



MANITOBA
School Boards
ASSOCIATION



The
Manitoba
Teachers'
Society



MASS
MANITOBA ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS



January 10, 2017

Honourable Ian Wishart
Minister, Education and Training
168-450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

Dear Minister Wishart,

In Fall 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its final report, with 16 distinctive calls to action in matters of education, culture and languages, and education for reconciliation.

Manitoba's five public education partners haven taken these calls to action as guiding principles for the future of our students, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

It is in the spirit of these calls to action and guiding principles that we request that the Province of Manitoba extend due consideration for an important, and we feel highly significant amendment, to The Schools Patriotic Observances Regulation (472/88 R) which has been established under *The Education Administration Act* (C.C.S.M. c.E10).

This amendment would serve to implement formal, universal, and consistent acknowledgement and recognition for Treaty Lands and Traditional Territories as part of the opening exercises that all schools perform at the commencement of each school day. The benefits from such an amendment would be numerous and would respond to several calls to action under the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Just as the singing of Canada's national anthem has become an ingrained practice for every school, fostering a sense of identity, citizenship and pride among students for their shared national heritage, so too by instituting formal acknowledgement and recognition of Treaty Lands and Traditional Territories, we are of the perspective that we can achieve something of lasting value and meaning for all staff and students. A well deserved time and place during the school day to honour and respect the rights and dignity of our Indigenous staff and students, while also helping all students appreciate the obligations and sacred trust that are incumbent upon all Manitobans toward the Indigenous peoples, lands and territories of this province.

It is our hope that through this proposed amendment, every student in this province will graduate with the skill and knowledge of how to appropriately and formally recognize Treaty Lands and Traditional Territories. It is our intention that such acknowledgement and recognition will become as "second nature" to our students as the very words of our national anthem.

By amending The Schools Patriotic Observances Regulation in this manner, Manitoba would emerge as a national leader in implementing the calls to action that have been issued for achieving reconciliation. We would effectively become the first jurisdiction in Canada to extend this important practice to all schools. While many school divisions have undertaken independent implementation of formal acknowledgement and recognition of Treaty Lands and Traditional Territories as part of the school day, ensuring that such observance is universal and consistent across all divisions remains a compelling public education objective.

All public education partners therefore wish to signal their strongest support for this amendment and we would therefore encourage the Province of Manitoba to work with us to achieve this important initiative in time for the start of the 2017/18 school year.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society has recently undertaken the important step of developing appropriate wording for formal acknowledgement and recognition of Treaty Lands and Traditional Territories for every school division in Manitoba. These important statements have also been translated into the founding languages of Canada (English and French, as well the local Indigenous dialects) as appropriate for each school community. MTS can share this wording with the Province should the amendment be considered in such manner as to include recommended wording that can be used by each school division for formal observance of Treaty Lands and Traditional Territories, according to each division's local and language contexts.

In closing, we again wish to signal our full support for such an amendment. We would be most grateful to the Province for the opportunity to promote this amendment across the many schools under our respective responsibility, with time being of the essence to ensure that our shared leadership and initiative through this proposed observance becomes the national model for emulation across all provinces and territories.

Sincerely,



Ken Cameron
President, MSBA

Norm Gould
President, MTS

Brett Lough
President, MASS

Anita Werbowski
President, MASBO

Judith Cameron
President, MAPC

cc Honourable Eileen Clarke, Minister, Municipal and Indigenous Relations
Bramwell Strain, Deputy Minister, Education and Training