

SCHOOL DIVISION SIZE

**An examination of School Division Size
with a view to developing an understanding of
policy decision-making, and
the role of research in that process.**

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By: Carolyn I. A. Lintott

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in
partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of:**

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SCHOOL DIVISION SIZE
AN EXAMINATION OF SCHOOL DIVISION SIZE
WITH A VIEW TO DEVELOPING AN UNDERSTANDING OF
POLICY DECISION-MAKING, AND
THE ROLE OF RESEARCH IN THAT PROCESS

BY

CAROLYN I.A. LINTOTT

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MASTER OF EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

On July 20, 1993 the Minister of Education, Rosemary Vodrey, announced on behalf of the Province of Manitoba the appointment of a Commission to conduct an independent comprehensive review of Manitoba school division/district boundaries. The Commission began its work in the fall of 1993 with a responsibility to produce a report on their findings to the new Minister of Education and Training, Clayton Manness, in the fall of 1994.

The mandate of the Commission is to study, consult and make recommendations to the Minister of Education and Training on any adjustments in school division / district boundaries for the Province of Manitoba. Within the terms of reference the Commission is examining a number of areas that may impact on the boundaries decisions, or be affected by those decisions. This Commission is also intending to make recommendations with respect to governance structures for both schools and school divisions.

This is the second major review of school division boundaries in Manitoba. The first review took place as a result of recommendations flowing from the MacFarlane Commission Report on Education in 1959. That review resulted in a substantive restructuring effort which saw the divisions and districts in the province go from over 1800 to the 56 we have today. It has been over thirty years since this question has been reviewed in our Province. In that time there have been many changes "which have impacted on the relevance and viability of boundaries which were created more than two generations ago." ¹ These have included changes in: population density, regional economic activity, provincial and national economic activity, technology, legislation regarding who should be accommodated within the public school system, and expectations regarding programming, delivery of service and learning outcomes. These changes have contributed to some school boards being unable to offer certain programs and services, and this has resulted in some perceived inequities in the educational opportunities for young people in Manitoba.

¹ Manitoba Teachers' Society, A Summary of Boundaries Issues. Nov.24,1993, p.2

We have come full circle to having to face some of the same questions which brought us to the MacFarlane Commission in 1959. We are at a point where school division / district size has again become an issue.

The question of optimal size - whether it be the optimal size of a school or a school division - is not usually one raised by practising educators at the school level. It more often comes from politicians concerned because small or declining enrolments, and the resources available in small schools or small divisions, appear inadequate to meet the educational demands or expectations. Fiscal considerations play a key role in prompting such reviews.

The question of school division reorganization is one being reviewed not only in Manitoba but also in other Provinces across the country - and for ostensibly the same reason. The country, nationally and provincially, is in serious debt, and since education is considered to be a high cost item, ways are being examined to enable politicians to contain or reduce costs.

There are, however, other agendas being considered. One is what the public school system ought to be providing in the way of education. The other is who should be governing the delivery of that education.

Although school division organization is more a political decision than an educational decision, the way in which divisions are organized has had profound effects on the way in which we provide education in the province. It is for this reason that the writer is interested in the current review of school division boundaries.

The reader needs to know that the work of this thesis was completed prior to the finalization of the report and recommendations from the Boundaries Review Commission. Their report was given to the government in November 1994 and was released to the public during the second week of February 1995. The writer has added a final chapter to this work which speaks to how the report of the Boundaries Review Commission supports the findings of the thesis.

WHAT WILL COMPRISE THE WORK OF THE THESIS?

1. A Review of the history of consolidation in Manitoba.

The first chapter of this work is devoted to looking at the efforts made in Manitoba (between 1870 and 1970) to bring about a more consolidated public school system. Information for this portion of the research comes from general history books as well as those with a specific educational focus. The chapter includes a brief summary of the MacFarlane Report of 1959 which stimulated the major reorganization of school division and district boundaries which exist currently. This work provides the background for understanding the issues being faced by the Boundaries Review Commission today. It also provides the basis for understanding the role context plays in the formation of policy.

2. Some Information on the Current Context

This chapter provides some brief information on the current context with respect to boundary review in both Manitoba and Canada. This information provides the frame of reference within which decisions about boundaries in Manitoba are being made.

3. A Review of the literature on school division size.

The writer reviewed articles which identify the research findings of: cost, quality, curriculum, student achievement, staffing and governance in relation to the question of division and district size. This work provides the theoretical framework for an analysis and discussion of the questions asked by the Commission reviewing boundaries and the presentations made to the Boundaries Commission by the official stakeholder groups. This chapter also includes some of the literature findings on the role of research in policy decision-making.

4. Information related to the current Boundaries Review Commission

This chapter includes some background on the Boundaries Review Commission and an analysis of the discussion document used by the Boundaries Review Commission in the consultation process with the various stakeholders. It also includes two literature findings with respect to Commissions in general.

5. An analysis of the presentations of the official stakeholders to the Boundaries Review Commission in the light of what the research says about size.

In this chapter the writer examines the responses made to the Commission by the official stakeholders and compares those responses to the research. The intent is to determine what is being said to the commission in relation to division and district size, and to determine how this fits with the research.

The presentations being examined include those from: the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Manitoba Association of School Business Officials, the Manitoba Association of School Principals, and the Parent Teacher Federation.

This chapter also includes a discussion of the political context within which decisions are made and indicates how this might affect not only what the politicians do but also the responses made by the official stakeholders.

6. A summation of what the writer has learned from the study of boundary reorganization in Manitoba

In this study the writer is primarily interested in understanding the broader question of how policy decisions are made and to what extent research plays a role in that decision-making. The question of boundary reorganization is a vehicle for the examination of this question. In this chapter the writer briefly discusses what has been learned about policy formation from this study.

7. A brief comparison of the findings of this study to the actual report & recommendations made by the Boundaries Review Commission.

This chapter briefly looks at some of the conclusions reached by the writer and compares them to the report and recommendations produced by the members of the Boundaries Review Commission.

The primary source of information for this work includes a review of the relevant literature and an analysis of both the Boundaries Review Discussion Document and the presentations made by the major stakeholders in education to the Boundaries Review Commission.

The literature review provides a frame of reference for understanding the process,

responses and implications with respect to boundaries decisions. The literature is also used to develop an understanding of how research is used in the decision-making process.

The Boundaries Review Discussion Document provides a basis for understanding where the Commission is coming from with respect to boundary reorganization. It also provides a practical example against which to understand the literature with respect to commissions.

The examination of the presentations made to the Boundaries Review Commission by the official stakeholders provides a practical example of how what organizations say fits with the research and the extent to which the official organizations use the research findings in their arguments and why. These presentations are only seven out of three hundred and eighteen received by the Commission. The writer is restricting this study to an examination of what the major stakeholders say for several reasons:

1. The official bodies represent the key players in education and have a powerful voice in what happens in education.
2. It is a small number of briefs and so manageable to analyze.
3. The official organizations represent the thinking across the province and so theoretically already represent a compromise of positions, or the dominant position of the members.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

More simply put, in this study it is the writer's intention to examine the question of boundary reorganization and division size as a vehicle for understanding policy decision-making, and the role of research in that process.

WHY AM I STUDYING THIS QUESTION?

The change in boundaries that occurred after the MacFarlane Report had an effect on more than the size of divisions. Boundary changes affected: the size of schools, the curriculum being offered, the development of teaching as a profession, and the governance structure of schooling in Manitoba. Should the divisions again be reorganized the writer suspects that other changes will follow as an indirect consequence of boundary changes. Some of the changes may benefit education for young people, others may work against the best interests of education for young people.

The writer believes that by better understanding the process of policy decision-making educators can make a more influential contribution to that process. Boundary reorganization has been selected as the vehicle for developing that understanding because it has a long history in Manitoba and is also a current issue before the policy makers in our province.

CHAPTER ONE

THE HISTORY OF CONSOLIDATION IN MANITOBA

In order to understand some of the issues facing the Boundaries Review Commission, and the positions taken by the various stakeholders today with respect to division and district reorganization, it is helpful to review how the school districts in the Province came to be organized as they are in 1994. The issue of school division and school district consolidation has been under discussion in this province for most of the years since the formation of a public school system of education in 1871. It has only lain dormant since the major restructuring following the MacFarlane Commission recommendations in 1959.

CONSOLIDATION EFFORTS IN MANITOBA PRIOR TO 1959

When settlers first came to Manitoba the pioneer communities were small and self-contained. Transportation and communication across and between communities was difficult. "Under these conditions, the small school district, supported by a few neighbours living close together, was the only system that would work."² The schools in the district were established by the church, and the life of both the school and the church were bounded by the size of the community.

A system of education in Manitoba was established in 1871, one year after the Province joined Confederation. In order to accommodate the two dominant religious and cultural groups in the Province the system established was a Dual System, with both Protestant and Catholic schools. Under this new system the Province was divided into 24 school districts. The boundaries of these districts coincided with the

² Manitoba Teachers' Society, Building Equity. (A Submission to the Boundaries Review Commission, April 20, 1994), p.20.

provincial electoral districts of the period. At that time, within the boundaries of the 24 school districts, there were 16 Protestant schools enrolling 816 pupils, and 17 Catholic schools enrolling 639 pupils. The schools in this new system, which were to be publicly funded, were all elementary, and the usual pattern was one school per district.³

By 1890 the population had increased significantly. With that increase in population came an increase in both the number of schools and school districts. There were still some of the same difficulties in communication and transportation that had existed earlier, so the small district structure was still somewhat suited to the time and conditions.

The demographics had changed, however, and while there was a dramatic increase in the growth of the student population in the Protestant schools, the same was not true for the growth in the population in the Catholic schools. This change would negatively affect support for the dual system of education.

Attendance at secondary schools was also on the increase. Accompanying that growth in secondary education were increasing demands for the continuation of publicly funded schooling beyond the elementary years. This change in expectation for secondary schooling was to expand, and to provide the first significant incentive for district consolidation fifty years later.

In 1890 the Dual System was abolished and a non-sectarian Public School System was established.

By 1897 the number of pupils enrolled in school had increased to 21,500. The school districts serving those pupils had also increased in number from 24 to 1,018. In only sixteen years the average pupils per district had dropped from 60 to 21. The need for consolidation of schools and districts was already being discussed.

³ Alexander Gregor and Keith Wilson, The Development of Education in Manitoba. (United States of America: Kendal/Hunt Publishing Company, 1984), p.34.

In 1904 an Act was passed in the Provincial legislature which authorized the formation of consolidated school districts. ⁴ As a result of this legislation school consolidations increased so that by 1912 there were 41 consolidated school districts. In that year a report entitled *Consolidation of Rural Schools in Manitoba* was published by the Department of Education. It included the following arguments in favour of consolidation:

- “1. The children of the farm would have equal opportunities with those of the town.
2. Better school officials could be secured by having a larger area from which to select.
3. The rich and the poor would have equal advantages in securing a high school education.
4. Graded instruction would be made possible.
5. Sufficient enrolment would be ensured to provide the social and cultural contact with companionable associates necessary for the best development of every child.” ⁵

As the system was, the Department of Education had great difficulty in controlling both the curriculum that was being taught, and how it was being delivered. A reduction in the number of school divisions would centralize the system, making it easier to exercise control over content, evaluation and standards. Thus it should be of no surprise that their report favoured consolidation.

