



# EDUCATION FUNDING SUBMISSION 2023-24

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Funding the Schools  
Manitoba Students Need

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**The Honourable Wayne Ewasko, MLA  
Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning  
Room 168 Legislative Building  
450 Broadway  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8**

December 21, 2022

Dear Minister Ewasko,

The Manitoba Teachers' Society represents 16,600 public school educators and is dedicated to advancing and safeguarding the welfare of teachers, the status of the teaching profession and the cause of public education in the province.

The first principle of the Society's *Code of Professional Practice* is that a member's first professional responsibility is to his/her/their students. The funding of public education directly affects students' opportunities and outcomes therefore advocating for adequate funding continues to be a priority for educators.

Over the past six years, the provincial contribution to operating funding for public education has failed to keep pace with inflation. In years with inflation levels of two per cent, school divisions were struggling to meet the needs of their students.

In June 2022, according to Statistics Canada, Canada's inflation rate rose to 8.1 per cent - the fastest annual increase in the cost of living since 1983. In Manitoba, the inflation rate was even higher at 9.4 per cent.

There was already a significant funding shortfall in our public education system. According to published Manitoba Education FRAME reports from 2016-17 to 2020-21, the audited provincial contribution to the operation of K-12 public schools declined by 5.2 per cent in inflation-adjusted terms (during the April 2016-April 2021 period).

Now, with record high inflation rates and the increasingly diverse and complex needs of Manitoba's student population, the situation is dire.

Inadequate funding can lead to cuts of student electives, apprenticeship programs, and fewer hires which may result in larger class sizes.

Manitoba students cannot afford another year of underfunding.

There are a variety of student needs that require support and enhancement to ensure positive outcomes, including but not limited to school nutrition programs, smaller class sizes, special education and youth mental health supports, reconciliation work in Indigenous education, student transportation, and French-language education.

In December 2021, MTS submitted *Beyond the Status Quo: Funding the Schools Manitoba Students Need* in advance of the 2022-23 education funding announcement. It included 26 recommendations to address these urgent needs and is included at the end of this document for your reference. Many of the recommendations in that submission were first brought forward in our report to Manitoba's Commission

on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education in May 2019. We were pleased to hear that your government has committed to supplying free menstrual products in schools. This was one of our funding submission recommendations, which called on the government to remove socio-economic barriers to education by providing menstrual products, free of charge, in K-12 public schools.

We advocate for these products to be available in female, male and gender-neutral washrooms in public schools across the province and that funding will continue beyond the three-year contract with Shoppers Drug Mart.

We would also like to acknowledge the \$1.3 million investment to support the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba (CNCM) in delivering school food programs.

While this investment is a positive step, there is so much more that needs to be done when it comes to feeding hungry students.

School food programs improve children's long-term health, school attendance and social cohesion. According to data from CNCM schools with meal programs reported:

- 75 per cent of participants saw an improvement in student attendance;
- 86 per cent said that academic effort and attention span improved;
- 70 per cent saw better academic performance and a decrease in disruptive behaviour.

We advocate for food programs to have access to more stable and less complicated sources of funding and be expanded to all public schools. We are hopeful that your collaboration with the federal government will result in a comprehensive and sustainable solution to addressing this issue.

Our position is that school food programs should be available to all students, regardless of perceived need or ability to pay. Furthermore, it is crucial that Indigenous food sovereignties, as well as diverse community needs are reflected in school food programs.

The development of *Mamàhtawisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born With—An Indigenous Education Policy Framework* also includes some of our recommendations from our 2022-23 budget submission.

We see this as evidence of your government's commitment to advancing reconciliation. Our expectation is that funding will be available to ensure that the full potential of the Framework can be realized.

Finally, we are aware that work is being done regarding recruitment and retention of French language teachers. We look forward to updates on the progress of your efforts.

The recognition that work is being done across the education sector is not lost on us nor is the fact that COVID-19 required a shift in focus that slowed progress in some priority areas.

