

MONDAY, MARCH-19-18

PARK WEST SCHOOL DIVISION

RE: PROPOSED CUTS – VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN SMALLER SCHOOLS

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

IT IS VERY UPSETTING THAT THESE PROGRAMS WILL ONLY BE CUT TO KIDS IN THE SMALLER SCHOOLS NEEDING TO BE BUSSED TO LARGER SITES. SO CHILDREN IN THE LARGER SCHOOLS WITH THE LABS WILL CONTINUE TO TAKE THESE COURSES FOR GRADES 7-8 WHILE OUR CHILDREN FROM BINSARTH WILL NO LONGER HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE THESE PROGRAMS EVEN JUST IN GRADE 8. NO SURE WHY YOU FEEL THAT OUR STUDENTS DESERVES LESS EDUCATION AND ARE NOT WORTHY OF RECEIVING THE SAME BENEFITS AS THE LARGER SCHOOL CENTRES. I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY PWSD FEELS THEY NEED TO CUT THIS PROGRAM. THIS GIVES THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN AND EXPLORE OTHER OPTIONS AS NOT ALL KIDS WILL ATTEND UNIVERSITY. IT IS ALSO VERY HELPFUL TO THE KIDS TRANSITIONING TO THE NEW SCHOOL.

I AM PERSONALLY VERY DISAPPOINTED IN THIS PROPOSED CUT AND THE FACT THAT OUR CHILDREN COULD BENEFIT FROM THE VOCATIONAL PROGRAM IN GRADE 8.

BINSARTH STUDENTS CURRENTLY GO IN GRADE 8 FOR 2 OF THE 4 COURSES. AND THOSE COURSES SWITCH EACH YEAR. SO MY UNDERSTANDING IS THAT THIS YEAR THEY ARE TAKING SEWING AND FOODS AND NEXT YEAR THE GRADE 8'S WOULD GO FOR WOODS AND METALS IF IT REMAINS AN OPTION FOR THE SMALL SCHOOLS. HOWEVER IF I'M UNDERSTANDING CORRECTLY THE STUDENTS IN THE LARGER SCHOOLS THAT HOST THESE CLASSES GET ALL 4 OF THESE COURSES IN BOTH GRADE 7 AND 8 AND THAT ISN'T GOING TO CHANGE. IN MY OPINION, IT MAKES NO SENSE TO ME WHY THE STUDENTS IN THESE LARGER SCHOOLS WOULD GET ALL 4 OF THESE COURSES TWICE BEFORE THEY HAVE TO CHOOSE COURSES IN GRADE 9 AND YET OUR CHILDREN WILL NOT GET THEM AT ALL IF THEIR PROPOSED BUDGET GOES THROUGH. AND THEN IN GRADE 9, I WOULD ASSUME OUR KIDS WOULD BE PUT IN THE SAME VOCATIONAL CLASS AS THESE OTHER KIDS THAT HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE THEM FOR THE PAST 2 YEARS. MAYBE IT'S JUST ME BUT IT DOESN'T MAKE MUCH SENSE?

PLEASE RECONSIDER YOUR PROPOSED CUTS TO THIS PROGRAM. ALL THE STUDENTS DESERVE THE SAME EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES NO MATTER WHAT SIZE THERE SCHOOL IS.

THANK YOU & DO THE RIGHT THING! RE-INVEST IN OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURES.

ANITA COOK

PARENT OF STUDENT CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN BINSARTH SCHOOL!

March 19, 2018

PWSD Board of Trustees and Senior Administration
Park West School Division
Box 68
Birtle, MB R0M 0C0

Fax 204 - 842 - 2110

Dear Board of Trustees and Senior Administration,

This family is writing to you in regards to the most recent PWSD budget made public. We are not in agreement with the cancellation of grade 7 and 8 industrial arts programming to feeder schools of Major Pratt School.

The underlying reason for this cancellation appears to be the cost of transporting students from feeder schools to Major Pratt School. Major Pratt Students in grades 7 and 8 will still enjoy this programming so we assume teachers and classrooms remain available for the program. We suggest that grade 7 and 8 teachers and a volunteer adult from the feeder schools drive our students to Major Pratt and be reimbursed for their mileage. This common sense approach might be a viable solution to the untoward slashing of valuable programming to all deserving students in PWSD.

