

**Manitoba School Boards Association**  
**Presentation on**  
***Bill 48: The Planning and Land Dedication for School Sites Act***

The Manitoba School Boards Association is a voluntary organization representing public school boards in the province. As such, we are advocates for strong schools that benefit all students, and for the role local governance plays in ensuring that those schools are responsive to community needs.

As advocates for students, schools and communities, we strongly support *Bill 48, The Planning and Land Dedication for School Sites Act*. It addresses several school board concerns about current practices in this regard.

***Bill 48 ensures that land in new developments will be made available for school construction.*** Under current legislation, land *may* be made available, at the discretion of the developer. In some high-demand areas of the province, this is not happening, and when new schools are needed, school boards have had to scramble to find alternative sites. *Bill 48* will make the dedication of land for school sites mandatory.

***Bill 48 will help ensure that land needed for new school construction is affordable.*** By providing a formula that ties the price of a school site to its assessed value *prior to* the application for approval of the subdivision plan, the legislation will help control costs associated with providing public schools. While this association is on record as requesting the re-establishment of a standard price in development agreements for the acquisition of school sites in the city of Winnipeg—that standard price was \$25,000 per acre in 2006—we believe that the *Bill 48* provisions are a reasonable and equitable way of addressing this matter.

***Bill 48 will prevent the proliferation of misinformation and misunderstanding surrounding the school site acquisition process.*** By prohibiting the advertising of a parcel of land as a future school site until the construction of a school has been approved by The Public Schools Finance Board, residents will be better informed about future plans for the development of their community. They will know clearly if and when a new school is to be built, there will be clearer lines of accountability, and they will be able

to make their own plans according to facts, rather than speculation. We support any move that brings greater transparency to a complex process, and *Bill 48* does that.

We do have two minor amendments to suggest to *Bill 48*, as outlined below. Both of these amendments relate to Section 19 of *Bill 48*, which would insert the following provision into *The Public Schools Act*.

**Use of money**

68.1(2) A school board may use the money referred to in subsection (1) [that is, money from the sale or lease of land that was conveyed to it, or money received in lieu of land being conveyed to it] and interest earned on the money only to acquire land for a school site or to acquire school buses.

We would request that the acceptable uses of that money be expanded to include capital renovations of an existing school. We believe that such an amendment is appropriate as some school divisions may have available space in a nearby school building that could be used to accommodate students from a new subdivision, subject to renovations and/or the addition of portable classrooms. Secondly, we would ask that the legislation be amended to ensure that the lease of school buses, as well as the outright purchase, is classified as an acceptable use for these funds, as some school divisions do not own their bus fleets. The term currently used is “acquire;” this may be subject to an interpretation that would not allow for a leasing option.

*Bill 48* responds directly to school board concerns relating to the acquisition of school sites. We would like to thank the government for introducing this legislation in such a timely manner, and would encourage all parties and MLA’s to support *Bill 48*, with the amendments proposed within this brief. Thank you.