

MEMO

October 22, 2018

TO: All Trustees

FROM: MSBA Provincial Executive

RE: Editorial sent to Winnipeg Free Press for consideration

This week's elections will see each voter use their democratic right to choose how education is delivered in this province. Public education is an important public service that impacts the lives of over 207,000 kids and their families across our province. It further impacts 31,000 people who work to provide our students with bright futures. This is why public funding to support our schools is second, only after healthcare. Planning excellence in the delivery of education could therefore not be more important to most Manitobans. And this is where every Manitoban plays a key role, through our democratic way of life. As voters, when you go to the ballot box to cast your vote for school trustee, you choose who among us will share responsibility for ensuring that the needs of Manitoba's students and schools continue to be met.

One size does not fit all when it comes to planning for such a big school system. This is why Manitoba has 37 school divisions, each with its own elected school board, to represent every community in our province. Northern and southern, rural and urban, English and French, to name just a few. Yet, there are so many more than that. Winnipeggers for instance, know that their city alone is one community made up of many neighbourhoods. Each one of Manitoba's school divisions thus ensure that school needs are met at the local level, where decisions are made that provide the best education for students. In this respect, local voices and local choices still matter and do make a difference.

There has been some talk recently about changing how school divisions and their school boards represent communities. We wanted to find out more about what Manitobans thought of these proposed changes. A month ago, our association asked some important questions. Did the people of Manitoba wish to keep their local school division to serve the people of their community, or create bigger school divisions? Did they want to protect their right to elect school boards, or give up those rights? The results are very telling.

According to the scientific research poll conducted by Probe Research, a clear majority, or 56 percent of Manitobans, indicated that keeping local community school boards was their first choice. Less than a quarter, or 23 percent, wanted to amalgamate school boards to create larger sized boards. And only eight percent— not even one person in ten— wanted to abolish school boards altogether, in favour of the planning and delivery of education by the provincial government alone. All other respondents either couldn't say which of these options they preferred or had no opinion on the subject.

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These were not the only findings. Over 80 percent of Manitobans felt that electing their own trustees to oversee public schools remained an important democratic right. For those who continue to believe this is their right, casting your vote this week will be important. But for those who also favour keeping their local neighbourhood and community school boards, staying engaged in the days, months and year ahead will be as important.

Once all votes have been counted, every Manitoban must speak up to have their voices counted as well. They can do so in light of the online pre-budget survey that the government has published just last week, as well as during next year's review of the public education system. These opportunities will provide all Manitobans with the ability to share their opinions with the government concerning local democracy, to ensure that the future of public schools remains bright for all Manitobans.



**MANITOBANS' VIEWS ON THE
FUTURE OF PROVINCIAL
SCHOOL BOARD SYSTEM**
SEPTEMBER 2018

MANITOBA
School Boards
ASSOCIATION

P R  B E

RESEARCH INC.

ABOUT THE PROBE RESEARCH OMNIBUS

For more than two decades, Probe Research Inc. has undertaken quarterly omnibus surveys of random and representative samples of Manitoba adults. These scientific surveys have provided strategic and proprietary insights to hundreds of public, private and not-for-profit clients on a range of social, cultural and public policy topics. The Probe Research Omnibus Survey of Manitoba adults is the province's largest and most trusted general population survey.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The survey instrument was designed by Probe Research in close consultation with the Manitoba School Boards Association.

METHODOLOGY

Between September 19 and 28, 2018, Probe Research surveyed a random and representative sampling of 1,116 adults residing in Manitoba.

- ▶ With a sample of 1,116, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results are within ± 2.9 percentage points of what they would have been if the entire adult population of Manitoba had been surveyed. The margin of error is higher within each of the survey's population sub-groups.
- ▶ Modified random digit dialing, including both landline and wireless numbers, ensured all Manitoba adults had an equal opportunity to participate in this Probe Research survey. A CATI-to-web approach was employed whereby a live-voice operator or interactive system randomly recruited respondents by telephone, inviting them to complete the survey via a secure online questionnaire. In addition, 205 randomly recruited Probe Research panel members were included in this general population adult sampling.
- ▶ Minor statistical weighting has been applied to this sample to ensure that age and gender characteristics properly reflect known attributes of the province's population. All data analysis was performed using SPSS statistical analysis software.

FOR MORE
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KEY FINDINGS

Manitoba public opinion favours keeping the current system of local elected school boards over amalgamation or direct provincial oversight. Offered an overall choice, a majority of 56 per cent of Manitobans opt for keeping the current system versus 23 per cent who would move to larger boards and only eight per cent who would prefer direct provincial management. (13% could not say.)

