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SEP - 9 2020

MINISTER
OF EDUCATION

Room 168
Legislative Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
R3C 0V8

SEP 03 2020

Mr. Alan Campbell
President
Manitoba School Boards Association
191 Provencher Boulevard
Winnipeg MB R2H 0G4

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Thank you for providing a copy of the resolutions passed at the 2020 annual general meeting of the Manitoba School Boards Association (MSBA). I am pleased to be able to respond to the ten resolutions supported by your member boards.

1. Allowing Operational Reserves

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Manitoba School Boards Association lobby the Provincial Government to change the regulations to permit School Boards to create operational reserve funds.

The department takes the position that it is important that funds received from taxpayers are used to support learning in Manitoba schools, rather than being directed into reserve accounts. However, in recognition that some fiscal stabilization is necessary, the department has maintained a standing directive allowing school divisions to maintain operating surpluses of up to four per cent of their budget. This directive is in place to ensure that school divisions are able to absorb unanticipated changes in revenues and expenditures from year-to-year. At this time, the department is not considering revising this policy.

2. Subsidizing Travel Costs for Northern Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Manitoba School Boards Association advocate with Manitoba Education for financial support for travel and substitute teacher costs when teachers from school divisions north of the 53 parallel are required by Manitoba Education to attend workshops held in southern Manitoba.

School divisions operating North of the 53rd parallel receive a Northern Allowance as part of their operating funding from the Manitoba government. This allowance is intended to assist in covering additional costs associated with operating a school division in Northern Manitoba, including increased costs to access professional development for their staff. At this time, the department is not considering additional funding to support travel and back-filling for teachers

in Northern Manitoba for professional development. However, the department will continue to encourage the use of distance learning technology as appropriate. The experience of the past several months has demonstrated that video conferencing can be used effectively for hosting meetings, for professional development, and other purposes.

3. Special Needs Funding

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Manitoba School Boards Association request Manitoba Education to review the Special Needs formula-based funding model (formerly Level 2 and Level 3 student specific funding) and the underlying characteristics in order to address changing school division demographics, and by extension growing needs for support;

AND FURTHER that Manitoba Education make transparent the formula used to calculate the formula-based funding that is allocated to school divisions.

The Special Needs funding model has remained unchanged since 2016/17. This excludes The Whiteshell School District which continues to require student-specific applications. For 2020/21, school divisions will be provided with the same Level 2 and Level 3 funding amount that was provided in 2019/20. Contingency funding is available for school divisions experiencing significant increases in numbers of students with profound needs compared to prior years.

4. Playground Development Costs

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Manitoba School Boards Association Executive advocate with and urge the Minister of Education to include the cost of development and construction for playground structures and outdoor equipment, accessible to all students, in the provincial funding formula for all new school builds and the replacement of play structures, which have been deemed unsafe for use.

The Public Schools Finance Board Act does not list school sites and playgrounds as a distinct area of support defined by the Capital Support Program. Maintenance, repair and periodic replacement of playground structures that do not meet current standards are the responsibility of the respective school division.

5. Dual Credit Recognition

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Manitoba School Boards Association advocate with Manitoba Education and the Department of Economic Development and Training for a return to past practice whereby courses in accredited university or college programs that were completed successfully by high school students were recognized for post-secondary as well as high school credit.

The department continues to support dual credit registrations between a variety of Post-Secondary Institutions (PSI) and schools in Manitoba. This past school year, Manitoba Education approved and registered 40 such courses.

The department recognizes that students may not be successful in completing a vocational program offered through a PSI, which is designed primarily for adults. Students who are not able to access Technical Vocational Education (TVE) programs at their high school can consider as an alternative the High School Apprenticeship Program (HSAP) via Apprenticeship Manitoba. HSAP consists of up to eight courses delivered in 110 hours and includes on-the-job training. Students may also access developmentally appropriate TVE programming via the PSI delivery of department-developed courses (at the PSI or at the high school). At this time, the department is not considering a return to past practice.

6. Elections

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Manitoba School Boards Association urge the Manitoba Government to repeal legislation requiring school closures on fixed election dates in order to continue to expose our students to our democracy in action and enable the voting public to see our schools in operation.