The money for the mileage might possibly come from two sources:

- 1 - We noticed that monies allocated for the cosmo instructor were inclusive of 89,000. Was this number in excess of what was actually paid out?
- 2 - Presenters and performers to the school division often receive gifts from the division. Are these gifts purchased with School Division Funds?

We kindly request a written response to our suggestions and questions at your earliest convenience.

Yours truly,

Wayne, Kris, Samantha Brown (grade 6)

Our mailing address

Amy & Nathan & Elijah Wendell Inglis School
(grade 2, Inglis School)

P.O. Box 84
Inglis, M.B.
R0J 0X0

P.O. Box 199
Inglis, MB
R0J 0X0

Good morning Mr. David

I am writing you this letter in response to the recent proposed budget for the next school year. I was disappointed to hear that the middle years school vocational program (I.e. bussing from outside communities) will likely be cut. My two older children were the benefactors of this program. They experienced first hand, travelling to what would become there soon to be high school, they engaged with other teachers and students, but most importantly they were able to try different courses. Courses which they never would have the opportunity to try if this program didn't exist. My daughter takes sewing classes, a calling she found during her grade 8 vocational arts training. My son is deciding on a career in welding. A world that would never have opened up without the introduction into basic metal working in grade 8. I have a younger son still in Binscarth School and look forward to him also engaging in this program and possibly finding a practice which he can turn into a career.

I can only imagine how difficult it must've been this year to plan the upcoming budget, given the mandate of the government to cut expenses. I know the decision to cut this program was not taken lightly. However, I am asking as a concerned parent from a smaller community please don't let our children suffer and miss out on this valuable life skill asset.

Thank you.

Karen Cook

March 19, 2018

Parkwest School Division
Box 68
Birtle, MB R0M0C0

RE: Proposed Cuts to Middle Years Vocational Program

Dear Board of Trustees and Senior Administration:

I would like to begin by taking this opportunity to thank you all for your time and commitment to our children's futures. Budget cuts are never an easy task and there is never a perfect solution unfortunately.

With that being said, I would like to express my concern with the proposal to cut the Middle Years Vocational Programs to only the smaller schools. I have a child that is currently enrolled in Grade 8 in Binscarth School; he is bussed 18 kms to Russell each afternoon to take the sewing and foods courses and returns on the high school bus that is already transporting the high schools students. They join a class that is already running with Russell grade 8 students and will continue to run after the proposed cut, from what I understand. I truly feel that the value of this program and the skills they learn far exceed the expense of an 18 km bus ride.

I believe these courses are very valuable to our children in middle years, more specifically grade 8, as that is when students in Binscarth are given this opportunity. I thought it was quite interesting as my children were discussing the fact that my son got to take sewing and foods and when my daughter reaches grade 8 in Binscarth, she would get the opportunity to take woods and metals, that is if the courses are still available to her. If they had the option, the courses would definitely be reversed, however, I think its fantastic in the fact that they are taking things they normally wouldn't have considered.

In grade 8 or when a child is 13-14, lots are starting to think about money and how to get after school jobs and summer employment. I think these vocational courses give them excellent hands on skills to gain these jobs. And it gives them an idea of some of the things they might like as a job and some they might not like so much. It also provides them with some skills to become more independent, in a few short years, they will be looking at getting out in the world on their own, picking a career or study to focus on. Being hands on learning, it gives those students that strive by doing, the opportunity to gain some confidence in some courses that they could carry on throughout high school and college.

One other point I wanted to mention is the value of being introduced to the high school atmosphere prior to coming full time the next year. Even speaking from personal experience when I attended Binscarth School many moons ago, it can be very intimidating starting high school in a different school, everything changes... Teachers, students, schedules, bell times, learning, classrooms, even finding a bathroom. I believe that by giving these students the opportunity to come to the high schools for these vocational programs, you are taking a lot of pressure and stress off of them when they enter the school in grade 9. They have a feel for the school; know some of the staff and students and the layout of the school.

