



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### PROPOSED EDUCATION MODERNIZATION ACT (BILL 64): CHAOS, CUTS AND LESS DEMOCRACY

#### WHAT IS BILL 64?

It's *The Education Modernization Act*. Bill 64 is a threat to public K-12 education in Manitoba.

The proposed law:

- Creates the Provincial Education Authority (PEA) to run the public education system. A small, appointed group of 6 to 11 board members will deliver public education across the province.
- Ends local democracy in education by eliminating School Divisions and elected Boards of Trustees (except the francophone school division). Thirty-seven School Divisions are replaced with 15 regions administered by Education Directors and advisory bodies, all run by the PEA.
- Creates a plan to gradually eliminate the education property tax that makes up 42% of all education funding.

#### WHEN WILL THESE CHANGES HAPPEN?

July 1, 2022 is the date set for the Provincial Education Authority to take over.

Bill 64 must become law first. The provincial government is planning to appoint a transition team to implement the changes.

#### IS THERE A PROBLEM WITH BILL 64?

Yes.

- Bill 64 includes drastic changes to the education system that have nothing to do with improving the quality, diversity and inclusiveness of public education for our province.
- Bill 64 is an attack on local democracy and public participation.
- Bill 64 is an attack on high quality, inclusive education.
- Bill 64 is an attack on public education funding.
- Bill 64 is an attack on frontlines public education workers.

- Bill 64 creates chaos and uncertainty at a time when the COVID pandemic makes public services more important than ever.

## **WILL THERE BE JOB CUTS?**

- The Minister of Education, Cliff Cullen, would not guarantee job security. He said that he would leave decisions about job cuts until later.
- Premier Pallister called the system top-heavy, and used the example of custodians in division offices who could be laid off.

## **WILL EDUCATION FUNDING BE CUT?**

- There have already been funding cuts to education, and Bill 64 will probably result in further cuts.
- Bill 64 creates a process to eliminate education property taxes that pay for 42% of education funding. The government has not said how this funding gap will be filled.

## **WILL BILL 64 IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION?**

- Bill 64 does not deal with the quality of education.
- The provincial government has presented no evidence that Bill 64 will improve student learning outcomes or the quality of education. Since 2016, their track record shows their real priorities: imposing austerity through funding cuts, service cuts, job cuts, cuts to programs for vulnerable students, and a stubborn refusal to work on reducing poverty.

## **WILL THERE BE UNION REPRESENTATION VOTES?**

- There is nothing in Bill 64 about union representation (intermingling or run-off) votes.
- The number or nature of bargaining units is not mentioned. Government has not said whether bargaining units will be province-wide, regional, or sub-regional. We do not know if support staff bargaining units will be all-inclusive or divided by classification (type of job).
- The provincial government said they will consult with support staff unions from April to June 2021. They have told us that they are counting on the Labour Relations Board to settle any bargaining unit and union representation issues.
- Let's not wait for the government to force changes. If education workers unite, we will have more power at the bargaining table – to stop Bill 64, and to face changes in education together.

## **WILL MY UNION CHANGE? WILL MY COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT CHANGE?**

- There is nothing so far in the legislation that forces workers to change unions or collective agreements. (Except that Bill 64 states that school principals and vice-principals cannot be in a bargaining unit with teachers.)

- Your current collective agreement or a new one that is ratified before July 1, 2022 will remain in place.
- We do not know what will happen after July 1, 2022, and the provincial government or the Labour Relations Board may make decisions on union representation later.

### **WILL I KEEP MY PENSION AND BENEFITS?**

- We believe so. More conversations with government are needed – but it appears the legislation was drafted as to allow the continuation of the various existing pension and benefits plans – at least for the time being. In our one meeting with government representatives, they indicated that the issue of pensions and benefits in the sector would be settled at the bargaining table.

### **WILL I KEEP MY SENIORITY?**

- The provincial government has no answers on what will happen to seniority after July 1, 2022.

### **WILL MY EMPLOYER CHANGE?**

- Yes. If Bill 64 became law, the Provincial Education Authority (PEA) will become the Employer for all education employees as of July 1, 2022. (School Divisions will no longer exist and will therefore no longer be Employers. The only exception is the francophone school division.)

### **WHEN WILL BARGAINING START? WILL BARGAINING BE PROVINCE-WIDE?**

- The current round of bargaining can start like usual – contact your CUPE Local to find out more.
- After July 1, 2022, there will be one Employer, but government has not said if or how contracts and bargaining units will change. They have not said if there will be provincial bargaining for education support workers.

### **WHAT CAN I DO TO PROTECT PUBLIC EDUCATION?**

- Stay informed and support your local CUPE bargaining committee.
- Support the CUPE Manitoba “Kids not Cuts” campaign.
- Visit [www.cupe.mb.ca](http://www.cupe.mb.ca) to get updates and order your “Kids Not Cuts – I Support our Schools” lawn sign, free of charge.
- Visit [www.CNCmanitoba.ca/education](http://www.CNCmanitoba.ca/education) to send a letter to the provincial government, asking them to scrap Bill 64 and fund education better.
- Follow CUPE Manitoba on Facebook and Twitter.

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