By 1916 there were some additional consolidations bringing the total number to 72. These consolidations represented 1/10th of the entire organized school area of the Province. By this time the school enrolment had increased to 66,561, but in spite of consolidation efforts the number of districts had also increased. There were now 1835 school districts in the Province. Although this meant some increase in the number of pupils per district it was only up an average of 15 from 21 to 36.

By 1918 another 11 school districts had consolidated schools.

In 1919 legislation was passed which gave the government the power to establish school districts in any area of the Province. The intent of this legislation was to enable

⁴ *ibid.*, p.70.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 92.

the government to extend the public school system into areas which did not have any schools, or only private schools. At the same time the Public Schools Act was also amended to force the closure of all schools having an average attendance of fewer than five pupils. As a result of this latter piece of legislation there were school closures which encouraged further consolidation.

Between 1919 and 1959 there were three commissions or committees charged with looking at the whole of the educational system. Each of the reports resulting from these examinations of the system had the need to consolidate schools and school districts as a central theme. The first such study was commissioned by the Premier of the Province, John Bracken, in 1923. The commission, chaired by Walter Murray (then President of the University of Saskatchewan), recommended that schools be consolidated, and that districts be re-aligned, so that greater efficiency and economy might be achieved. (At this time some school districts were having difficulty operating because of their limited tax base.) The commission also argued that consolidated schools and school districts would make rural life more attractive, and that better educated teachers would be attracted to the rural areas. ⁶

Even though the government of the day believed that more extensive consolidation was necessary it was unwilling to act arbitrarily. If consolidation efforts were to be expanded there needed to be a push from the grass roots.

“The policy of the department in these movements of consolidation and municipal school boards, while actively sympathetic, has been to leave the initiative and carrying out of the proposals in the hands of the districts concerned. Any such movement, to be a success, must be based on public opinion in the community affected, and harmonious action is essential to the satisfactory establishing and maintenance of these new methods of administration.” ⁷

That push was not forthcoming because:

“Many of the rural trustees opposed any such move

⁶ Benjamin Levin, “The Struggle Over Modernization in Manitoba Education:1924-1960.” Issues In The History Of Education In Manitoba. (The Edwin Mellen Press, Queenston, Ontario, 1993.), p. 83.

⁷ Gregor and Wilson, p.125.

towards consolidation, and no government that had to depend on a legislature dominated by rural members could ignore this fact...One historian has concluded that the most significant reasons for opposition to consolidation were:

1. Community feeling or tradition
2. Fear of increasing school costs
3. Fear of loss of local control
4. Fear of change
5. Fear of weakening the local community unit.
6. Local community pride.
7. Belief in the virtue of the small school.
8. Fear of pupil transportation dangers.
9. Fear of loss of parental control over children.
10. Fear of the loss of the intimate home-school relationship.”⁸

In 1936 legislation was passed to give the government power to establish municipal school districts in those municipalities in which the districts that had not become parts of consolidated districts were under the jurisdiction of an official trustee.⁹

The second major committee to review education across the Province was appointed in 1945. It was a Special Select committee of the Legislative Assembly and was appointed to inquire into, and report upon, a wide range of educational concerns. Two concerns relevant to the definition of boundaries were:

“...the concern being expressed about the administration and financing of the public school system of the Province, and

...the concern about the equalization of educational opportunity throughout the Province.”¹⁰

The report stated that there was conclusive evidence that the present system of school organization was open to serious criticism as a result of the wide differences in opportunities between rural and urban areas¹¹ and made recommendations in a

⁸ Gregor and Wilson, p. 134.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹¹ Levin, p. 83.

number of areas. Two of those were as follows:

“(a) the committee accepted the principle of the larger unit of school administration and the retention of local boards with specific powers, but also recommended that an educational campaign be initiated to inform the public and gain public approval and support for the reorganization of educational administration.

(b) the committee considered that the best argument for the larger administrative unit would be the successful operation of such units, and it recommended that the Department of Education organize two such units on an experimental basis in the school year of 1945-1946.”¹²

In addition:

“The committee noted that larger administrative units would result in fairer taxation, administrative efficiencies, and better conditions for teachers, but especially that “the larger type of school unit is the only type...that could provide the type of education suited to the needs of the pupils of the Province as a whole, particularly of the large number.....who leave school at an early age.....”¹³

The committee recognized the need for successful models, plus an extensive lobby campaign, if the public notion of how education was to be funded and organized was to be changed.

As a result of the report two larger administrative units were to be set up on an experimental basis. However, only one was established, the Dauphin-Ochre School Area on January 1, 1947.

In spite of the Murray Report, and the report of the Select Committee, the position of the government with respect to forced consolidation continued into the early fifties,

¹² Gregor and Wilson, p. 108.

¹³ Levin, p.83.

even though by that time the perceived need to create larger administrative units had increased even further.

“In his reply Mr. Miller agreed consolidation of school districts was necessary. The trouble was that many districts refuse to entertain the idea and it was not the policy of the government to enforce amalgamation.”¹⁴

What the government did do was enact legislation in 1953 which permitted the establishment of secondary school areas. This legislation was intended to be a compromise between the need for larger school areas and the desire to maintain local school district areas of administration. As a result of this legislation four secondary areas were established. The first one was established around Portage La Prairie. While this was a small step towards amalgamation the Teachers' Society did not see it as meeting the basic needs of district reorganization for the following reasons stated in their presentation to the Royal Commission on Education of 1959.

- “1. There is no broadening of the base for financing the elementary school program.
2. There are overlapping jurisdictions with the consequent lack of co-ordination between the elementary and secondary programs.
3. School districts within a natural attendance area may retain their independence.
4. The minimum size of the Secondary School Area is too small for efficient operation.
5. The establishment of Secondary School Areas will tend to make more difficult the implementation of the larger area plan.”¹⁵

Given the recommendations of at least two major commissions one wonders why efforts to consolidate were so slow to be implemented. In Chapter three of “Issues in the History of Education in Manitoba” Levin poses three reasons for the lack of change in how divisions were organized in Manitoba between 1924 and 1960. These

¹⁴ Gregor and Wilson, p. 125.

¹⁵ Manitoba Teachers' Society, Brief Submitted to the Royal Commission On Education. (November, 1957), p. 22.

reasons, he suggests, had to do with the context within which these recommendations were made. In his article he talked about the economic, political and cultural context which existed at the time, and the relationship of those factors to boundaries decisions.

The Economic Context:

Levin notes that up until 1940 the agricultural economy of the province was very poor and that this created some opposition to spending more on education both at the local and provincial levels. Some alternatives to these sources of funding were explored unsuccessfully during the forties.

“The federal and provincial governments were negotiating cost-sharing arrangements as a result of the Rowell-Sirois Report, although this process did not result in any significant changes in education funding.”¹⁶

The recommendations to change the boundaries came along with recommendations for increased funding from the province. Since the government was unwilling to commit more funds to education, the boundary revisions continued to be placed on hold.

The Political Context:

During much of the time that consolidation was recommended the provincial legislature was heavily dominated by rural members. These members were not in support of the move towards consolidation and so Levin suggests that the “rural focus to government acted as a brake on the the implementation of some of the recommendations made in the Murray and Select Committee Reports.”¹⁷ Wilson and Gregor state that the governments from 1916 to 1958 provided no educational leadership and that in 1958 the government was actually defeated largely on its educational record.¹⁸

¹⁶ Levin, p. 86.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁸ Gregor and Wilson, p. 126.

The Cultural Context:

The economic and political reasons given above are commonly espoused for the resistance to consolidation. Levin gives these reasons less credence and instead highlights cultural reasons, which he states provide a better explanation for the lack of movement in this area. His explanation for the behaviour of rural legislators sets aside the idea that they might have been ignorant of the importance of education and the need for change. He argues, instead, that the rural legislators were not resistant to change, but simply defending the legitimate interests of the people they represented.

“Given this view, one could argue that the recommendations of successive reports were opposed not because rural residents were thickheaded, but because they saw quite clearly that such recommendations would change their lives in fundamental ways, and they did not want these changes to take place. In other words, they were defending what they saw as their real interests.”¹⁹

He went on to add that the reports advocating consolidation spoke in terms of the advantages of larger schools and school districts but did not speak of the consequences for the rural way of life. In this way the members of the commission avoided the notion that the recommendations presented a clash between the rural and urban ways of life.

The argument that consolidation efforts were slowed more by the social climate than simply by the economic conditions is supported in Gregor and Wilson.

“As a general conclusion, then, it can only be suggested that although economic and financial considerations did influence the development of education, their influence was not dominant. For much of this period the province enjoyed relative prosperity; and if this prosperity was not immediately reflected in the educational conditions of rural Manitoba, the reason was basically social rather than economic.”²⁰

Whether the reasons were primarily cultural, or a combination of economic, social,

¹⁹ Levin, p.84.

²⁰ Gregor and Wilson, p. 94.

political and cultural factors, up until the Report of the Royal Commission on Education in 1959 the boundaries of the school districts in Manitoba did not change significantly.

In the year before the Royal Commission on Education in Manitoba was established there were more than 1800 districts in the Province. These districts had a school enrolment of 159, 533 students serving a total population of 850,040. ²¹

²¹ Report of the Royal Commission in Manitoba. (Winnipeg, Manitoba. November 1957), p. 14.

THE CONTEXT IN MANITOBA IN 1957

By the time the MacFarlane Commission was established in 1957 the social, political and economic context of the Province had undergone some changes. These contextual changes brought with them not only the shifts in thinking, but also the shifts in power needed to bring about change in how the system of education was administered and organized.

Social Changes:

Both transportation and communication difficulties had been cited as valid reasons to keep schools and school districts local and accessible. By 1957 transportation difficulties had been eased because of improvements made to the road system. There was a paved Provincial Highway south to the border and north to Flin Flon. Equally as important, the roads were now open in the winter. Vehicles were also more reliable and more prevalent than they had been previously. It was now much easier for the "once isolated" rural communities to travel to larger centres and make more contact with urban areas.

Communication difficulties had also been reduced significantly. Electrification of the rural areas was almost complete by 1954. This brought the radio and television into rural Manitoba - and the ways of the city into the country. It also made communication over distances more feasible and more practical.

Major concerns in these areas had been addressed, leaving the rural areas more vulnerable to changes in the organization of schools and school districts.

There were events outside the Province "which were to precipitate changes that internal agitation by itself could not. The 1957 launching of Sputnik proved to have an impact on Manitoba, as it did for all North America." ²² These events served to underscore the importance of education, and heighten interest in the recommendations from the Commission.

²² Alexander D. Gregor, "Teacher Education In Manitoba." Issues In The History Of Education In Manitoba. (The Edwin Mullen Press, Queenston, Ontario, 1993.), p. 241.

In addition....

“..... Manitoba society was profoundly committed to the ideal of equality of opportunity. The widest way to the realization of the ideal was through the schools. Social rather than academic agencies, the schools had created out of the mixed immigrant population a new society of equals, for whom education might take the place of capital or family. More and better education was therefore both needed and demanded.”²³

There was also a growing belief on the part of a large number of people that there needed to be more central control over education. This belief was precipitated by local test scores and international events. People felt that the school system had adopted the American way of social adjustment and sacrificed intellectual training in doing so. There was some thinking that the system had been successful in making Canadians, but had failed to achieve high standards in literacy and numeracy.

