



Local Voices Local Choices

Because schools belong to communities



INVESTING LOCAL TAX DOLLARS INTO LOCAL SCHOOLS

How your local school board is working for Portage la Prairie and Area:

The Portage la Prairie School Division has a long history of providing unique educational programs in our region. Local citizens have always had an active voice in shaping the educational system that we have in our area. Over the years, local voices have made local choices, resulting in huge benefits to all students in our division.

Some important decisions that were made locally are:

- offering a K-12 French Immersion program
- creating one Regional Secondary School – Portage Collegiate Institute, that offers diverse programming for all students in the division
- providing a wide variety of industrial arts, technical & vocational programs, with first class vocational spaces that mirror industry standards containing the latest technology, tools and equipment
- installing a fiber optics network across the city of Portage la Prairie and extending to Oakville for greater internet and communication capabilities for our students
- Investing heavily in computer technology for all grade levels and all schools
- providing band, drama and visual arts programming
- partnering with Red River College to offer dual credit opportunities to our high school students. Students may graduate high school having all ready earned post-secondary credits
- welcoming and allowing Red River College to utilize PLPSD labs and facilities to offer programming to college/adult students
- partnering with local groups to operate daycare and early years programming in our schools
- providing stakeholders, the opportunity for meaningful involvement in the creation of the Portage la Prairie School Division Strategic Plan
- collaborating and communicating with the City, Municipal Governments, Hutterian and Indigenous communities on a number of educational projects.
- providing additional funding above Provincial support for our Special Education Programs
- implementing recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
- Investing significantly in Accessibility upgrades to make all Portage la Prairie School Division buildings accessible to the public
- partnering with a number of community groups to provide access for countless after-hour clubs and activities in schools across the division

BRINGING AWARENESS OF POTENTIAL EDUCATIONAL REVIEW IMPLICATIONS

Details of the announced K-12 education review are beginning to be released. In an effort to engage the residents of Portage la Prairie and surrounding areas, the Portage la Prairie School Division would like to share more information about key issues to bring awareness to the review, and the potential implications to the future of education not only within our division, but the province of Manitoba.



FACT OR FICTION?

School boards are opposed to the review.

X FICTION: School Boards welcome the review. If we can find ways to save money while increasing learning, create more opportunities for our students and increase engagement from our communities, why would we oppose such an outcome? If the review is comprehensive, transparent, inclusive and non-political, School Boards will support the conclusions.

Eliminating the ability of the local school board to tax will mean no more property taxes!

X FICTION: In provinces where local School Boards have been stripped of their ability to tax, the Provincial Government has instead collected and set the tax rate. The money goes into the government's bank account so local tax money may or may not be spent in our Division. If property tax for education was eliminated the government still needs the revenue so will tax in another manner, such as adding 2 or 3% to the PST.

Locally collected taxes ensure that the money is spent where it is collected. Funding for

the Portage la Prairie School Division from the Province has not increased in the last 5 years.

✓ FACT: The provincial contribution to Portage la Prairie School Division's budget has actually decreased by about \$240,000 per year over the last two years. It has again for the 2019-20 school year. The previous three years saw a 0% increase. The Province has also made it clear that similar cuts to our budget are to be expected over the next few years.

Amalgamation saves money.

X FICTION: A study from the Frontier Institute for Public Policy after the last round of amalgamations, which resulted in the loss of 20 school divisions, **showed no savings.** It was found that dollars were spent to save pennies. In fact, in some areas, when factoring in contract settlements costs only increased. **There is NO real relationship between school division size and cost per student.**

Example: • Pine Creek SD – 1,100 students - \$11,412 cost per student • Winnipeg SD – 31425 students - \$12,943 cost per

student. The larger the entity the less connected you are to local stakeholders.

NOTE: Portage la Prairie School Division has maintained one of the lowest cost per pupil rates since the 1990's, while continuing to provide outstanding value for money. According to the provincial FRAME report, all neighbouring school divisions report a higher cost per pupil (approximately +\$950 per pupil more). Amalgamation in this region could result in higher costs for local ratepayers, not lower due to increased costs such as transportation.

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✓ FACT: A great example would be health boards. As health boards have grown bigger, have services improved? Have costs been lowered? Do local citizens feel like they have a voice when it comes to making decisions about health services in their area? If the answer is no, let us not make the same mistake in Education.

Portage Collegiate Institute is a unique high school because it offers more technical vocational programs than most rural and urban high schools.

✓ FACT: Many high schools in rural Manitoba offer none. Portage la Prairie School Division Boards have made a conscious decision over the years to pay for and provide unique vocational options to our students with significant local investments in the Cosmetology, Building Construction Trades, Applied Commerce Education,

and Automotive Technology facilities and technology.

Trustees are paid very well, so reducing the number of trustees or eliminating school boards all together will save a great deal of money.

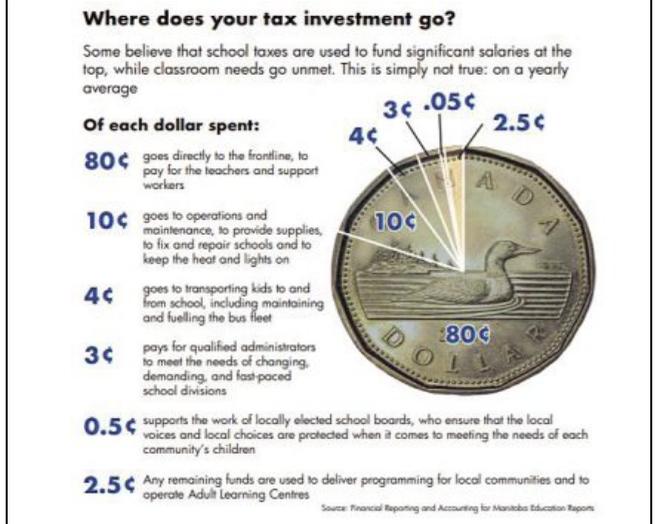
X FICTION: Portage la Prairie School Division Trustees are paid as follows: chair \$9,900; vice-chair \$9,150; trustee \$8,400 / year. Provincially, total trustee costs account for 0.5% of the overall budget. Unlike many city councils and municipal boards who adjusted compensation packages for their elected officials (due to changes to federal tax rules), the Portage la Prairie School Division Board of Trustees did not increase their pay packages.

Trustees do not want to make hard decisions so they just increase taxes.

X FICTION: Your Board undertook a comprehensive review of its operations one year ago. Upon completion of that review, the Board made decisions to reduce costs. The Portage la Prairie School Division Trustees have kept budget increases below the rate of inflation by:

- maintaining or where possible reducing staffing levels
- carefully reviewing all funding requests
- restructuring of the school division

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Help Shape Our Education System.

Participate in the Manitoba Government
K-12 Education Review.

Written submissions may be emailed to: K12educationcommission@gov.mb.ca
To learn more: edu.gov.mb.ca/educationreview/

Career Education Matters for the Future of Our Students

Portage la Prairie School Division offers a variety of Career Development Education courses. These courses enhance the employability skills for all students in the Division. We are viewed as an innovated leader in the Province, with many other divisions following our lead. Mandatory Career Development in Grade nine, to Credits for Employment and High School Apprenticeship, connections are made with our community. Students are gaining real-life experiences by working in the local community, earning credits, and gaining employment. From learning in the classroom to engaging experiences in the community, all leading to graduation attainment. This programming encourages our students to remain in our community and become our leaders of tomorrow.