My understanding with this proposed cut is that in host schools the middle years students receive all 4 courses for both grade 7 and 8 and this will remain the same regardless of the potential funding cut. Why would this be acceptable and why do students in the same division get offered opportunity when others won't? And if this is the way things are going to proceed, will my children be in the same grade 9 vocational programs once they enter high school, as the students from the host sites that have taken the courses for two years and have a knowledge base in these areas? If a cut in this area is imminent, maybe the opportunity to take these courses could be similar for all students in all schools and only offered to grade 8 students across the division? This would allow the grade 8 students from all schools the same education and the opportunity to try these courses prior to having to choose whether to take them or not in Grade 9 and it would still give them the opportunity to get their "feet wet" in the high school before attending full time the following year. I don't feel it's fair to our children to not receive these programs based on the school they are attending in the division. In my opinion, it is not acceptable or justifiable to limit the opportunities for only some middle years students in an education system that is focused on the best interests of K-12 learning in the entire division and at a very impressionable age of the children. This program area has already been cut substantially in previous years to students from these smaller schools, so to cut it more, would be a detriment to our kids.

Another suggestion would be to increase student fees slightly to offset some of costs so no students opportunities are affected no matter their age or add a small fee to take these vocational courses.

I know that transportation was questioned for the Senior Years Vocational Programs, but I would be interested to know how many students access the transportation. Are busses operated to transport 3-4 students to these programs? Most have a license and I would assume that they transport themselves to school. Some of these students, depending on the program, are receiving thousands of dollars worth of college education for free, so if transportation needs to continue, maybe a small fee to take these courses might be reasonable.

Don't get me wrong, I see the value in both programs however I do feel that if it's a choice between K-12 education and College education, the division's priority should be the K-12 education. I feel that there must be a way to compromise to keep both programs, maybe revising them both slightly, as there are so many valid points to keep both vocational programs.

I feel your board unfortunately has a very tough decision ahead and I realize there are pros and cons to each and every item on your list of cuts. I also realize it might be much more justified in the public eye to cut something that only affects small schools with not as many complaints coming forward but with having younger children in one of these small schools that would benefit from middle years vocational programs, I really hope to see it continue for many more years.

Thank you for your time, hard work and consideration into this matter. I know that each one of you will have all the divisional student's best interest at heart while you finalize your budget.

Respectfully,

Kari Fouillard

Lana Miller
Box 531
Russell, MB
R0J 1W0

March 20, 2018

Park West School Board
Birtle, MB
R0M 0C0

Dear Park West School Board of Trustees:

I am writing in response to the proposed budget for the 2018-19 school year. I am a parent, taxpayer and teacher in Park West School Division and I am very concerned about the budget proposal that is currently on the table.

I am greatly appreciative of the time and effort that you have put into dealing with a difficult budget. I fully support the initial budget that you put forth which cut out the extra optional vocational courses for high school students. I felt that in a difficult budget year those are truly extras that had to be seriously looked at in terms of their viability. The logic in making those decisions was based on sound financial facts. As stated by our superintendent during the taped presentation of the initial budget, we offer 6 credit hours to students to achieve the nurses aid certificate at no cost to the students, which saves them \$10 - \$15 000 as compared to attending post-secondary institutions to take the course. This is awesome, but it is something that really is an extra to a K-12 education. It just weighs on my mind heavily that we would continue to do this when it costs 67% more to educate a vocational student in Park West (as per Question and Answer document). That is one of the main reasons I feel so supportive of the initial budget proposed. The courses being cut really are a luxury that we have been fortunate to offer as long as we have and to as many students as we have, including the 42 enrolled in the programs this year alone.

Replacing this cut with cuts to a bus purchase and photocopier expenses, just erodes away at the solid foundation that I feel we have in our school division. If a bus or photocopier breaks down, it will still have to be replaced, whether the budget is there or not, thus running a deficit.

Giving the middle years students access to the vocational programs is a wonderful way to give all the students in the division the same opportunities. Taking these away from that group of students will just widen the gap from small school to large school. Giving students access to band equipment and transportation to take band is also a huge part of equality for students among our schools.

I don't view any one group of students as more important than another and I know that's why the public presentations made this such a hard, emotional decision, which resulted in a reworking of the numbers. Since the new adjusted budget has been brought forward, though, I just can't help but think that we are putting so much money into an area that affects such a small percentage of our student population. I just can't get past that. Are we really willing to do this for the benefit of roughly 40 students, who realistically can take these courses after high school? Perhaps ACC could independently offer Health Care Aide, they have classroom space at Major Pratt already. It would still be a huge savings for these kids to live at home and take the course close to home. If the students are really interested they would see the savings in this. Or perhaps offering nature studies and carpentry in alternate years, seeing as the instructors are in house teachers at Birtle Collegiate and neither run at capacity every year anyway.