“Teaching was being held in contempt by a growing sector of the community.”²⁴

This attitude made the general public more receptive to rethinking education, and more apt to support political decisions which would make it more possible to control what was going on in schools.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society was increasingly concerned over the welfare of its teachers in rural Manitoba. Small, local boards were able to hire unqualified teachers and to negotiate teacher salaries to the detriment of the profession. It was the Society's wish to have the qualifications for teaching both upgraded and standardized. It was also a goal to raise teacher salaries to make them commensurate with other paid professionals. The Society saw consolidation as a vehicle to achieve its goal of professionalism.

Economic Changes:

The economy, which had been very agricultural based, had been dominated with very conservative thinking as a result of both the Depression and the War. Into the Fifties, however, the economy was changing.

²³ W. L. Morton, Manitoba: A History. (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1967), p. 475.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 467.

"There were clear and pressing causes of change in Manitoba after 1955. There was first the changed economic climates of Canada and the world. The cycles of boom and depression, underscored as they were on the prairies by drought, crop failure, and debt, had become a fixed part of the thinking of the province. All enterprise, private and public, was governed by the need to be able to reduce costs and carry debt in times of low income. That depression would follow the Second World War was taken for granted. That the dry years would come again was thought certain, if unpredictable. But in fact no major depression, and no serious drought, or crop failure, occurred in the twenty years after 1945. A fundamental premise of Manitoba thinking simply did not hold. *The economic climate was buoyant, expansive, beneficent.* The hard-taught caution of two generations was confounded."²⁵

Since boundaries and funding were tied so closely together in the minds of people a decrease in the reluctance to spend money on education meant the creation of a more open attitude towards changes in boundaries.

"In the second place the very establishment of a modern society created social needs that had to be met. Of these perhaps the chief was improved opportunities for formal education. The elementary school system that had been created to ensure general literacy had largely succeeded. The secondary school system that had been designed to furnish recruits for the professions and for clerical and administrative work had also largely fulfilled its purpose. but these restricted ends were insufficient for the society which had come into being. For one thing, *all forms of work, including farm work, required, or benefited from, more than elementary education.*"²⁶

What was becoming apparent was that, while the need for education was increasing, as was the willingness to pay more for education, the ability of all areas to pay equally for the needed changes was diminishing. The comprehensive scheme of school taxation proposed by the Murray Commission in 1924 had been instituted for a

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 475.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 475.

number of years. More Provincial grants were being given to the schools in an attempt to equalize the school revenues and create more equality of educational opportunity throughout the Province. ²⁷ Twenty five years later, however, the costs of education had increased and many of the rural districts, because they were so small, and because they were losing their economic base to urban centres, were having a difficult time funding even basic education. Shifts in the economy had left some of the rural areas without sufficient tax base from which to draw education taxes.

Political Changes:

In 1907 there had been changes made in the way in which the vote was distributed throughout the Province. At that time the numbers in the rural area were still greater than those in the urban areas. By 1951 that was changing. Although the population was still larger in the rural areas, the real growth in population in Manitoba was taking place in the urban areas. What this meant politically was that there was over representation in the rural areas and under representation in the urban areas. Concern over this brought about the Redistribution Act of 1955 which increased the ratio of urban to rural areas. The political clout, long held by rural Manitobans, was slowly being taken over by the urban Manitobans. ²⁸ This was to affect how the government would react to any recommendations made by the commission.

The Depression and the War had made Manitobans very conservative in both their spending and their vision. For a number of years there had been a coalition of parties which had tended to create more political harmony, but also less challenge to the government of the day. In 1949 and 1953 the elected Premier of the Province was Campbell. He was a farmer and he was in charge of an agrarian and rural government which was non partisan. Although he was considered an effective Premier, his focus was more administrative than political or visionary. When he was voted out in 1958 he was replaced with Duff Roblin, a Progressive Conservative, during a time when the Conservatives were in power federally under John Diefenbaker.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 462.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 463.

It was Campbell who established The Royal Commission to study education in Manitoba. The study was completed, however, within the administration of Duff Roblin, in a climate where recommendations would not only be made and heard, but also acted upon.

THE MACFARLANE ROYAL COMMISSION ON EDUCATION

The commission was established on the 15th of May 1957. It was prompted by shockingly bad examination results which were achieved in the rural high schools.

The Commission had five members: R. O. MacFarlane, J. H. Bruns, J. A. Cuddy, S. Hansen and H. Wood. Three of the members, including the chair, were (or had been) urban residents of Manitoba, two of them were from rural Manitoba. Three of the panel members had some connection to the field of education. The chair had been the former Deputy Minister of Education in Manitoba.

The purpose of the Commission was identified in the Order - in - Council 1208 / 57 dated July, 1957. It stated in part:

“AND WHEREAS section 8 of Order - in - Council No. 841 / 57 provided, in part, as follows:

“8. The purpose of the Commission shall be to inquire into and report upon such matters and things pertaining to education in the Province of Manitoba as may be prescribed by the Lieutenant - Governor - in - Council.”²⁹

Once the Commission was established the members of the commission identified the following terms of reference which were accepted by the government.

“To study and report on all aspects of education in Manitoba, up to University level, and without limiting the generality of the foregoing, in particular to study and report on the following:

²⁹ Report of the Royal Commission on Education, p. ix.

1. administration;
2. finance;
3. buildings and equipment;
4. curriculum and standards;
5. supply, training, certification and terms of employment of teachers;
6. inspection and field services;
7. special groups, such as blind, deaf, physically and mentally handicapped;
8. special services such as audio, visual, library, correspondence;
9. scholarships and bursaries;
10. official trustee and special schools;
11. school attendance and its enforcement;
12. advisory and statutory boards and committees.”³⁰

The commission held hearings on 29 days between October 1 and November 26 in 1957. In addition to the information received at those hearings a number of written memoranda were submitted to the commission for inclusion into their thinking. The input was broad based. It came from a variety of stakeholders and commented upon all of the issues identified in the mandate of the commission.

One of the major stakeholders reporting to the commission was the Manitoba Teachers' Society. Since teachers are key players in the delivery of education in the province it is useful to examine their position at that time with respect to boundary changes.

THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY PRESENTATION TO THE MacFARLANE COMMISSION

In their presentation to the MacFarlane Commission the Manitoba Teachers' Society made a number of different recommendations with respect to how education might be improved in the province. In reference to the boundaries issue the Society argued in favour of the reorganization of school districts into larger attendance units. The presentation made by the Society highlighted the reasons for larger units of administration recommended by the Select Committee twelve years earlier. These

³⁰ Report of the Royal Commission on Education, p. x.

included:

1. equalization of the tax burden,
2. efficiency in school administration,
3. attraction of high quality educational leadership and instructional personnel to rural areas through better teaching conditions, and
4. improvement in the instructional program. ³¹

They argued that a program of sound financing was critical to the equalizing of educational opportunity throughout the Province, and that the reorganization of the Province into larger units of administration was an essential prerequisite to that program of financing. It was their contention that the typical school district in rural Manitoba had an insufficient tax base to pay for even half of its meagre program, and as a result had to settle for sub marginal and unqualified teachers, and had to do without educational leadership.

They also argued that when the district was too small it became inefficient in terms of cost. They noted in their presentation that when less than 200 pupils were enrolled in a district the per pupil costs increased sharply. In their presentation the Teachers' Society did not recommend only one size for divisions and districts of the Province. This was because variations in population density and geographical location would make such a recommendation unworkable. They did state that most of the settled areas could be reorganized into larger administrative units and that 250 to 500 teachers was an optimum grouping to permit the most economical use of funds. Recognizing that this recommendation alone would not likely be accepted, they also stated that units of 80 teachers or more would produce adequate supervisory and administrative control with relatively low overhead and further recommended that each reorganized district should have at least 50 teachers. This grouping would justify the minimum administrative support needed to have both financial control and curriculum leadership.

What the Teachers' Society also did not recommend was the consolidation of schools. They identified this as a local decision. There are probably two reasons for this position. Firstly, school closures can greatly affect the local community socially and

³¹ Gregor and Wilson, p.109.

economically, and so are apt to be very emotional decisions. Any hint that boundary reorganization was an attempt to close schools would further build resistance in the rural areas and undermine the implementation of the recommendations. Secondly, while the Society believed that consolidated schools would improve the general working conditions of teachers by creating conditions for educational dialogue, single grade groupings, school leadership etc., there were drawbacks, like a possible reduction in positions available, which could alienate rural teacher support. In their presentation the Teachers' Society did recommend that that the divisions formed should be grouped around logical community centres with similarity of road conditions, as well as good road and rail communications. They stated that previous arguments against consolidation centring on problems associated with transportation and communication no longer applied.

The Teachers' Society was also concerned about the size of districts for program reasons. They thought that when districts were too small they were subject to extreme localism which influenced the teacher hired for the position, and ultimately the curriculum taught. This, they argued, tended to reduce the standards and increase the inequities between educational opportunities in the rural and urban areas.

In examining the recommendations related to boundaries presented by The Manitoba Teachers' Society one needs to remember that the MTS had as their primary agenda the establishment of teaching as a profession. The Teachers Society had continually pursued this goal through the arguing of four issues which they considered to be central to the quest for professional status:

1. the acknowledgement of education as central to the building of a social order,
2. increased training for teachers, both before employment and after,
3. the improvement of salaries, and
4. input from the teachers into decision-making. ³²

Their presentation to the MacFarlane Commission was no exception. The

³² Course notes: 116:737, Jan. 1994.

presentation was based on seven principles which The Manitoba Teachers' Society believed to be fundamental, and which served to provide the basis for their arguments related to the above issues.

1. All children in all parts of the province have a right to an equitable educational opportunity.
2. The educational service to be provided must be at the highest standard the province can afford.
3. The cost of providing the educational service must be shared by the citizens of the province according to their ability to pay.
4. Education is such a direct personal service that there must be a large measure of local support and control.
5. The right of all children to equitable educational opportunity at the highest standard the province can afford implies the necessity of staffing all schools with the best teachers that can be obtained.
6. Since the public school system accepts all children regardless of their ability or background, it must recognize and make provision for the multiple individual differences within its enrolment.
7. Equitable educational opportunities can be provided only if there is coordination, leadership, and evaluation, on the one hand, balanced by freedom to adapt curricula and services to the individual differences and local conditions.”³³

Within the document the Teachers' Society stated their position even more clearly:

“Finally, the Manitoba Teachers' Society believes that one further step must be taken to ensure that the opportunity of a truly adequate education is available for all the children of Manitoba. This step is the development of teaching into a major profession in the fullest sense.”³⁴

To enable this to happen they made recommendations which, if implemented, would:

- * increase the level of provincial funding,
- * increase the entry educational level of students into teacher training,

³³ Manitoba Teachers' Society, Brief Submitted to the Royal Commission on Education. (Winnipeg, Manitoba, November 1957.), p.ii.

³⁴ Ibid., p.67.

- * extend the level of teacher training to include a university degree,
- * pay teachers at a level commensurate with other salaried professionals,
- * pay teachers on one salary schedule based on qualifications and experience with no regard to position occupied,
- * improve pension benefits,
- * give credence to the role of the Department of Education, and
- * increase the involvement of teachers in curriculum and pedagogy decisions.

