



The
Manitoba
Teachers'
Society

NEWS *release*

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MB Teachers release 17-point Education Review submission

Universal meal program, class size, TRC calls to action, curriculum, French-language issues, and more

The Manitoba Teachers' Society today released their submission to the K-12 Education Review. Included in the 17 recommendations is a call for a universal meal program for students in the K-12 public education system.

"Proper nutrition supports student learning. Unfortunately, teachers are telling us that an increasing number of kids are coming to school hungry," said MTS President Norm Gould. "Hungry kids aren't focused on schoolwork; they're focused on their hunger pangs."

There are many reasons why a child may be at risk of coming to school hungry. One of the most important factors is financial. Manitoba has one of the highest child poverty rates in Canada, ranging from 12 per cent to 22 per cent. The percentage is even higher among Indigenous communities where one in two First Nations children, one in four Métis and one in four Inuit live in poverty.

"We recognize that the issue of poverty extends beyond meal programs, but we have to start somewhere," he said. "A universal meal program is about lessening the barriers to education that exist because of socioeconomic inequities."

In 2016/17, the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba (CNCM), which funds school nutrition programs, served 3.7 million snacks and meals, reaching 24,000 students and 239 programs. However, 60 per cent of the programs supported by CNCM needed further resources to meet the demand of students.

"These programs should be able to access more stable and less complicated sources of funding and be able to expand to all public schools," said Gould.

The Society is also recommending a collaborative effort with the Government of Manitoba to develop uniform teaching standards for the teaching profession.

"The public trusts teachers because teachers have the qualifications, skills and judgment, to serve students' educational needs," said Gould. "Teachers have a responsibility to act at all times in a manner that is worthy of this public trust and consistent with the teaching profession's expectations."

Teachers already adhere to a Code of Professional Practice that outlines their commitment to high quality, professional teaching. Standards are an additional piece that would focus on performance and competency and help guide the professional judgment and actions of the teaching profession.

Gould added that public trust is a two-way street and that the public also trusts that the government is fulfilling its role in ensuring that education is appropriately funded and that teachers have access to the necessary resources and supports.

The submission also includes recommendations on implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, French-language education, class size and composition, access to clinicians and student support services, and more.