For me, numbers just don't lie. The question and answer document states a \$5002 difference to educate a student in a vocational program vs a non-vocational program. This is just an obvious place to reduce spending. How can we justify spending this kind of money to offer courses to so few students? If we put the emotions aside, the initial budget make the most sense.

In closing, I truly believe the first budget proposal was very financially responsible, for the longevity of our school division. I implore you to revisit this option, for the benefit of the 1300 plus other students in our school division who travel on field trips, take band, get exposure to vocational courses and build the foundation of our school division.

Sincerely,

Lana Miller

Box 1462
Russell, MB R0J 1W0

March 18, 2018

Stephen David, Superintendent/CEO
Park West School Division
Box 68
Birtle, MB R0M 0C0

Attn: PWSD Board of Trustees and Senior Administration

Over the course of the last few weeks I have had numerous conversations with parents, colleagues and community members and have put much thought into the PWSD proposed budgets. When the original budget came out, the cuts to the dual accredited/college level vocational programs had people in social media land outraged. I feel the outrage was due in part to a lack of communication as to what these programs actually are and the enormous cost of running them. One of the main misconceptions was that the Birtle Collegiate was losing their Woods courses. From what I understand, that was never the case. Birtle Collegiate would no longer have the vocational carpentry program, which costs our division close to \$10,000 per student taking it, but would still continue on with Grades 9 through 12 Woods courses like other schools in our division. This means that students would still have the opportunity to build carpentry skills and these high school Woods credits would be just as accepted on an application to ACC as the vocational Carpentry credits. Therefore, the accusations from the public saying that the board doesn't support the trades were completely false and unjustified. I supported the board's original budget decisions as they seemed to affect the least amount of students and financially had the largest savings impact.

After the public hearing and the updated proposed budget was posted, I was disappointed, to say the least. The board's decision to cut the middle years vocational programs within our division is the most upsetting. I understand that this will not affect students at Major Pratt School or other schools which have the vocational facilities, but I must advocate for the middle years students from other smaller schools. As someone who works in the high school at MPS, I have seen what a difference it makes to the Binscarth and Inglis students to have the opportunity to come to the 'big school' in Grades 7 and 8 for Woods, Metals, Clothing and Foods. It is not just about taking the courses, which is an essential part of the students knowing what options to select in Grade 9, but also about meeting their future classmates and becoming comfortable and confident in a much larger educational setting. The middle years vocational programs, for these students, are a wonderful transition to high school life and curriculum.

I understand that your job as trustees has become very difficult over the past 2 years due to the Provincial funding cuts. You now must make some tough decisions that will ultimately not make everyone happy. I am personally against retaining the Cosmetology, Health Care Aide, Carpentry and Nature Studies programs at the expense of our K-12 students. It makes little sense to me to pay for a handful of high school students to have the opportunity to take college level/dual credit courses in high school, but not allow middle years students to take middle years programs, or Grade 6 students to take Grade 6 Outdoor Ed, or to cut extra-curricular funding thus putting field trips in jeopardy, etc. Currently in MPS we have a Grade 8 class with 28 students. We've had our reading recovery teacher cut from full time to .25. Our division's priority *must* be K-12 education. The vocational/dual credit trades courses were wonderful options when the funds were available to keep them in place, but that is no longer the case.

I believe that as a board you must look at the big picture and possibly find some compromises within the new proposed budget. The Health Care Aide course is argued to be beneficial to our region. If you choose to retain it I would hope that students would be required to pay for at least a portion of it. I do not feel that the other 3 high school vocational courses being offered are cost efficient and I question how many students taking them actually continue on in a field related to their course. I would also like to suggest that if you feel the need to keep some of the vocational/college courses that you make it the responsibility of the students and their parents to transport them. Some of these students are already getting a free start to their career (Cosmo and Health Care Aide) and others are receiving the benefit of dual credits (Nature Studies and Carpentry), at the expense of tax payers, so transporting themselves is a small thing to ask. This would save the division \$96,000 which could then be put towards retaining the middle years vocational programs, lessening the proposed cuts to the extra-curricular budget, or being proactive and saving for a new bus.