If the boundaries stayed as they were it would be much more difficult to achieve the goal of professional status for teachers because local control, coupled with insufficient financing, worked against the raising of qualifications and remuneration levels which were central to advancement.

Support for the reorganization of boundaries would facilitate the implementation of those recommendations because larger administrative units would: link teachers and give them more clout, provide a stronger tax base and so make it more feasible for the recruitment of qualified teachers, and create a more centralized system which would allow the Department to exercise more control over the curriculum and the standards of evaluation.

MacFARLANE COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO SCHOOL DIVISION BOUNDARIES

The MacFarlane Commission made a number of recommendations in all of the areas relating to the terms of reference. These were, however, based on the recommendations made by the Commission in the area of finance. The members of the Commission considered finance recommendations to be central to the notion of change. The MacFarlane Commission recommended that the province assume a greater share of the educational tax burden, and allocate revenues to the local divisions in ways that would equalize the tax burden between wealthier and economically disadvantaged areas.

The members of the Commission did not, however, believe that funding changes alone would bring about improvement in the system. For that reason they chose to end the first section of the report, the chapter on school finance, with the following statement:

"It is a simple matter to spend more money on education. It is a more difficult task to spend it in a manner which will improve education. There is considerable evidence and frank admissions by outstanding Americans that while they spend proportionately more on education than any other country in the free world, it has not brought them the best education of all. It is upon these convictions that the recommendations in the following chapters are based."³⁵

The MacFarlane Commission made twenty four recommendations with respect to the Organization and Administration of School Divisions. These recommendations supported the notion that in order to provide the quality and level of programming demanded by society there was a need to reorganize the system of education into larger attendance units with a tax base able to support both qualified teachers and a diverse program. The Commission recommended between 50 and 60 school divisions with 80 to 100 teachers in each division. (This recommendation was very similar to the recommendations of The Manitoba Teachers' Society.)

The Commission also recommended the process by which the above should happen. They recommended that:

- .a boundary commission be established,
- .the Commission draw up boundaries,
- .the Commission hold local hearings to discuss the proposed changes, and
- .that the electorate vote on those boundaries on a prearranged date.

"In 1958, the provincial legislature amended the Public Schools Act to give the government authority to establish school divisions that were to be responsible for secondary education. The legislation also provided for the

³⁵ Report of the Royal Commission on Education, (Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1959), p. 19.

establishment of a Schools Boundary Commission, which was responsible for mapping out the projected school divisions.

Only a few years later, the Manitoba Royal Commission on Local Government Organization and Finance, chaired by Roland Michener, urged the government to take the next step and establish unitary school divisions that would be responsible for both elementary and secondary education. In 1964, when the Michener Report was under consideration, nine school administration units - seven of which were in metropolitan Winnipeg - were already responsible for both secondary and elementary education. These nine units were responsible for educating 40% of Manitoba's school children. However, throughout the rest of the province, no fewer than 1500 district school boards were providing educational services, and almost two-thirds of these boards were responsible for a single one-room school house." ³⁶

By the end of 1967 forty school divisions had been formed representing 93% of the school aged population in Manitoba. Within a short time eight more multi-district divisions were added. At that time the only districts remaining were those which had never been a part of a school division. These were usually in geographically remote areas of the province. In 1970, following the final consolidations of the Michener Report, there were 247,000 students being served by these school divisions and districts.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

In reviewing the history of consolidation in Manitoba the issues under discussion appear to be the same as those being discussed today. The politicians were grappling with how education should be funded, how to provide more equitable access to programming for all students, the role of the various stakeholders in the governance of education and what reforms would be necessary to provide a higher standard of education in the province. Commissions were used several times

³⁶ Manitoba Association of School Trustees, A Discussion Paper On School Division and District Boundaries in Manitoba. (December 1993), p.3.

throughout the history of consolidation to gather information about education in the province. In each case the Commissions had made the recommendation that boundary reorganization would enhance the province's ability to work towards some of the changes deemed necessary to improve education at the time. The politicians did not, however, act on the information until after the MacFarlane Royal Commission on Education in Manitoba in 1959. By that time other changes had occurred in the province which made school division consolidation a more widely accepted policy idea. The acceptability of the notion of school division consolidation then made it possible for politicians to act on the the recommendations in this area.

“(An) assumptive world domain (for politicians) defines what are acceptable and unacceptable policy ideas. Policy actors risk loss of power and influence if they propose policies that trample on powerful interests, defy tradition, or are deemed “unworkable”, or if they try to open debates on issues that diverge from the prevailing value.”³⁷

What makes a policy idea acceptable?

An examination of the history of consolidation efforts up to 1959 would lead one to believe that “acceptability” is based less on the information generated about the quality of education through commissions and more on the social, political, cultural and economic climate of the times. What had changed since 1890 were not the arguments for or against consolidation but rather the context within which those points of view were put forth, discussed and decided upon. The improvements in the infrastructure, the trend towards urbanization, the changes in the economy, the changing nature of work, the changing beliefs about the importance of education and the changes in the political composition (to name a few) all influenced and shaped the way in which the recommendations from the Commission related to boundary reorganization would be received, by the general population, and by the provincial politicians. When these factors converged to create a common mindset of readiness in the general population, which was strongly supported by the Teachers' Society, the idea became acceptable to politicians.

³⁷ Catherine Marshall, “Bridging the Chasm Between Policymakers and Educators.” Theory Into Practice (Vol. XXVII, Number 2), p.99.

In 1959 the dominant social, economic and political factors came together (with a little help from an MTS and Department of Education media campaign) to make consolidation a winning idea. It was backed by the politicians, and it was backed in the polls when the people voted on the idea.

"Policy actors know they must bet on the winners, touch all the bases, get something for everyone in policy proposals, and so on."³⁸

The result was a dramatic reorganization of school districts in Manitoba over an eight year period.

What is interesting with respect to this is what happens if the ordinary thinking that develops flies in the face of what researchers have found in their studies of the question. Should this happen one might predict, from the importance placed historically on the contextual factors, that the research would be ignored. This notion is supported in the research that Karen Fish has conducted.

"She concluded that "scientific and technological factors are peripheral to the economic, social and political concerns determining parliamentary decisions."³⁹

If one accepts the notion that context plays a role in decisions about boundaries it is useful to examine briefly the context within which boundaries are being discussed today.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.100.

³⁹ Edward A. Holdaway, "Making Research Matter." *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research*. (Vol. XXXII, No. 2, September, 1986.), p.250.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CURRENT SITUATION

In this section the writer will discuss briefly some of the contextual conditions within which the reorganization of school division boundaries is under discussion. These conditions will include specific Manitoba information related to enrollments, governance, per pupil costs and a listing of related reviews and reports which have been released within the past few years and are under discussion. In addition some brief information will be included related to reform considerations in other provinces.

The Educational Context in Manitoba

According to the enrolment report from Manitoba Education and Training, Schools' Finance Branch, there were, in 1993 - 1994, 196, 619 students in the province. These young people were being educated in 47 school divisions, 6 school districts and 3 special revenue schools across Manitoba. The smallest educational organization was the district of Sprague #2439. It had 132 students. The largest was Winnipeg School Division #1. It had 34,651 students.

Eleven of the division, district and revenue school areas have fewer than 1000 students. Over half of these educational areas, twenty-nine of the fifty-six, have an enrolment of between 1000 and 3500 students. Nine have enrolments between 3500 and 8,000. The remaining six have student enrolments of over 8,000 students.⁴⁰

The Minister of the Department of Education and Training is responsible for the supervision, control and direction of all public schools. Local school boards, made up of elected trustees, have jurisdiction over the delivery of education within the boundaries of those divisions which elect them.

"Each of these school divisions and districts is served by an elected board of trustees ranging in size from 5 to 12

⁴⁰ Boundaries Review Commission Discussion Document, November 1993., p.20.

elected board of trustees ranging in size from 5 to 12 members. The average size of (a) school board in Manitoba is 8 members; there are a total of 486 public school trustees in the province."⁴¹

In March of 1990 the Supreme Court of Canada granted official minorities the right to manage and control their own schools. This right was extended to Manitoba in 1993. The result of that ruling has been the establishment of the Francophone School Division. The establishment of this school division introduced into Manitoba a school division which is not defined geographically and which is governed differently. This new division includes French schools from other divisions where the parents have opted to be part of the Francophone School Division. It is governed by a school board which is elected by regional committees who in turn have been elected by parents. This is a significant departure from other divisions which are defined within a certain geographical area, and where the school boards are elected from, and by, the general population.

The formation of this new division, which crosses boundaries into other divisions, leaves some divisions with a sharply reduced enrollment. Norwood, St. Vital, St. Boniface and Red River Division #17 are four examples of divisions that are affected. The viability of affected divisions is now in question. This is especially true in the cases of Norwood and Red River School Division #17.

The per pupil costs of education in this province for the school year 1991 - 1992 ranged from a low of \$3,965 to a high of \$9,828.⁴² In fourteen boundary areas less than \$5,000 was spent to educate each student. In thirty seven areas the per pupil expenditure was between \$5,000 and \$7,000. In three areas the cost per pupil was in excess of \$7,000. The average cost to educate a student in Manitoba was \$5,560, with the total cost for public school education coming in at \$1,033,394,535.

Within the past few years there have been a number of committees of inquiry investigating the status of education in Manitoba. The work of these committees has included reviews of such aspects as: high school education, post secondary

⁴¹ MAST Discussion Paper., December 1993., p.4.

⁴² Boundaries Review Discussion Document., p. 27.

education, distance education, educational finance and educational legislation. Much of the substance of the reports published after the work of these committees has been aimed at educational finance and educational reform.

The Educational Context across Canada

In December of 1993 the Globe and Mail ran an education article which identified a school reform trend happening across Canada. That trend has as its goals the reduction of costs and the increasing of the efficiency of the system. Increasing the size of school divisions is one of the strategies being used or promoted. Other recommendations point to a changed perception of how schools should be governed.

In 1992 the Newfoundland Provincial Government proposed to cut the number of school boards from 27 to between 8 and 10. It also proposed trimming the number of trustees from 17 to 15, with only 10 of those being elected by the general public. The other five would be church appointed where numbers warrant. In October 1994 the government announced that the proposed legislation would not go ahead immediately as planned.

New Brunswick streamlined its linguistic-based school system in January 1992, cutting anglophone boards from 27 to 12 and Francophone boards from 15 to 6. In addition to the elected school boards the province has 6 community boards which are responsible for all aspects of school operation and are responsible to a school district board.

In Prince Edward Island the trustees of the five boards that remain after reorganization must work with school councils on local issues. (Since this article appeared the province has further reorganized reducing the numbers of divisions to 2 anglophone boards and 1 Francophone board. The anglophone boards have 7,783 and 15,832 students governed by 15 elected trustees each. The Francophone board has 627 students governed by 9 elected trustees.)

In Nova Scotia the Education Minister indicated that the government wants to devolve more authority to the local level, with a bigger role for parents. (Presently the Nova Scotia Government is reviewing its education system with a view to restructuring which may further reduce the 21 divisions they currently have. This number was reduced from 77 to 22 following a review of the review of the education financing system in 1981.)