Our funding-specific recommendations from the 2022-23 funding submission, *Beyond the Status Quo: Funding the Schools Manitoba Students Need*, (see pages 5-7) are discussed in detail below. Updates have been made from the 2022-23 version to reflect the audited provincial contribution to the operation of K-12 public schools.

As we look ahead to the 2023-24 education funding announcement in January and to a potential new education funding model in the future, funding that is adequate, equitable and stable is foundational to the successful implementation and sustainability of the outstanding recommendations.

### **Adequate, Equitable and Stable Funding**

The Manitoba Teachers' Society has long supported a public education system that is 100 per cent funded by the provincial government. We are pleased to see that the government is moving in this direction, however we have concerns over the adequacy of funding.

The issue of adequacy requires a funding formula sensitive to the differing cost structures that exist across

the province. Differential student and contextual needs must also be acknowledged. From an equity perspective, one size does not fit all. Equitable funding for school divisions should not mean that school divisions are to be equitably underfunded.

### **Recommendation 1**

That the Government of Manitoba provide adequate, equitable and stable funding to enable school divisions to provide quality public education to Manitoba students.

### **Inflation**

Since 2016, the provincial contribution to the operation of K-12 public schools (the FRAME Operating Fund) has fallen well below inflation.

According to published Manitoba Education FRAME reports from 2016-17 to 2020-21, the audited provincial contribution to the operation of K-12 public schools declined by 5.2 per cent in inflation-adjusted terms (during the April 2016-April 2021 period).

Operating revenue that is below the rate of inflation means that the public education system is losing ground on a per pupil basis.

Funding at a level to maintain student resources and supports means there remains a considerable and widening gap in the ability to meet the diverse needs of students.

### **Recommendation 2**

That the Government of Manitoba provide annual operational funding increases that exceed the rate of inflation.

### **Offloading costs strains budgets**

As the province looks to implement the recommendations from Manitoba's Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education it is crucial that additional funding be provided where necessary to ensure school divisions can effectively meet the requirements within the unique needs of their context.

The issue of new unfunded provincial mandates is a continuing concern as it creates a system of competition for already scarce resources. The addition of provincial mandates without new money intensifies the financial challenge of finding resources out of static or decreasing (over the last six years) levels of operating funding.

### **Recommendation 3**

That the Government of Manitoba provide additional funding to school divisions when mandating the implementation of provincial initiatives to eliminate the practice of offloading costs on to school divisions. The Manitoba Teachers' Society welcomes the opportunity to work together to improve our public education system for this and future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Bedford', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

James Bedford



# Recommendations from Beyond the Status Quo:

## Funding the Schools Manitoba Students Need (2022-23 submission)

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### Funding successful student outcomes

#### Recommendation 1

That the Government of Manitoba provide 100 per cent of education funding to improve equity across divisions.

#### Recommendation 2

That the Government of Manitoba provide stable, equitable and adequate funding to enable school divisions to provide quality public education to Manitoba students.

#### Recommendation 3

That the Government of Manitoba provide operational funding increases beyond inflation and enrolment growth.

#### Recommendation 4

That the Government of Manitoba provide additional funding to school divisions when mandating the implementation of provincial initiatives. This would eliminate the practice of offloading costs on to school divisions.

### Removing socio-economic barriers to education

#### Recommendation 5

That the Government of Manitoba establish a universal meal program for all school-age children. The program must be available for any school-age student at no cost to the student regardless of perceived need.

#### Recommendation 6

That the Government of Manitoba work with the City of Winnipeg, other municipal governments in the province and any other applicable parties to establish a pilot project, offering bus tokens to students. The fare for public transportation should not be a barrier to accessing education.

#### Recommendation 7

That the Government of Manitoba provide menstrual products free of charge in K-12 public schools and ensure that the menstrual products are available in female, male and gender-neutral washrooms.

### Investing in classrooms

#### Recommendation 8

That the Government of Manitoba reinstate the cap on class size for kindergarten to Grade 3 to help ensure that teachers can provide students the individualized attention they need to improve educational outcomes.