In closing, I would like to thank you for being a part of our students' education system. Your job is not an easy one, but as board trustees of a K-12 division, I encourage you to *put K-12 education first*, above all else.

Sincerely,

Lorissa Cook

MPS Parent/ Former Exec. Member, MPS Parent Council/ Substitute, PWSD

March 20, 2018

Dear Park West School Board,

I am disappointed to see the revised budget that while saving the vocational programs which I know are important to many in our communities does so at the expense of the band programs. I will speak to the Band Program Supplies cut and not the busing issue as that is for the SCS/SL program to do but it is a huge loss for them and will affect their program greatly.

The funding that the division has provided in the past few years has been about one third of the Major Pratt Band program until about this last year where it is only about a quarter. The remainder of our funding comes from grants, donations and student fees. Next year, you are proposing to provide nothing towards our operating costs.

In any given year the band program spends between \$10-13,000. When the board gave the band programs additional funding a few years ago it was at the same time as the push for lower fees for students for all activities ranging from sports to music. The lowered fees were offset by a boost in divisional support. The current amount that MPS charges band students for renting instruments does not even cover the cleaning cost of each of our instruments let alone any wear and tear repairs that need done. When the need for instruments in our program exceeds our supply, we must rent from a music store at a price of 2-3 times the amount of our rental fees.

Without your support, our program will be forced into doing multiple fundraisers and charging our students for things that the Band Boosters used to cover like registration and transportation for festival trips or reeds for our reed instrument players. While we can put off some minor maintenance for a brief time to stay out of the red this coming year, this cut in funding cannot be a permanent solution to balancing the budget at a divisional level.

Sincerely,

Pearl Von Zuben

Good morning,

I am writing this in regards to the proposed cuts to the middle years vocational program.

As a parent with children just coming up to these courses I feel like offering college courses over middle years programs is unfair. We are a K-12 division, not a college. If my children decide not to pursue one of the offered vocational programs I won't see anyone handing out money for my child's first year of college. Which PWSD is doing right now. We are paying for what is essentially a college course and taking out the programs for the K-12 children.

I also find it unfair that in reading and talking to others it sounds like the bigger schools that have the labs to have these vocational programs won't see a cut but the smaller schools like Binscarth (where my children go to school) and Inglis will have the program cut. It's very cruel to make our children suffer because of where we decide to live. My children have no control over where we live and I will have to explain to them that the reason they can't participate is because we choose to live in the community of Binscarth.

These programs are also very beneficial for these students as they get the opportunity to go to the bigger school and it helps in the transition from having to leave Binscarth to attend Russell school in Grade 9.

I believe that PWSD needs to focus on the well being and education of our K-12 children! I also believe that if you look long and hard at the bigger picture, there will be many other places you can cut back other than on our children's education. Maybe cutting from the top end is what needs to happen.

Thank you

The Reagh's

To Whom it May Concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to voice our opinions on your current budget plans. It is no doubt, a daunting task that none take lightly. As a mother of 4 children in this division I have great interest in your decisions. Thank you for reconsidering the cutting of the programs offered to our senior students.

I noticed that the middle years vocational program is being cut. I was disappointed to hear this, but further disappointed to hear it was only the smaller schools that would miss this opportunity. I have seen the advantages with my older 2 children having had the chance to go to the Russell School and take Sewing, and Foods (neither child has had the year with woods or metals). I like that my kids are learning these useful life skills. Yes they can be taught at home. The lessons that they are learning are far greater than the obvious cooking and sewing basics. The daily trips to the "big school" help our small school students transition to life in a new environment. I hear stories of new friends, and how the new school isn't nearly as scary as once imagined. I feel this is a big deal to a small town student to feel included and helps ease anxiety many kids have when heading into their transitional year. The hallways are easier navigated and the faces more friendly. It is as much an experience of human acceptance as it is skill building.

I was disappointed also to learn that the schools where the shop is usually held will continue with the program, for both their grade 7 and grade 8 years. Is it financially possible to reduce the time that the big schools receive these programs in order to make it possible for all students in the PWSD receive the same opportunities? For example only grade 8 students will take the vocational arts? Perhaps only for a reduced time frame compared to current years? I am hoping there are some other options that can be explored before completely dissolving these useful programs.