In Ontario efforts to amalgamate school boards and reduce the numbers of trustees have not gone as smoothly. The Minister of Education was, however, able to introduce legislation that would enable boards to reduce trustees by more than the one or two now permitted under the law. The province currently has 169 school boards served by 2,000 trustees. (Recently the Ontario government released the recommendations of a Royal Commission on Learning which included recommendations in the area of governance.)

Quebec also has plans to restructure school boards along language lines. The number of districts was reviewed in 1992 with recommendations to reduce the divisions to 101 Francophone boards, 49 bilingual boards and 8 anglophone boards. Their timeline for completion is mid 1996. The number of trustees elected is tied to school enrollment. Divisions with 2,000 students elect 9 trustees. Divisions with more than 25,000 students elect 21 trustees.

In Saskatchewan a task force proposal to cut the number of school divisions from 92 to 35 is now under consideration. These recommendations were made as a result of a School Finance and Governance Review conducted by the Department of Education and Training in 1990. They include a recommended divisional size of from 2,000 students to 5,000 students. Their proposal for implementation includes incentive grants for pilot amalgamation projects. In Saskatchewan there is legislation which says there must be no fewer than 5 school trustees and no more than 10. It also allows for the appointment of advisory councils in urban centres.

Alberta introduced a measure that would allow boards to amalgamate voluntarily. (In October 1994 the government announced the amalgamation from 181 school boards

and divisions to 57. Trustee representation has been reduced from 1,000 to 435.) It also now has a law that allows for the creation of Francophone school boards. In addition Alberta has introduced the concept of Charter Schools.

British Columbia currently has 75 school districts with elected trustees for school divisions ranging from 3 to 9 depending on school division size. The Ministry of Education in British Columbia is currently discussing a need for a review of school district boundaries as part of an examination of governance and administration of the public education system.

In the Yukon a recent Education Act (1990) provides for the establishment of both school boards and school councils which include representation from the First Nations on both.

The number of school boards in the Northwest Territories was recently reduced to 10 from 11 (1994). The number of trustees varies depending upon the number of communities included in each jurisdiction. Each school has a Community Education Council which has one representative on the Division Board of Education.

The trend across Canada seems to be two pronged - aimed at centralizing some aspects of education and decentralizing others.

The consolidation of divisions and districts in Canada comes at a time when the major talk in the country is about balancing budgets and about down-sizing to reduce government expenditures.

It is within this context that Manitoba is conducting its own inquiry into how and if present divisions should be realigned. And it is within this context that Manitoba is in the process of implementing the governing structure for its newly formed Francophone Division.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

Less than thirty years ago Manitoba had 1800 school divisions. Today it has 56. Both schools and school divisions are larger than they were in the 1960's. What is currently under study is whether they should become even larger. In the past thirty five years a number of things have changed. Some of the changes (for example: in technology and in the changing nature of work) have lead to changing expectations and an increased demand for accountability in education. Others (for example: the provincial and national debt load) have lead to a perception that education funding levels must be reduced. Thus the question of boundary reorganization has once again surfaced - not only in Manitoba, but also across Canada. The key questions seem to be "Can educational expenditures be reduced in larger organizations? If they can be - at what "cost" to the level of service provided, and to the effectiveness of that service?" The question of boundary reorganization is being raised as the vehicle for financial and educational reform considerations with respect to the delivery of education.

The following chapter examines what the literature has to say in relation to division size and some of the its effect upon both efficiency and effectiveness. It also examines some of the literature findings with respect to the use of research in policy formation.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on size typically looks at several key variables in relation to size in an effort to determine the optimal size for a school or school division. These include the variables of: cost, quality, curriculum, student achievement, staffing and governance, which are examined against the background of school division efficiency and effectiveness. In this chapter the writer will do the following:

- * Define some of the key terms which recur in the literature.
- * Identify some of the research findings on size in relation to the following variables: cost, quality, curriculum, student achievement, staffing and governance.

These findings will then provide a framework for the analysis of the questions asked in the Boundaries Review Discussion Document, and the analysis of the responses made by the official stakeholders to the Boundaries Review Commission.

In this chapter the writer will also discuss what the literature has to say regarding the role of research in policy decision-making. This information will provide a background for understanding the extent to which the research enters the decision-making process with respect to boundary reorganization, and the extent to which it might be used in the process.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

The question of school and school division size has been under debate for the better part of this century. That debate has resulted in significant divisional reorganizations and consolidations - especially prior to 1970 - within both the United States and Canada. Today there are a number of states and provinces with initiatives concerning consolidation currently under debate.

"Reasons given for these....initiatives usually fall under the headings of economic efficiency, broader course offerings, quality of teaching staff, and better student performance."⁴³

Prior to most of the school division and district consolidations that took place in North America there was little research on the effects of size, or the implications that size increases would have on goals important in educating young people. Consolidation was encouraged on the premise that education would cost less and provide more in the way of programming and services. It was not until 1975 that studies were being conducted to determine the effect of school and school division size on student learning.⁴⁴

Prior to an examination of the literature on size it is useful to define three of the terms which recur within that literature: size, efficiency and effectiveness.

What is the measure of size when examining a school system?

There are a number of ways in which school division size could be measured. One could take use the industrial measure of organizational size - a simple or adjusted count of employees. In a school division, using the industrial measure, size *could* be determined by counting:

- . all of the employees within the system (ie. teachers, administrators, bus drivers, clerical staff, maintenance personnel etc.), or
- . one group of the employees in the system (ie. authorized teachers)

One problem with this definition of size becomes how one recognizes, organizationally, the large number of people within a school system who are not employees, and, in fact, outnumber the employees. This group includes both students and volunteers.

One *could* also consider taking a count of the schools within the division. Or, on the

⁴³ A. Ramirez, "Size, Cost, and Quality of Schools and School Districts: A Question of Context." Source Book on School and District Size, Cost, and Quality. (Eric ED361162, 1992.), p.10.

⁴⁴ Herbert J. Walberg, "On Local Control: Is Bigger Better?" Source Book on School and District Size, Cost and Quality. (Eric ED 361 164, 1992.), p.8.

other hand, one *could* simply measure the geographical area of the division to determine its size.

In spite of these possibilities, the most common way of measuring school division size is to identify the student enrolment within the division.

“...while student enrolment by itself may represent a theoretically -- and in some way an ideologically -- suspect indicator of system size, such data have the virtues of being both easily available and generally comprehensible. For such reasons alone enrolment will likely continue to be used as the dominant measure of system size.”⁴⁵

While enrolment data are easy to understand, what is not automatically determined from student enrolment is the “definition” of size. At what enrolment levels is a division considered small? At what enrolment levels is it considered large? “There is no immediate answer to this seemingly simple question.”⁴⁶

Ramirez used the Illinois State school districts to illustrate how the terms small and large are relative.

“...the Chicago Public Schools is one of 950 districts in Illinois. Chicago has 410,000 students in 540 attendance centres. The next largest school district in the state, Elgin, has 29,000 students in fifty attendance centres. (Illinois State Board of Education, 1992). Half the districts in the state have fewer than 800 students and the average number of schools per district is about four. Compared to Chicago, all other school districts in the state are small.”⁴⁷

A similar illustration could be drawn within Manitoba. The largest school division in the province is Winnipeg #1 with 34,000 students. The next largest is River East #9 with an enrolment of 13,284. One fifth of the divisions / districts have fewer than 1000

⁴⁵ Derek J. Allison and Patricia A. Allison, “Similarities and Singularities: A Comparative Analysis of the Organizational Size of Canadian School Systems.” A Paper Presented at the Canadian Association for the Study of Educational Administration, (Quebec, Canada, June 1989.), p.11.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.4.

⁴⁷ A. Ramirez, p. 17.

students enrolled.⁴⁸ Compared to Winnipeg #1, all other divisions or districts in this province could also be considered small.

Were we to compare school division size in Manitoba with the Chicago Public Schools *all* of the divisions in Manitoba, including Winnipeg #1, would be considered small. Allison and Allison support this difficulty with "relative terminology" when they note that the variances between jurisdictions in the range and pattern of size distributions are such that if one identifies small, medium and large only within an individual context there can be no research cross comparisons. What may be considered a large division in one place, may be considered medium or small when compared to other jurisdictions.

Within their research they attempted to identify a model for size comparison of divisions and districts across Canada. Two things are of note in that research. The first is that in their scheme there was a need for "outliers" at both ends of the size spectrum. These outliers are categories for those few divisions which fall into the very small or very large categories. The second is that there is some difficulty in comparing sizes of Canadian school divisions to those across the border. In the United States they use a four category system which demonstrates a size spread much different than one would find in Canada.⁴⁹

In the United States there are far more divisions in category D of their system - which in Canada would be an "outlier" category at the extremely low end. Within that category (<300 students) there are 2,671 divisions (18.7%) in the United States. In Canada there are only 19 divisions, or 2.4%. While the percentage of divisions with enrolments between 300 and 2,999 is roughly the same in both countries there are fewer large divisions (>2,999) in the U.S. (4.11%) than in Canada (44.3%). These statistical variations might make some of the recommendations from the literature in the U.S. less appropriate for Canada.

Swanson states further that optimum size is not simply a question of numbers, costs

⁴⁸ Boundaries Review Discussion Document, p.20.

⁴⁹ Allison and Allison, p.16.

and outcomes. He defines it as a function of desired standards, available technology and governance structures. He notes that because there have been significant changes in these over the years, studies that simply look at the relationship between size, costs and outcomes are obsolete.⁵⁰

Thus even though enrolment figures are objective and comparable the notion of size is a relative term and has much to do with the context within which the discussion is occurring. This compounds the difficulty in determining the enrolment size for small and large divisions - thus complicating the determination of optimal size.

What is meant by the word efficiency?

The dictionary definitions of efficient and efficiency are:

“productive of desired effects...productive without waste,
and
the quality or degree of being efficient...effective operation
as measured by a comparison of production with cost...”⁵¹

Within the literature on school division size efficiency refers to both spending efficiency and production efficiency.⁵²

Spending efficiency is measured in per pupil expenditures which are determined by dividing the the total expenditures of the division by the student enrolment within the division. In education many of the costs are fixed (ie. building operating expenses), with the only significant variance in costs coming from those associated with salaries and benefits which are by far the largest cost in education.⁵³

Discussions surrounding consolidation efforts are largely about trying to create spending efficiency through economies of scale arrived at through increasing class

⁵⁰ Austin Swanson, p. 8.

⁵¹ Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, p.362.

⁵² Herbert J. Walberg, "Expenditure and Size Efficiencies of Public School Districts." Educational Researcher, Volume 16, Number 7, October 1987., p. 8.

⁵³ Robert F. Hall and Robert L. Arnold, "School District Reorganization in Illinois: Improving Educational Opportunities for Students." A Paper Presented at the Annual Conference of the National Rural Education Association. (Burlington, VT, October 1993.), p.7.

size, eliminating small classes and bulk purchasing.

Economies of Scale is a term frequently used within the literature on school division size. The term comes to us from the study of economics - a social science concerned chiefly with description and analysis of the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.⁵⁴ The idea of economies of scale is that as an organization becomes larger it will be able to be both more productive and more efficient.

"The basic tenet of operating scale is that as scale is expanded in scope, generally more activity becomes feasible. This condition is known as economies of scale. The converse holds true as well. As scale is reduced in scope, less activity becomes possible. This condition is known as diseconomies of scale.