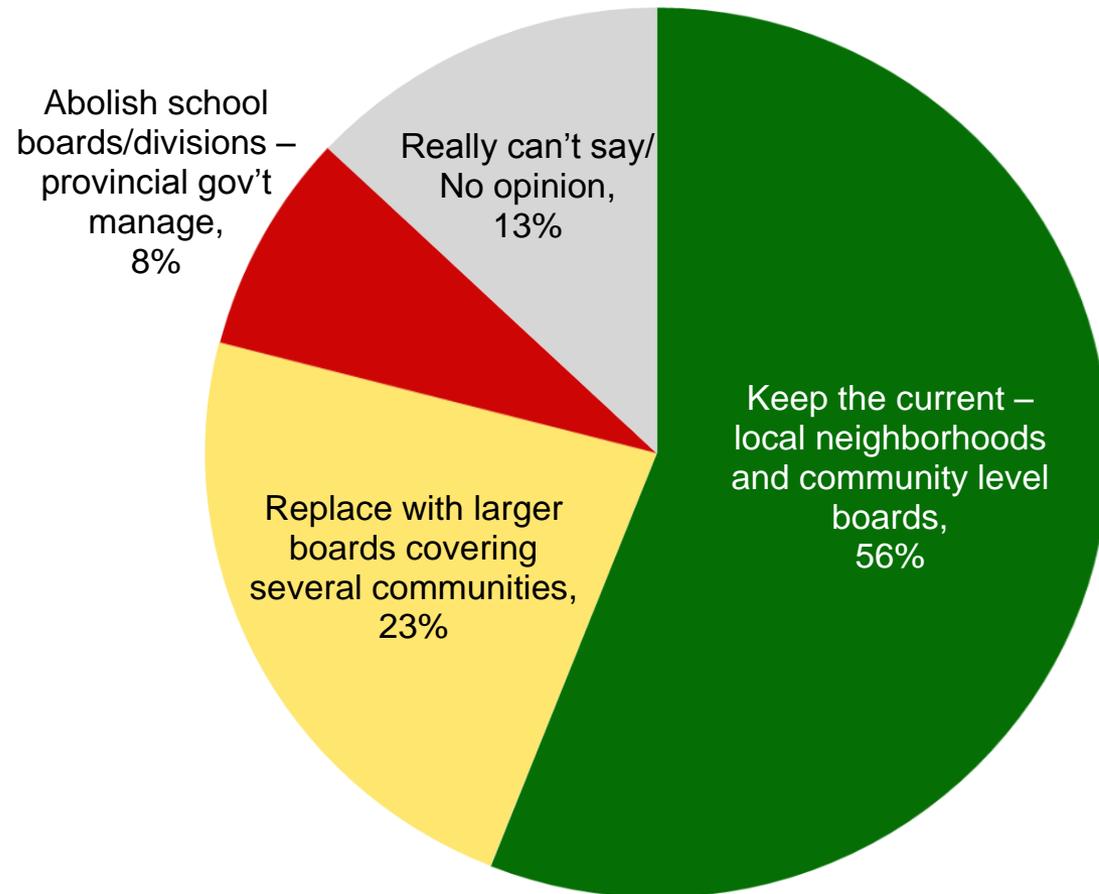
This is the preference of a majority or large plurality of Manitobans from all walks of life with especially strong support for the status quo recorded:

- outside of Winnipeg (69% versus 47% in the city);
- among women (61%, rising to 70% among younger women);
- among those currently involved (either as parents or employed) in the public school system (65% versus 45% of those with no involvement in the system).

Manitobans embrace the democratic argument in favour of electing school boards: four-in-five (81%) agreed that *"It's an important democratic right for Manitobans to directly elect their own representatives to oversee their local public schools."*

MANITOBANS' CHOICE FOR THE PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

"Which one of these options would be your first choice for Manitoba's public education system?" (n=1,116)



Support for keeping the current system is strongest among:

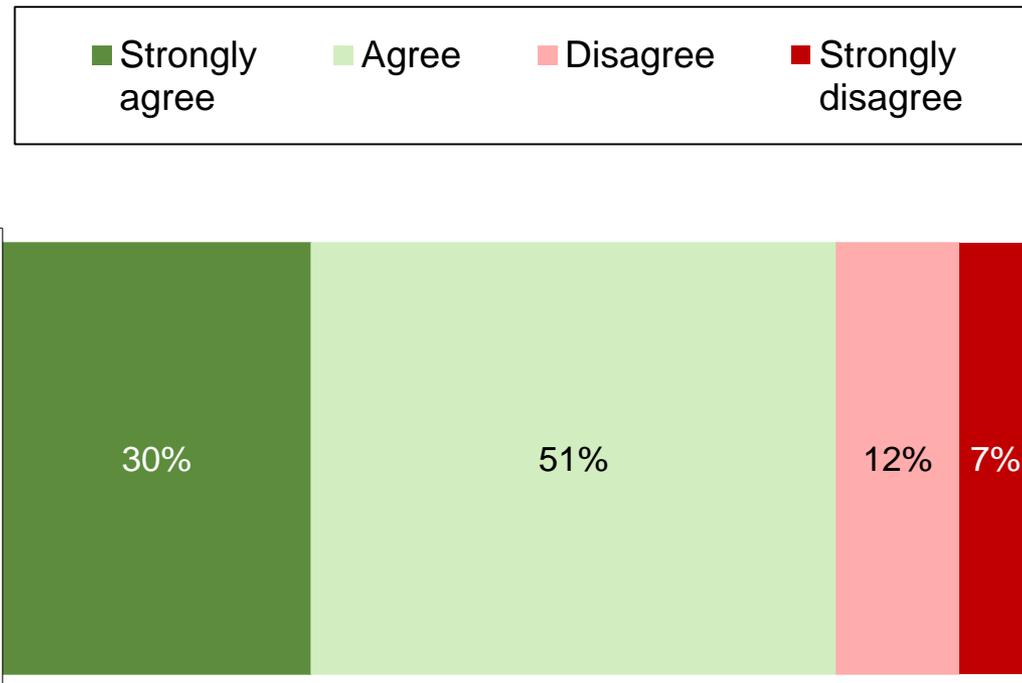
- Rural Manitobans (69% versus 47% of Winnipeg residents);
- Women (61%);
- Those involved in the public school system either as a parent or working (65% favour the status quo).

Base: Manitoba adults

RESPONSES TO DEMOCRACY AND EFFICIENCY ARGUMENTS

*“Do you agree or disagree
with the following statements?”
(N=1,116)*

It’s an important
democratic right for
Manitobans to directly
elect their own
representatives to
oversee their local
public schools



Base: Manitoba adults