Respectfully,

Sabrina Aitchison

- **Name** Shellie and Kevin Wasilka
- **Email** kevshel@mymts.net
- **Subject** Proposed Budget Cuts - Inglis School Vocational Arts Program
- **Message** Good afternoon, As parents of 3 children in the Park West School Division, we wish to express our disappointment at the proposed budget cuts to the vocational arts program for the Inglis School. It is our understanding this program will continue for those students at Major Pratt but stop for the outside communities where transportation is required. We ask that rather than simply cutting this program, you explore other solutions such as seeking parent volunteers to drive the students. As the program takes place at the end of the school day, the students should be able to return to their respective communities (in our case, Inglis) via school bus. This would mean transportation is only needed to get to Major Pratt. Aside from offering important learning opportunities for our children, these programs also expose them to larger class settings and a larger school. This is extremely beneficial as they will soon transition to high school and it gives them a feel for what lies ahead and reduces some of the intimidation. We hope you consider any other possible options to retain this program so that it can benefit all children at the Grade 7/8 level, not just those that are fortunate enough to live in a larger centre. Thank you for your time. Sincerely, Shellie and Kevin Wasilka 204-564-2079
- **Sent on:** 21 March, 2018

Thank you!

Box 1162
Russell, MB
R0J 1W0
March 19, 2018

Park West School Division
Birtle, MB
R0M 0C0

Dear Stephen David

I would like to submit this letter in response to the second proposal of the Park West Budget.

As parents we have several concerns regarding the changes that have been put forth. We realize that it is difficult to make these decisions, however, we feel that the first budget proposal was better. The younger population of students is truly where the focus should be. As a parent of a grade 2 student who is struggling with reading, it was a great disappointment to us when the reading recovery program at Major Pratt was cut last year. To continue on with cuts to the middle years vocational program, band programming, the grade 6 outdoor education, photocopying, and the purchase of a bus for 2018-2019 school year is wrong in our opinion. The middle years students from outside communities need access to these programs so that they are equal with other students entering high school. To cut photocopying budgets leaves teachers trying to figure out different ways to provide programming which is perhaps possible, but the whole focus for the division's existence is for them to do their job. To cut the purchase of a bus puts student safety at risk and just delays this cost into future years. I would strongly encourage the board to figure out a way to reinstate the reading recovery programs that were cut to our schools. Learning to read is an instrumental part of education.

I realize the Senior Years Vocational programming is valuable, but it is also available outside of the secondary school setting. We need to put our money at the heart of education which is teaching students to read and giving them access to programming so that they can make informed decisions as teenagers becoming adults.

I hope that further consideration is taken prior to the adoption of the budget. Our vote would be to return to the first proposed budget.

Sincerely

Jamie & Tammy Edwards

Box 474

Birtle, MB R0M 0C0

March 6, 2018

Park West School Division Administration and Board

Box 68

Birtle, MB R0M 0C0

Dear Sirs and Madams:

I am writing to express concern about the proposed cancellation of the four senior vocational programs in PWSD for the 2018-2019 school year. I am unable to attend the board meeting on March 8 to present my comments in person, and therefore I'm sharing them in this letter.

At the public budget meeting on February 26, I referred to the vocational programs as the jewels in Park West's crown. I have often sung the virtues of PWSD as an innovative organization, with the vocational programs being the defining example. I feel the educational climate has changed over the past generation or two (since the parents and grandparents of current students were in high school), and it's important for divisional priorities to keep up with the times and even push the envelope. While I would never propose a lesser focus on core courses, I would suggest that university is no longer the best post-secondary option for most high school students (even though it was for me, nearly thirty years ago). College programs including trades have become an important consideration for many students, regardless of their academic ability. PWSD's vocational programs have been key assets for students interested in pursuing further education and careers in trades, and I predict that over time, the vocational programs should attract more students.

I recognize the budgetary timeline has been very tight, from the announcement of provincial funding until the deadline to finalize PWSD's budget. It's not easy and it may not even be possible to make the best long-term decisions under considerable time pressure, especially when trustees have lives outside PWSD and don't have unlimited hours to devote to board functions. I fear the vocational programs (located at only two schools) may have been an obvious (I hesitate to say "easy") target when compared with taking all the necessary time to review every budget line in detail, think outside the box, consult with affected parties and experts, and end up with different cuts spread throughout the division's programs and schools. Wouldn't it be great if the budgetary process could occur a year or more in advance, to allow time to make the best proactive decisions and long-term plans that build year after year, rather than hurried reactive decisions for the upcoming year based on unexpected changes to provincial funding? However, that is not the current reality.