...For the provision of services, scale is measured in terms of the number of persons who are recipients of the service. For the provision of public education, the student population receiving programs and services represents scale."⁵⁵

Why is there a concern with spending efficiency and economies of scale?

There has been much legislation, both in the United States and Canada, aimed at creating funding formulas which will help to ensure that, regardless of the wealth of a particular region, all children will have equal access to a quality education. This has led to trends towards greater funding from the provinces and states, with less funding coming directly from the local level.

As the definition of quality has expanded, and expectations have increased, the cost of providing that education has risen significantly. That factor alone might not stimulate questions about the expense involved. However, as educational costs have increased, the resources available to finance public services have dwindled and the number of taxpayers with children in school has decreased. Thus questions about

⁵⁴ Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 360.

⁵⁵ MTS, Summary of Boundary Issues., November 1993., p.1 & 2.

cost, which have always had significance, have even greater significance today.

“All commercial enterprises and governments are being forced to re-evaluate their efficiency and effectiveness in order to remain solvent under today's economic pressures. Entities which are highly dependent upon government funding are being forced to find new methods by which the same or more can be achieved with less resources. This is evident in the health care and education fields where demands continue to grow but resources continue to shrink. It is apparent that a rationalization and prioritization of demands together with new and more efficient delivery mechanisms are mandatory if we expect to achieve the joint goals of excellence in that particular field together with overall deficit reduction at the senior government levels.”⁵⁶

In a survey of Superintendents and School Board Presidents from the 100 largest school districts in the United States both groups were in complete agreement that finance and related worries were the most important problems they face.⁵⁷

Production efficiency, a term used by Monk, refers to how well the money within a given division is spent on education. The assessment of production efficiency is determined, in the literature, by looking both at what division personnel are purchasing and providing with their educational dollars, and at the outcomes of the educational process in those divisions. A review of the former would involve comparing large and small divisions on things such as: teacher- pupil ratios, teacher qualifications, teacher workload and degree of specialization, courses and programs offered or transportation time spent by students. A review of the latter (educational outcomes) would involve comparing large and small divisions on such things as: student achievement, student involvement, governance structures, bureaucracy, satisfaction, student behaviour and educational quality. In assessing educational outcomes some of the literature refers to this as production efficiency, most refers to it as **effectiveness**.

In the following sections this chapter will contain a review of the literature comparing **School Division Size** to: **Cost, Quality, Curriculum, Student Achievement,**

⁵⁶ Boundaries Review Commission Discussion Document, p.26.

⁵⁷ Allan C. Ornstein, "Problems Facing School Superintendents and School Board Presidents of Large School Districts." The Urban Review (Volume 23, Number 3, 1991.), p.207.

Staffing and Governance. These variables are the ones selected because they occur most commonly in the research literature on optimal size.

SCHOOL DIVISION SIZE AND COST

Consolidation efforts were primarily undertaken due to a belief that larger jurisdictions, (and larger schools) would enable divisions to provide more diversity in curriculum and support services at an affordable cost.⁵⁸ Melnick cited reduction of costs through increased purchasing power as one the most frequent arguments in favour of large schools, which are a significant second level reorganization flowing from divisional consolidation efforts. Hall and Arnold identified the economies of scale as an important objective in consolidation deliberations.⁵⁹ It was in the hope of achieving production economies of scale and greater staff utilization that many small districts, since the turn of the century, have consolidated into larger units.⁶⁰

Monk, in his book entitled "Educational Finance: An Economic Approach" indicated that if it costs more to do the same thing in a small enrolment setting then efficiency is served by taking steps to increase enrolment. These steps could include: the reassignment of grades within a building, the closing of smaller school buildings, *the amalgamation of school divisions*, or policies aimed at the building of larger facilities. Marshan, "Student Achievement and Size of School District in North Texas", agrees that if size does not influence performance, then the school district should pick the size that minimizes cost.⁶¹

The key assumption in divisional reorganization has been that larger organizations are more economical, and can provide a higher quality of education at a lower cost.

According to Swanson the public has been quick to accept the concept of economies of scale cited in some of that research.

⁵⁸ Swanson, p.11.

⁵⁹ Hall and Arnold, p. 6.

⁶⁰ Walberg and Fowler, p.7.

⁶¹ Jerry Marshan, "Student Achievement and Size of School District in North Texas." p.8.

More recent research has, however, cast doubts on the benefits of consolidation in relation to the cost of education. Walberg noted that economies of scale, a benefit of consolidation, has not gained much support from the literature.⁶² Ramirez cited research stating that few fiscal advantages were obtained through consolidation.⁶³ Guthrie found that the evidence of cost savings associated with larger schools and districts is ambiguous at best.⁶⁴

Swanson indicated that one reason for these new findings is that transaction costs are not accounted for in the typical research on division size. These transaction costs include costs in the areas of communication, co-ordination and decision-making. As divisions increase in size researchers have found a concomitant increase in bureaucracy. This increase in bureaucracy normally results in administrative costs not typically accounted for in any research looking at division size.⁶⁵

Monk also found that there are costs associated with organizational solutions which have not always been considered in any estimates of economies of scale. These could include one time costs for redoing everything with the new divisional name (for example: letterhead, uniforms, bus lettering etc.), but they might also include ongoing increases in costs (for example: transportation).⁶⁶

Another cost, not always identified within plans for divisional reorganization or consolidation, is that associated with staff salaries and benefits.

"The usual practice in consolidating organizations is to level upwards - salaries, benefits and programs will tend to rise to the highest (and usually most expensive) level. The costs for levelling teachers' salaries and program options up to the highest level in Manitoba or in Winnipeg would be very large, far outweighing any savings in reduced

⁶² Walberg, p.4.

⁶³ Ramirez, p. 13.

⁶⁴ David H. Monk, "Educational Finance An Economic Approach." Schooling Inputs and Attributes part 2. (McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, New York.), p.406.

⁶⁵ Swanson, p.2.

⁶⁶ Monk, p.404.

administrative costs."⁶⁷

Since salaries and benefits consume the major proportion of educational spending consolidation efforts aimed at maintaining or reducing costs which do not take this into account may not achieve this goal.

Monk also found that the perceived savings in administrative costs gained through an increase in division size may not be realizable because of other staffing costs associated with increasing bureaucracy. He also noted that since administrative costs are such a small part of the educational budget any gains made here would be minimal, and constitute far less of a saving than previously thought.⁶⁸

There has also been new knowledge which has been gained with respect to diseconomies of scale. This new knowledge has added to some of the disenchantment with previous research. ⁶⁹ Cost comparisons across divisions have revealed that the benefits gained from economies of scale have an upper limit - after which the organization begins to experience diseconomies of scale. Some of those diseconomies of scale relate directly to cost, others relate to the production efficiency side of the analysis. The complicating factor is that cost comparisons have shown the breakpoint for economies of scale to vary markedly from division to division. Coleman found that diseconomies of scale became evident in Oregon once a division enrolled more than 51,000 students. Similar diseconomies of scale happened in British Columbia, but at between an enrolment of 15,000 - 20,000 students. In Manitoba the breakpoint was significantly lower. Diseconomies of scale in this province seemed to set in at the 4,000 student mark.⁷⁰ The difficult question to determine is what the contextual factors are that cause such a variance in breakpoints from economies of scale to diseconomies of scale. Is it possible that without such knowledge divisions could reorganize only to find that costs have increased instead of decreased?

⁶⁷ Boundaries Review Submission B. Levin, A. Riffel 1994

⁶⁸ Monk 1992 p.9

⁶⁹ Swanson p. 2

⁷⁰ Peter Coleman, "The Perils of Bigness; The Case Against Large School Systems." A paper on School District Size. 26 pages., p.7.

In spite of recent research there is still support for the concept of reorganizing divisions into larger units to maintain or reduce costs. Monk found a persistent consensus that an optimal size exists for both schools and school divisions. He also found that there is a general belief among researchers that economies of scale are more pronounced in secondary schooling than in primary schooling.⁷¹

The search for an optimal size becomes an issue whenever divisions or districts have become so small that they are spending more than they receive in revenues. ⁷² In these cases consolidation with other areas seems to be an effective strategy because it creates a more stable valuation base from which to draw local levies and have sufficient revenues to provide a full range of programming.⁷³

Another interesting finding which has supported efforts to reduce spending has to do with the relationship of costs to student achievement. Walberg and Fowler have found that there is no consistent relationship between how much is spent on education and how much students actually learn. This applies whether the spending is "general" or specifically related to certain components of the budget. This finding has been supported by Mullin and Summers and Hanushek. It has led researchers to speculate that traditional remedies like reducing class size and hiring better qualified teachers are unlikely to improve the learning gains of students. ⁷⁴

"It bears repeating that an important difference exists between expenditures and costs. Attempts to estimate economies of scale in education are not concerned solely with expenditures. It is not a matter of comparing large and small school districts in terms of expenditures per pupil. Such comparisons are virtually uninterpretable since they fail to control for whatever differences might exist in what the respective school districts are accomplishing. As should be clear by now, increasing efficiency is not synonymous with merely reducing expenditures. Rather, efficiency is improved if expenditures are reduced without a corresponding sacrifice of outcomes, or if outcomes are

⁷¹ Monk p.405

⁷² Hall and Arnold 1993 p.32

⁷³ Hall and Arnold 1993 p. 20

⁷⁴ Walberg and Fowler 1987 p. 7

increased without a corresponding increase in expenditures. Thus, costs concern the relationship between inputs and outcomes and are therefore correctly considered in a production context.⁷⁵

Monk notes that the central empirical question is not simply what it costs to provide a certain level of inputs, nor simply what outcomes we are able to produce, but rather what happens to the relationship between inputs and outcomes as the size of a district varies. He suggests that the literature around school division size and cost is inconclusive because of the complicated relationship between inputs and outcomes. What consistency does exist may result from a confirmation of the notion of economies of scale and the wisdom of promoting larger size schooling units, or it may result from researchers making the same mistakes in using crude measures which bear little relationship with student outcomes and the quality of education. According to Monk, the quality dimension can be measured by looking at the characteristics of inputs or at specific student-related outcome measures.

This difference in the definition of quality may help to explain some of the confusion that has surrounded the research on size.

SCHOOL DIVISION SIZE AND QUALITY

Consolidation efforts all along have not only been aimed at creating spending efficiencies, but also at providing a higher quality of education. The dictionary talks about quality as a degree of excellence. In examining the research on quality as it relates to division size one finds a wide diversity of opinion.⁷⁶ This is because, in practical terms, the definitions of quality, and of excellence, have changed over time. These changes in definition are important in understanding why research has focussed in certain directions.

Monk and Kadamus identify the diversity as a split that has emerged in the research

⁷⁵ Monk, p.402.

⁷⁶ Steven A. Melnick and others, "A Comparative Study of the Relationships Between School District Size and Selected Indicators of Educational Quality." A Paper prepared for the Connecticut Association of School Administrators. Small/Rural Schools Committee. (February, 1986), p.10.

dealing with school district organizational structure and quality. They found the major difference to be between findings of early versus more recent researchers.

