

**March 31st, 2023**

Josh Watt  
Executive Director  
Manitoba School Boards Association

Dear Josh,

**Thank you, for the opportunity to address these key educational policy issues you have raised. The Green Party of Manitoba (GPM) supports the key values of health, ecology, fairness and care and we strive to ensure all our policies reflect these values.**

### **MSBA**

For many years, MSBA and community partners have agreed that protecting fiscal autonomy for local school boards has remained an important guiding principle. Everyone from municipalities to chambers of commerce agree that it remains absolutely critical that boards have discretion to support programs that are tailored to the needs and character of their community.

In 2023, the Manitoba Government announced a further step towards repealment of education property taxes. With this step, our long advocated for split of revenue share is now fact, with twenty percent of operating funding still coming from community investment in their schools. If elected as Government, will you protect fiscal autonomy for all school boards and what are your plans for ensuring that the local voices elected to Manitoba's school boards are able to fund local choices to meet the needs of their students.

**Respecting local diversity is a key Green value the Green Party of Manitoba (GPM) will support through the creative means our community connections foster. We propose consultations on revising the funding structure for equitable allocations with support and autonomy respected for schools and teachers.**

**The GPM understands the value of protecting fiscal autonomy for ALL school boards. We, as a leadership team, with our candidates' input, will do all we can to ensure local voices are respected and supported in funding the local choices identified in each unique context.**

**Besides funding, we'd advocate that school boards are well supported, including access to timely data and systems, relevant training for members of the board, and opportunities to effectively engage with their communities.**

### **MASS**

#### **BACKGROUND**

The public school system continues to navigate the many ongoing impacts of the pandemic while also responding to other societal and economic pressures:

- inflation
- demographic dynamics
- , growing economic distress and

- declining mental health.
- The school system needs stability, certainty, and predictability.

### **QUESTION**

Which three (3) priorities would be foundational to you as we respond to the public-school system's greatest areas of need?

- (i) How would these priorities be identified?
- (ii) What would the process moving forward include?
- (iii) Please elaborate on the specific ideas that you feel would add stability, certainty and predictability.

**In a time when there is little stability, certainty, and predictability in society in general, we need to create teams of support so consistency in friendly faces and funding are possible in our school communities. Decisions need to be made with a balance of head and heart thinking.**

**Clearly priorities need to be identified through consultation with experts in education, teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders. Surveys, focus groups, and other mechanisms for collecting feedback and assessing needs could be used.**

**Continuing efforts to expunge the inherited colonial system of exclusion from our public school system, will make our schools welcoming to all. We do this by respecting demographic diversity with culturally appropriate resource support (resource funding and volunteer coordination) for the approaches found to be effective. Through the lived experience of our teachers and school board members and through current research indicators, appropriate resources can be identified. We will invest in people and update school curriculums to support meaningful engagement.**

**This will require increasing support and training for teachers, mental health supports and prioritizing infrastructure improvements. Additionally, and often neglected, this will require dedicated, planned funding to meet the basic needs of nutrition and housing for students. To stem the tide of the growing economic distress that makes our school nutrition programs ever more needed, we can build community, and network creatively to maximize the resources in our communities. Manitoba is a food producer province, and we have a responsibility to eliminate the hunger limiting learning and health in Manitoba today.**

**Expanding access to peer groups, online therapy and nutrition supports will help to prevent and address mental health decline in our young ones, our education professionals and indeed the general population. A fundamental part of our platform, we will advocate for a Basic Income, as a key approach to addressing the root causes of poverty, homelessness, addiction and crime, key social determinants predicting educational and later-life outcomes. Prevention is a fundamental Green value.**

### **MTS**

The shortage of certified substitutes was perhaps the most understated crisis in public education until the Covid –19 pandemic brought it into the spotlight.

Post-pandemic, the need for certified substitutes has grown as teachers struggle with crushing workloads and increased stress, resulting in absences.

The lack of certified substitutes also means a loss of prep time and the ability to participate in professional learning and development.

Put simply, certified substitute teachers are an essential part of education. What is your plan for ensuring a healthy supply of certified substitute teachers in Manitoba?

As an essential part of our education system, the role of certified substitute teachers can be supported in a variety of ways to prevent burnout and build retention. Incentives could be offered to increase interest in the profession and attract more Manitobans to become certified substitute teachers. These incentives could include increased salaries but also tuition assistance. Promoting engagement through consultative curriculum updates can be an effective tool in accomplishing a variety of staffing and educational goals. Rural school divisions need the resources to cover travel time for rural substitute teachers. Addressing poverty issues including implementing Basic Income (see previous question) along with special needs requirements can ensure the employment needs of certified substitutes are met, while supporting the reality of responding to absences in the permanent staff contingent. The certification process can be made more accessible, modernized to reflect training qualification equivalencies, and ensure it is meeting current needs.

## MASBO

Many school buildings across the province were built to meet the needs of an education system from several generations in the past. On-going needs to maintain and improve this aged infrastructure continue to increase to meet modern requirements relating to accessibility, quality learning environments and expanded child care spaces. What is your party's plan to address current and growing deficits in capital support to school divisions without negatively impacting adequate and sustainable operating funding?

**The GPM would add this community accessibility remodelling need for quality learning environments to our capital planning over a 4-year period and look at opportunities to reallocate the necessary resources. Subsidies for oil and gas production would be one important example where funds could be reallocated to education and expanded childcare space development. We would advocate for expanding opportunities to promote energy efficiency and conservation in schools, e.g., existing building retrofits including solar energy and sustainable designs of new construction. In doing so, significant reductions in the long-term costs of operations and maintenance of school buildings would be realized, while their environmental footprint would be dramatically reduced.**

## MAPC

Section 4.1 of the Education Administration Act serves to recognize MAPC as the legal representative of English school-based parent groups in Manitoba, including parent advisory councils and parent councils.

Nevertheless, in 2019 the legally mandated annual meeting between the Minister of Education and MAPC was stricken from the Public Schools Act, without consultation.

Further, when speaking with parents and parent groups, we know that the relationship between parents, schools and communities has deteriorated, notwithstanding the 2005 document "School Partnerships, A Guide for Parents, Schools and Communities". This resource provided important guidance to these partners in how to work together.

In view of the importance of promoting and protecting parents voice in public education, should your party become elected or re-elected to serve as Government, what steps will you take to support the role of MAPC in representing parent councils and parent advisory councils, as well as the parent voice? How will your Government honour MAPC's legal status and recognition going forward?

**Parent Councils and Parent Advisory Councils play many important roles in our educational system. The GPM supports honouring MAPC's legal status and recognition of its key representational role going forward. This kind of parent involvement is what can help address alienation, improve indigenous, newcomer and students with special needs outcomes, enriching our school experiences and communities. Additionally, the creation of alumni associations would be encouraged and called**

upon to share resources, particularly in providing mentorship to students and financial contributions for projects not normally funded by core budgets.

Respectfully on behalf of our Green Party of Manitoba Leadership Team and our Members.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Janine G. Gibson', is positioned to the left of a vertical black line.

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