administration, less pay and benefit negotiations with staff bargaining units. The reality is that Manitoba’s public education system is already “lean” and works very efficiently. It is not possible to create bigger school divisions with any less staff, schools, buses or anything else that is required to educate Manitoba’s students. To control or cut further funding from our public schools risks proper investment of time and money in meaningful education reform and ongoing improvement. It also risks taking education decisions away from local communities. There is no value for money in these prospects.

A final word: why it is important to speak out and be heard!

Every day, public schools in Manitoba serve over 207,000 students. Every one of these future citizens of Manitoba holds promise and potential. Your tax money helps to support the programs, supports and services that helps these students learn and grow.

Over 31,000 people serve our students and communities through Manitoba’s public schools, as teachers, principals, education support workers, bus drivers, custodians and more. Together, they make a meaningful difference in the lives of our children.

Every Manitoban has a stake in the future of our children. As taxpayers, it is your right to speak up and be heard. Remaining silent should not be an option when it comes to how your tax money is used concerning our kids and their future.