"The early studies on the topic tended to find evidence of significant size related inefficiencies and / or inequities and served as an important basis for the remarkable success reformers had at reducing the number of schooling units and increasing their average size. Today, studies finding significant small size related inefficiencies and / or inequities can still be found, but they are complemented by studies suggesting that the benefits of larger size are either illusory, elusive, or more modest in magnitude than commonly supposed."⁷⁷

Ornstein had come to the same conclusion six years earlier.

"As we examine the trends with impacts on school finance, and as we try to determine the outlook for financing the schools during the 1990s, we should keep in mind that equal educational opportunity is no longer the key issue that it was in the 1960s and 1970s. Today, the key words are excellence, performance standards, efficiency, and academic productivity."⁷⁸

The difference in definitions may very well be a function of the times and where education was developmentally, in terms of what was needed and in terms of what the system provided.

Previous consolidation efforts were a response to inequities within the system. As cited, above equal opportunity was a key issue. This created a focus on the inputs dimension of quality. Proponents of consolidation were concerned with things such as: teacher qualifications and experience, facilities, and programs being offered. The concern was a response to inadequacies in these areas.

⁷⁷ David H. Monk and James A. Kadamus, "The Reform of School District Organizational Structure: New York's Experimental Use of a Collaborative Study Process." (A draft copy of a paper, February 12, 1994.), p.4.

⁷⁸ Allan C. Ornstein, "State Financing of Public Schools." Urban Education (Vol.23, No. 21, July 1988.), p.202.

Consolidation efforts created an 87% decline in the number of school districts in the United States. Where the Americans once had 117,108 school districts, they now have 15,367. In Manitoba the school divisions declined by approximately 97%, going from over 1800 school divisions to 56. This meant not only the amalgamation of school divisions, but also the amalgamation of schools. How did this address the question of ensuring a quality education (defined in terms of redressing inequities and providing equal opportunities) for all children regardless of where they lived?

1. Many of the school divisions and districts had only one very small school within their jurisdiction. The officials of the division were responsible for the hiring of the teachers and the monitoring of the curriculum. The local areas had significant influence over who would teach and what would be taught. Teachers were hired with differing qualifications and on markedly different salary schedules, and curriculum varied with the expectations of the community.

Moves toward consolidation were also moves towards more centralization and standardization - giving the Department of Education more say over who would teach and what would be taught. The assumption here is that with more control would come increased uniformity of curricular offerings and increased standards. Consolidation efforts were backed by the teachers' associations because along with consolidation came a move towards greater professionalization. This was achieved through the provision of increased training by the universities and an increased expectation of uniform credentials for persons wishing to teach.

2. School "divisions" were frequently restricted to very small geographical areas which meant that enrolments were small and the economic base for supporting the school was very limited.

Consolidation efforts enabled divisions to increase their enrolment base and to have a more viable economic tax base from which to draw local levies to support education. This became especially important as there were increasing demands for levels of education beyond elementary.

While there is no doubt that previous consolidation efforts did lead to increased teacher professionalization, more standardization of the curriculum, and broader curriculum offerings, more recent researchers have now raised questions about the case for larger size and the effect of these changes on student learning.

Monk and Kadamus speculated that the case for larger units might have become more problematic as the absolute size of the units increased, or that more sophisticated research methods might have made it more possible to capture some of the drawbacks to larger size that have always been present.

Our thinking has been affected by the progress researchers have made in the assessment of student learning which casts doubt on the effectiveness of previous linkages (for example: teacher experience, teacher qualifications, money spent, more curricular offerings) thought to contribute more positively to student learning. It has also been affected by the fact that we now have more refined methods for measuring school processes which are enabling us to specify more clearly what a high quality program entails.⁷⁹

Today, although equality of opportunity (as defined on the "inputs" mentioned above) is still important, our notion of quality has more to do with expectations for student performance and the provision of environments conducive to increasing that performance. For those reasons more recent research on size has concerned itself with the effects of size on a broader definition of quality education.

Swanson talked about the importance of culture as a dimension of quality and its relationship to learning. He found that there were differences in culture which varied with the size of an organization. He defined culture as the pattern of beliefs and expectations of the members of the school community that guide their predominant attitudes and behaviours. According to Swanson:

"Cultures most conducive to learning seem to be found in small organizations which are personal and where the

⁷⁹ David H. Monk, "Modern Conceptions of Educational Quality and State Policy Regarding Small Schooling Units." Source Book on School and District Size, Cost, and Quality (1992), p.35.

prescriptions for learning are individualized.”⁸⁰

Swanson's work applied mainly to subunits within the organization (schools) and although there may be some question regarding the applicability of this thinking to school districts, he goes on to cite conclusions reached by others which support the value of smaller organizations. Berlin and Cienkus , after co-editing an issue of Education and Urban Society devoted to the subject of size of school districts, schools, and classrooms, came to the conclusion that “Smaller seems to be better.” Walberg found larger organizations, and subunits of those organizations, to be less efficient at producing high quality outcomes. He cited research which has identified three problems associated with large organizations which interfere with their ability to achieve high quality outcomes. The first has to do with co-ordination costs among functional departments and administrative levels which divert money, time, and attention away from ultimate purposes. The second has to do with agency problems which enable staff members to work for their own, and possibly self-interested, purposes and which interfere with persons in leadership positions obtaining full and accurate information about what is happening in the system. The third has to do with the characteristics of bureaucracies which favour standard operating procedures over more productive and client-satisfying innovations.⁸¹

Although this literature review is not about school size it is important to note again that increasing division size often leads to an increase in school size. For that reason one cannot totally ignore the research on school size and quality outcomes. There is more research in this area - and what there is raises some concern about the merits of further divisional consolidation efforts which are apt to lead to larger schools.

“The preponderance of studies show that, other things being equal, students generally learn more in smaller schools and reap related benefits. ”⁸²

Walberg notes that elementary schools show positive learning effects that are consistent with being smaller in size. While studies of high schools show less

⁸⁰ Swanson, p.4.

⁸¹ Walberg 1992, p.6.

⁸² *ibid.* p.9.

consistent results related strictly to achievement, these same studies find that smaller high schools show consistent benefits to students in other ways related to quality. The smaller high schools have a positive learning effect on: student satisfaction, student sense of belonging, student participation and involvement in extra curricular activities, student attendance and retention, and student avoidance of drugs and alcohol.

Ramirez, however, found that while there are some differences in the qualities associated with school size these quality indicators tended to balance out giving each school size a unique set of qualitative advantages. These findings suggest there is still work to be done in the research in this area.

What can be said with confidence on the research on school size is that the quality of schooling can be said to be positively skewed towards institutions which are smaller in size. If divisional reorganization efforts lead to larger schools then the quality of schooling (as it has been redefined) may be adversely affected.

SCHOOL DIVISION SIZE AND CURRICULUM

Early definitions of effectiveness looked at curricular offerings to determine the measure of quality within a school division or school. The dominant issue under consideration here was that of equity. Did all students have an equal opportunity to access courses and programs - and therefore did all students have an equal opportunity to obtain a quality education?

It was found that students in some schools and school divisions had access to programs and services which were unavailable in others. It was also noted that the size of the jurisdiction seemed to play a key role. Some schools and school divisions were simply too small to support a full range of curricular offerings. They had neither the enrolment nor the revenue to sustain that broad a curriculum.

The assumption made was that the greater the number of courses being offered, the richer the program.⁸³ A major criticism of small schools, particularly small secondary

⁸³ Swanson, p.10.

schools, was therefore that, because they were unable to offer a sufficient range of courses, they were therefore unable to meet the learning needs of students and the training needs of society. In a 1959 study Conant found that large numbers of high school students were being educated in schools that had inadequate course offerings.⁸⁴ Monk and Haller also identified limited curricula as a weakness of small schools.⁸⁵

“All indications are that the program offerings of small jurisdictions are insufficient.”⁸⁶

Proponents of consolidation efforts favoured the merging of divisions and schools because they claimed that with increased size school divisions would be able to take advantage of some economies of scale (human and financial) and would then be able to address this concern.

As was predicted larger school divisions and schools were able to offer a greater range of courses and were able to give students greater flexibility in completing their secondary education.

More recent research has, however, looked beyond the surface of those curricular offerings and discovered some surprising things which lead one to question the “more is better” mindset of consolidation efforts.

Although the course offerings are greater in larger schools and school divisions, this enriched curriculum does not occur across all program areas. Typically larger settings offer more opportunities in the arts, vocational education and foreign languages, as well as some advanced and remedial courses in certain subject areas. Most of the enriched courses offered are not in the basic areas and most are not ones required for graduation.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Ramirez, p.11.

⁸⁵ Hall, p.6.

⁸⁶ Anne L. Jefferson, “Support of Small School Jurisdictions in Alberta.” The Alberta Journal of Educational Research (Vol. XXXI, No. 1, March 1985.), p.35

⁸⁷ Melnick, p.9.

Monk found not only a variance across subject areas, but also a tendency for increases in curricular offerings to diminish as schools and school divisions get larger. His research indicates a breakpoint in the advantage gained with increases in size not noted previously.

Another interesting finding is that there is a tendency in larger schools to add courses which are introductory in nature.⁸⁸ Monk notes that the pedagogical value of these courses can be questioned as a preponderance of introductory courses, instead of increasing the quality, can contribute to a less cohesive, well developed program.

What is now being researched is not only what courses are offered but who takes them. Recent findings suggest that while larger secondary schools may offer a wider range of courses it does not mean that there is wide participation in those courses.

“Remarkably small percentages of students within larger schools take advantage of those courses found only within large school curricula.”⁸⁹

Part of this small participation is due to the fact that even though larger jurisdictions offer more courses access can be limited to those courses because of restrictions in scheduling.⁹⁰ Another aspect of the small enrolment in these courses has to do with the target population of those additional course offerings.

What happens typically in larger districts is that the enriched course offerings tend to favour students enrolled in special education or advanced courses. The resources in these divisions are shifted away from the “regular” students towards those students with “special needs” at both ends of the spectrum.⁹¹ In smaller districts and schools the course offerings are directed more towards mainstream students thus making them less adversely affected by small school and district size. This raises new questions about the equity issue that larger jurisdictions were supposed to solve.

⁸⁸ Monk, p.406

⁸⁹ Monk 1992, p.7.

⁹⁰ Monk 1992, p.39, Monk and Kadamus, p.9.

⁹¹ Monk 1987, p.375.

Monk notes that size plays a "largely misunderstood"⁹² role in how one category of student will be treated in relation to another category.

Based on the more recent research Monk and Kadamus state that large size cannot be justified on the basis of enhanced curricular offerings.

The question again becomes one of "What is large size and at what point might consolidation be advantageous?" Hall and Arnold examined five school districts with very small schools which have reorganized since 1983. The preliminary results of their findings lead them to believe that there are benefits to consolidation - especially when school divisions become very small, and especially in the area of curriculum offerings.

SCHOOL DIVISION SIZE AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

In today's climate student achievement is a key indicator of school and school division quality. Since 1975, while examination of costs associated with organizations of differing size has not been neglected, a new emphasis has emerged which has been directed towards finding out the effects of size on student achievement. After 1983, and the Nation At Risk Report in the United States, learning replaced spending as the key index of educational quality.⁹³ Recent research has therefore been more concerned with student outcomes than with the typical process measures that have usually been cited in research on size. Melnick now identifies student achievement as one of the most frequently used indicators of the extent to which a school fulfills its function.⁹⁴ Ramirez indicates, however, that the question of the relationship between the size of the school district and student outcomes becomes very clouded in the research.⁹⁵

The School District Report on Reorganization in Illinois, May 1985, found that school

⁹² Monk 1987, p. 376.