In 2017, amendments regarding provincial elections were made, including an amendment to The Education Administration Act requiring the regulation respecting the scheduling of non-instructional days to be amended to make mandatory the scheduling of a non-instructional day on the day of a fixed-date provincial election (and a deferred fixed-date provincial election). This amendment was made in response to concerns Elections Manitoba heard from voters, parents and teachers about student safety. While the department agrees that students should have the opportunity to learn about government, democracy and citizenship, our main priority is to ensure the safety of students when a school is used as a voting place. At this time, the department is not contemplating repealing legislation that requires the scheduling of a non-instructional day on a fixed date election.

7. Mental Health Supports

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Manitoba School Boards Association lobby the provincial government to ensure comprehensive mental health supports including crisis response services are available locally.

The department is working on a whole-of-government approach to strengthen mental health and addictions services and supports across the province with \$20 million in new investments. Many of the universal and targeted initiatives directly support children, youth, and their families. Manitoba expanded classroom-based mental health promotion programs, such as Project 11 and

Thrival Kits. Initiatives for vulnerable youth, such as expanding the Community Schools Program and increasing support to the NorWest Youth Hub, are also underway. An enhancement to school division clinical teams is being piloted in three rural school divisions; the pilot adds psychiatric nurses, addictions support workers, and wraparound facilitators to existing clinical teams.

8. Vaping

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Manitoba School Boards Association urge the Ministers of Health (Manitoba and Canada) and Manitoba Education to develop education programs modelled on successful tobacco use reduction strategies to discourage the use of vaping products by our students.

AND FURTHER that Manitoba School Boards Association urge these agencies to regulate vaping products and e-cigarettes by: lowering their nicotine content; banning their use of flavorings, and their sale on the internet; setting the legal age for their sale and the sale of tobacco products to 19 years; ensuring that health and safety warnings be placed on their packaging and prohibiting the promotion and advertising of them anywhere they can be seen or heard by youth.

The department is in the process of updating curriculum outcomes in the K-12 PE/HE curriculum associated with Substance Use, Drug Education, and Addictions and developing a curriculum supports/resources to help educators navigate these topics in the classroom. Learning outcomes and resources connected to the use of tobacco and Vaping Products will be included in this update. They will relate to the effects of products, decision-making skills, social influences, and strategies for reducing or avoiding risk.

Manitoba's *Smoking and Vapour Products Control Act* includes provisions that regulate vaping products in much the same way as tobacco products, these restrictions on the sale, use in public places and display, advertising and promotion are aimed at reducing youth uptake. Health Canada currently regulates vape devices and liquids from a production, content and safety perspective, as well as the distribution, packaging and promotion of vape products. As of December 2019, Health Canada announced new proposed regulations, which will further restrict the promotion of vaping products aimed at reducing advertising exposure to youth. Manitoba is part of the national conversation on vaping at various tables, including the Joint Consortium for School Health and the Tobacco Control Liaison Committee.

9. Remote Participation In Provincially Mandated Professional Development

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Manitoba School Boards Association advocate with Manitoba Education to provide mechanisms for interactive video conferencing access for personnel from northern school divisions to attend mandatory Manitoba Education workshops/in-service sessions held in southern Manitoba.

The department schedules provincial workshops and in-service day sessions that staff in school divisions are invited to attend. Attendance is encouraged, but not mandatory. For most sessions, the department considers remote participation to assist with the travel and time limitations that may affect the ability for staff in school divisions to attend, particularly for those in northern and remote areas of the province. Such options include video conferencing / virtual meeting solutions. The department will continue to look at and provide virtual meeting and video conferencing options for provincial workshops and in-service day sessions.

10. Access To Mental Health Professionals

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Manitoba School Boards Association lobby the provincial and federal governments to have increased timely access and coverage to mental health professionals under our Health Care System.

As mentioned earlier, the department is working on a whole-of-government approach to strengthen mental health and addictions services and supports across the province with \$20 million in new investments. Some of the new initiatives increase timely access and coverage to mental health professionals in Manitoba's health care system, such as the addition of psychiatric nurses, addictions support workers, and wraparound facilitators to existing clinical teams in three school divisions. The province also made a one-time investment in the Kids Help Phone program, Counsellor in the Classroom, which introduces students to the service and encourages them to develop their help-seeking skills by "practice calling" a Kids Help Phone counsellor while in a safe classroom environment.

I appreciate you bringing these resolutions to my attention and for the invitation to meet in person to discuss these and other issues of mutual interest.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kelvin Goertzen', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Kelvin Goertzen
Minister of Education