Mr. David stated several times at the public budget meeting and at BCI's PAC meeting, that staffing schools is not as simple as applying the formula, since formula-based cuts would prevent certain schools from being able to run their programs. In fact, the current budget proposal imposes exactly that

reality on BCI and the vocational programs. May I suggest that where there's a will, there's a way? Creativity on the part of PWSD administration, board, principals and staff may allow solutions to be found, and there may be ways to continue offering great education in different ways. It all comes down to priorities, and even sacred cows. What if we thought of the vocational programs as sacred cows? What would be cut in that case? I'm not an expert in education, but as a pharmacy owner currently facing large cuts in provincial healthcare funding, I understand the importance of brainstorming and taking time to consider all options before making any irreversible decisions.

Some of Park West's vocational programs have only been offered for a few years, and they have the potential to grow in future. Some of the programs have higher enrolment than others. I would suggest looking at the four programs individually rather than as a block. I would also encourage PWSD to try to preserve these programs long enough to explore some new educational models. For example, could the health care aide program be maintained until there is time to explore partnerships with Prairie Mountain Health? There is a shortage of health care aides in the region, which is necessitating the use of untrained aides, and/or costly agency aides. Surely it makes economic and healthcare sense to have an additional source of trained health care aides in PMH. Similarly, advances in technology may allow schools to offer more courses by IITV, although not as soon as 2018-2019. IITV and attrition may increase staffing efficiencies over the next few years. Yet by the time these efficiencies are realized, the vocational programs may be long gone.

Once the programs are cut, they may be gone forever. Even if future funding allows the programs to be resurrected, what student would enrol in cosmetology knowing the precedent of the program being suddenly cancelled this year? (Please also consider: is it ethical to cut this program abruptly rather than grandfathering it to allow current students to complete the program?)

I recognize that the cancellation of the vocational programs will affect a minority of students (who also happen to be relatively expensive to educate). My oldest son is graduating this year, and he did not choose to enrol in one of the vocational programs. I can't say whether his younger brothers will choose a vocational stream, if they are still available. However, I do feel strongly that vocational programming is essential now and in the future, and I will indeed be disappointed if Park West abandons these initiatives.

Sincerely,

Alison Desjardins, Parent

Cc: Stacie Stonehouse, BCI Principal

ROSSBURN COLLEGIATE

Principal: Bob Ploshynsky

Box 370 • Rossburn MB • R0J 1V0 • rci@pwsd.ca • Ph: 204.842.2810 • Fax: 204.859.3044

Date: 03.07.18

Board of Trustees
Park West School Division
PO Box 68
1126 St. Clare Street
Birtle, Manitoba
R0M 0C0

Re: Waywayseecappo Shops Program.

Dear Board Members,

When Joe Aruda initiated talks toward our current educational partnership he asked me to support the idea of a shops program at the Waywayseecappo Community School for students at RCI. As we all know, this was an almost unprecedented move; even on a national scale—provincial students attending a federal school!

Initially I wasn't sure how our municipal students and parents would react to the idea and I braced myself for a resistance that never really came. The impact of that bold initial step was a cornerstone on which our amazing partnership has been built. It was a school board's act of courage and wisdom, and a move toward healing that is flourishing before our eyes.

It is within this context that I strongly urge each of you to support the program going forward into the 2018-2019 school year. This program is not at all marginal in cost-to-benefit considerations. Currently we have 12 students attending the afternoon program in semester 2. Our schools are six kilometers apart, and many of our participating students are simply returning to their K-8 community school for part of their high-school program.

The current cosmetology and power mechanics courses offer each of our participating students new avenues of experience and possibility. For me, however, it's more personal on a professional and societal level. Our Indigenous students have a history of inequity just as their parents and their parents before them do. For me, cutting this program should not be up for consideration on a number of levels that I know each of you recognize.

Sincerely,



Bob Ploshynsky
Principal—Rossburn Collegiate