#### Recommendation 9

That class composition be considered when determining class size. Class composition refers to the diversity of student abilities including behavioural needs, mental or physical disabilities, giftedness, and English as an additional language. Differently abled students require access to appropriate learning opportunities, specialized educational supports, and individualized programming, intervention, and accommodation.

#### Recommendation 10

That the Government of Manitoba review and update any K-12 curricula older than seven years.

Further, that outcomes related to sexuality and relationships be updated to meet the comprehensive sex education (CSE) standards as outlined by the Sex Information and Education Council of Canada (SIECCAN).

### **Recommendation 11**

That the Government of Manitoba support classroom-based formative assessments that align with existing and new curricula. Further, that the Government of Manitoba ensure that mental health services are readily accessible in schools, including more school counsellors and other specialist support teachers, to address student mental health issues where necessary.

### **Recommendation 12**

That the Government of Manitoba ensure public school students have access to technological devices and reliable, affordable internet service to enrich their learning experience.

## **Supporting successful inclusion and overall mental health and wellbeing**

### **Recommendation 13**

That the Government of Manitoba develop a comprehensive mental health curriculum for K-12 students, promote mental wellness and help reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues.

Further, that the Government of Manitoba ensure that mental health services are readily accessible in schools, including more school counsellors and other specialist support teachers, to address student mental health issues where necessary.

### **Recommendation 14**

That the Government of Manitoba reduce wait times for student assessment, diagnosis, and intervention to ensure that students with learning disabilities and those who qualify for a special education designation receive timely and appropriate resources and supports, regardless of where in the province they attend school.

### **Recommendation 15**

That the Government of Manitoba ensure that students requiring clinician resources, such as psychology, social work, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, audiology, speech and language pathology, etc. are provided access in a manner that is timely, efficient and effective.

## **Dedicating funds for teacher PLD, recruitment and retention**

### **Recommendation 16**

That the Government of Manitoba mandate school divisions/districts to release MTS members for professional development on MTS PD day. The province must provide any funding needed to achieve this mandate.

### **Recommendation 17**

That the Government of Manitoba and school divisions work together to fund teacher professional learning and development (PLD) to ensure that PLD is adequately funded by Manitoba Education and to provide teachers access to ongoing learning opportunities for their work in complex and diverse classrooms.

### **Recommendation 18**

That the Government of Manitoba, the Bureau de l'éducation française, and all other stakeholders work together to develop a strategy for recruiting and retaining French-language teachers.

Further, that the Government of Manitoba make a commitment to increase bilingual staff in all positions in French Immersion schools.

## **Advancing reconciliation in support of TRC recommendations**

### **Recommendation 19**

That the Government of Manitoba make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Indigenous peoples' historical and contemporary contributions relevant to the local community and Nations involved.

### **Recommendation 20**

That the Government of Manitoba fund certified teachers, acting in the capacity of Indigenous education consultants, and the use of Elders and Indigenous knowledge keepers to support decolonial and anti-oppressive teaching methods in classrooms.

### **Recommendation 21**

That the Government of Manitoba address barriers and to create culturally safe spaces to engage Indigenous parents and caregivers at the school level.

### **Recommendation 22**

That the Government of Manitoba build teacher-student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect, using anti-racism curriculum and teaching resources developed by Manitoba Education.

### **Recommendation 23**

That the Government of Manitoba establish senior-level positions in government at the assistant deputy minister level or higher dedicated to Indigenous content and Indigenous student achievement.

### **Recommendation 24**

That the Government of Manitoba provide time and resources for teacher professional development that promotes reconciliation and anti-racist pedagogical practices.

### **Recommendation 25**

That the Government of Manitoba fund the development of anti-racist, anti-oppressive and decolonial policies to enhance equity and address systemic barriers that impact the school experience and achievement of Indigenous people. Policy development should be a collaborative process that includes representation from divisions, education stakeholders, Elders, knowledge keepers and members of the Indigenous community.

### **Recommendation 26**

That the Government of Manitoba fund and support the collaborative implementation of anti-racist, anti-oppressive and decolonial policies to include professional learning and accountable reporting mechanisms.