

The Significance of School Division and School District Operating Scale

Operating scale is a very significant factor to the current provision of public schooling in Manitoba.

The operating scale of an activity determines whether that activity is practical. Generally, as scale is expanded, more activity is feasible. This is known as economy of scale.

The opposite normally holds true as well. As scale is reduced, less activity is possible.

Gauging ideal operating scale varies from activity to activity. In providing services, scale is measured in terms of the number of people who receive the service.

For public schooling, the number of students receiving education programs and services represents the scale. In Manitoba, with the reliance placed on property taxation at the level of the school division, the property assessment base of a school division likewise represents scale.

Adequate operating scale for public schooling enables the provision of necessary education programs and related services by ensuring an optimum number of students per service unit. The service unit is the school division or district given that the school board develops the yearly operating budget and allocates resources.

If either of the two scale factors for the school division or district, the total number of students enrolled or the total value of property assessment, is relatively low, the possibilities for providing programs and service are sharply reduced. If both scale factors are prevalent in a school division or district, the feasibility of program and service delivery is impaired.

The Province of Manitoba maintains 38 school divisions and districts. There is a very wide range in student enrollment among these jurisdictions. There is a very wide range in the total value of the property assessment bases among these jurisdictions.

The province-wide average enrollment for the 38 school divisions and districts is approximately 4,500. The Province of Manitoba preserves the lowest average enrollment for school divisions among the Canadian provinces.

The very limited operating scale of many Manitoba school divisions and districts continues to influence the scope and the intensity of education program and service delivery. Divisions which have adequate scale can provide fully appropriate learning conditions for all students and offer more stable and enabling teaching environments for

teachers. Those divisions not having adequate scale are less able to provide for all students and the teaching environments are constrained.

The public schools of each community throughout Manitoba should have the support of a viable, sustainable and cost effective school division.