

Municipalities send open letter to the Government of Manitoba

BILL 64 EDUCATION MODERNIZATION ACT

Virden Empire-Advance

AUGUST 19, 2021 02:18 PM



Signs like this one protesting Bill 64 can be seen on lawns and business frontages across Manitoba.
PHOTO/ EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Dear Premier Pallister and Cabinet Members:

We, the municipal entities of Hamiota, Wallace-Woodworth, Yellowhead and Prairie View Municipalities within the Park West School Division on the western side of the province, wish to express our concerns from a municipal standpoint concerning Bill 64 -The Education Modernization Act. The schools within our jurisdictions and our youth are very much at the forefront of our concerns.

Rural life is most important to our province and to our children. Many of our students come from an agricultural background where rural life and the life of our communities are key to our existence. It is a well-known fact from past history that when schools are closed/removed from communities, it is the beginning of a very quick and downward spiral for the community. We are concerned that Bill 64 will see the closure of small schools as the moratorium is lifted. In following history, that will see many of our small towns also disappear.

The long, exhausting bus rides for these children will negatively affect the emotional and learning capabilities of our children. Many of our rural schools have had excellent track records in educating our youth, and we are most proud of the exceptional leadership skills these students acquire and hone, taking them out into the world as lawyers, teachers, nurses, skilled tradespeople, skilled labourers, municipal and provincial leaders and more.

School boards allow for democratic representation in education and provide a strong, representative voice in response to the needs of local communities and students. The goal of local school boards is to improve student education and achievement. We feel it is a direct disadvantage to the students and their parents to erase the school boards of our present-day system. Parent councils can not provide the expertise and knowledge that school boards strive for in providing a fair education to all students, regardless of race, creed, socio and economic status and backgrounds.

The people of Manitoba, including students and parents, have been inundated with so much this past year and a half due to the Covid pandemic. As municipal leaders, we feel Manitobans need an opportunity to recharge and rebuild, emotionally and economically. This is not the time to throw the education system into huge changes being suggested in Bill 64. We strongly urge your government to put on hold/suspend Bill 64 for considerable time to allow Manitobans to recover from the pandemic.

While there are possible changes that need to be made to improve the education system for our youth, we feel that any changes need to be taken in smaller segments, and not a complete overhaul of the education system. We also ask that a referendum for all of Manitobans be slated, for the people need to be allowed to speak to such immense changes to education.

As local municipal representatives of the ratepayers, parents and students of our region, we ask that our concerns be taken seriously. We look forward to your response.

Yours in Municipal Government,

Prairie View Municipality

Reeve Linda Clark

Hamiota Municipality

Mayor Larry Oakden

RM of Yellowhead

Mayor Mervyn Starzyk

RM of Wallace-Woodworth

Reeve Clayton Canart