⁹³ Walberg 1992, p.8.

⁹⁴ Melnick, p.16.

⁹⁵ Ramirez, p.19.

size and achievement were related and that the relationship favoured smaller units.⁹⁶ This is only one of a number of state reports that reported more positive achievement with smaller school sizes. Similar findings have been identified with smaller school districts.

Newman and Brown stated:

“The bigger school districts often have lower student achievement scores and poorer student and staff morale than do smaller districts...Walberg and Fowler (1987) report that small districts may spend more funds per student than larger school districts, but they often obtain more achievement value per dollar.”⁹⁷

In his article “On Local Control” Walberg referred to the study conducted by himself and Fowler which also found an inverse size-achievement relationship.⁹⁸

Although Melnick found no significant differences between small and large divisions with respect to student achievement, he did find a tendency for small or medium high schools to show higher test scores than large high schools. The tests used were ones on the grade nine proficiency examination, however, and while other research has corroborated a difference at this level, it has found that this difference does not appear at the more senior levels of secondary schooling. This suggests that the effect of size directly on achievement as measured by standardized tests may vary according to the age level of the students involved. This research is important in that most of the divisional consolidation efforts have been aimed at increasing the size of secondary schools.

One of the problems with this research has been the concern expressed with the use of standardized achievement tests to measure achievement. Walberg and Fowler disagree, however, with this concern. In their article “Expenditures and Size Efficiencies in Public School Districts” they state:

⁹⁶ Ramirez, p.10.

⁹⁷ Dianna L. Newman and Robert D. Brown, “School Board Member Role Expectations in Making Decisions about Educational Programs.” *Urban Education* (Vol. 28, No.3, October 1993.), p.270.

⁹⁸ Walberg 1992, p.8.

"If a district is doing poorly on its basic purpose of achievement in the important school subjects, what evidence suggests that it is doing better on more difficult and less tangible goals."⁹⁹

Their research found that in all cases larger district enrolments were associated with lower test scores. And the larger the district the worse the scores became. Based on their findings they "suggest that the policy of district consolidation undertaken in this century may have hurt rather than helped learning since they suggest diseconomies rather than economies of scale."¹⁰⁰

Schwager, Mitchell, Mitchell and Hecht also found some interesting differences between large and small divisions with respect to student achievement and student retention. In their research on "How School District Policy Influences Grade Level Retention in Elementary Schools" they found that:

"...Retention rates, achievement levels, English language proficiency, and retention policy content all differ in large and small school districts. Larger districts have more complex retention policies, with more objectification of standards, more required student remediation, and more administrative work required for their implementation... Larger districts have a lower average achievement level than middle or smaller sized districts...(and) Larger districts tend to retain more students than middle or smaller sized districts."¹⁰¹

These findings are interesting because of the research evidence which indicates that retention does not increase achievement, has an overall negative effect on the affective concerns of retained children, and adds to the likelihood of students dropping out of school.¹⁰² It is possible that increased failure rates would also have an effect on learning climate, and so affect the attitudes of teachers and the quality of schooling.

⁹⁹ Walberg and Fowler 1987, p.11.

¹⁰⁰ ibid., p.12.

¹⁰¹ Mahna T. Schwager, Douglas E. Mitchell, Tedi K. Mitchell and Jeffrey B. Hecht, "How School District Policy Influences Grade Level Retention in Elementary Schools." Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, (Winter 1992, Vol. 14, No. 4.), p.431-433.

¹⁰² ibid., p.421.

This research refers to one aspect of that on p.434.

“...it is reasonable to assume that staff members in larger districts are more likely to assume that they are responsible for providing educational opportunities and upholding standards without taking responsibility for whether students are all assisted in meeting the standards.”

In several of their articles on school division size Monk et al note the difficulties in synthesizing the research with respect to school division size and achievement. They find that studies “vary substantially in both their level of sophistication and how schooling outcomes are conceived.”¹⁰³

It is Monk’s opinion, however, that as “measures of learning outcomes become more refined and more widely available, it will become less and not more important for the state to specify preferred district and school size and organizational structure...In such a world, the state will care less whether the district or school is large or small, and more about whether the students reach the chosen threshold learning levels.”¹⁰⁴

SCHOOL DIVISION SIZE AND STAFFING

Earlier school division consolidation efforts had difficulties associated with staffing as a key concern. It was hard to recruit teachers to teach in small, primarily rural, schools and districts. Many of those that were retained had little in the way of qualifications. When school divisions were able to hire teachers they were not always able to keep them so they were continually faced with working with staff with little experience.

More recently lower student achievement in large inner city urban settings was presumed to be linked to less qualified staff since working conditions in those areas were seen as less desirable.

It was assumed that these linkages - teacher qualifications and experience - had a significant impact on the quality of schooling and student achievement.

¹⁰³ Monk and Kadamus 1994, p.9.

¹⁰⁴ Monk 1992, p.43.

"Research, however, has not been able to find a strong, consistent relationship between experience and (student) performance..

...the extra spending for such qualifications appears to exert no detectable influence on learning since the present study of expenditures, of which salaries are a major part, nor previous studies of general and specific expenditures on teacher qualifications show consistent effects."¹⁰⁵

This does not mean that educational policies of districts and the instructional practices of teachers do not make a difference with respect to student achievement. They do. What it does mean is that consolidation efforts aimed solely at engaging staff with higher qualifications and more experience will not bring about improved performance without changes in those policies and practices.

It was also assumed that larger organizations would enable teachers to specialize. This is important because specialization is believed to be an important source of economies of scale.¹⁰⁶ What Monk and others have found is that to some extent this is true. However, the effects of size on specialization disappear much sooner than would have been predicted. With the breaking point at approximately 100 students per grade level at the secondary level the result is still a high school with a relatively small enrolment.

Similar results were found by Monk in the incidence of teachers teaching multiple classes. The percentage of teachers teaching two or more sections of the same course rose from 29% to 72% between the smallest high schools studied and high schools registering 100 students per grade. After that the percentage remained about the same - even when compared with very large high schools.

Melnick found that small high schools had significantly more total staff, and significantly more content area teachers, than would be found in large high schools. He did not however find the student-teacher ratio to be of practical significance because it did not fall below the 15:1 needed for gains to be made in achievement. He

¹⁰⁵ Walberg 1987, p.6 and 12.

¹⁰⁶ Monk, p.407.

also did not find that this increase in staff meant an increase in educational costs. In his study there was no significant difference between the cost per pupil in small as compared to large high schools. He suggested this must mean that a higher proportion of the budget for small high schools is spent on staffing. He also found that in small high schools significantly more teachers had multiple teaching assignments.¹⁰⁷

SCHOOL DIVISION SIZE AND GOVERNANCE

While governance issues are not directly examined to any significant degree in the literature, they are referred to indirectly in many of the studies and do have a relationship to the beliefs that are held about optimal size.

Discussions about governance revolve around who has authority and control over directing the enterprise, what that authority encompasses, and how that authority is exercised. In the literature governance issues are discussed as they relate to division size or changes in division size.

One of the other issues around governance is to what extent education benefits from an understanding and identification of which functions operate more effectively when centralized and which operate more effectively when decentralized. Within the current literature on size one sees simultaneous trends towards centralization and decentralization. These trends reflect efforts to come to grips with that very question. On the one hand there are efforts to make divisions or districts larger, while on the other hand there are efforts to decentralize authority to subunits of those larger organizations. The efforts to consolidate divisions or districts, and centralize administration, would seem to be based more on fiscal considerations, whereas the efforts to decentralize authority would seem to be based more on responsibility and accountability considerations.

¹⁰⁷ Melnick and Others, p.30.

What does the literature say about larger organizations?

One of the findings that Walberg made was that larger organizations and subunits were less efficient at producing high quality outcomes.¹⁰⁸ While the correlation was weak and negative for organizations (divisions, districts), it was found to be strong and negative for subunits of those organizations (schools). Both correlations were, however, significant.

The reasons for this lessened ability to produce high quality outcomes were identified by Walberg and reviewed under the section on size and quality.¹⁰⁹ In summary what he says happens is that as the size of the organization increases there is an increase in bureaucracy which tends to lead to several things which have an impact on how the system is governed.

- * There is a tendency for the decision-making to become more centralized and for people working in the organization, and served by the organization, to feel less influential over the work of the organization.

- * There is a tendency for larger organizations to rely more on policy and regulations making it less responsive to needs in the system.

- * There is a tendency for people in the organization to become more specialized in their roles creating increased needs for communication and coordination.

- * There is also a tendency for people in the organization to become more concerned about their own interests than the service they are supposed to be providing.

These tendencies mitigate against producing high quality outcomes because the system does not engender the commitment, responsibility and accountability at the grass roots level necessary to bring them about. While these tendencies can be overcome a conscious effort on the part of the leadership is necessary for it to happen.

¹⁰⁸ Walberg 1992, p.121.

¹⁰⁹ This paper p.52.

And while these tendencies can also occur in smaller organizations they are less likely simply because there are fewer people involved, communication is easier, and there is less need for formalized structures.

One of the other concerns discussed in the literature relates to costs associated with administration. One of the reasons given for consolidation is the reduction of administrative costs. It is assumed that creating larger divisions will enable "non divisible" personnel to operate at full capacity thereby permitting for downsizing in administration and creating a more efficient operation . The research suggests, however, that predicted gains in this area are illusionary because of the increase in administrative costs that is typically associated with increases in bureaucracy.

The other governance factor that changes as divisions become larger was identified by Strang. He found that in larger districts, legislators, special interest groups, regulatory agencies and professional associations were able to build consensus among themselves to influence the kind of programs and services educators were to deliver.¹¹⁰ What this amounts to is less control at the point of service, where ostensibly the understanding of the needs should be greater. This ability to control programming, and in turn to direct resources away from more core programming, does not seem to be as easy to do in smaller divisions and districts.

Prior to the first reorganization in Manitoba the local community had significant control and authority over what happened in that school. The Department of Education, on the other hand, had less control. What control they did have was exercised through the inspectoral system. Reorganization changed that - reducing control at the local level and increasing it at the provincial level. It would seem that more current efforts at reorganization are trying to avoid this by the implementation of governance strategies which encourage more local control within larger structures. The assumption being that if there are fiscal advantages, and the problems with control can be overcome, then consolidation is a valid strategy for the nineties.

Newman and Brown found two interesting beliefs of school board members which

¹¹⁰ Walberg 1992, p.6.

varied according to the size of divisions. Trustees from larger districts tended to believe that the involvement of the community in decision-making was more important than did trustees of smaller districts. While talking to the Superintendent, and finding out how he / she felt in regard to certain issues was important regardless of district size trustees in larger districts tended to rely less on the Superintendent to resolve conflicts that might arise.¹¹¹

The involvement of the community might be of higher priority in larger school divisions because, according to Swanson it is easier to achieve in smaller districts.¹¹²

The question then returns to the initial comparison of size to cost. If the cost gains are phantom or minimal should the boundaries be redefined knowing that they will lead to governance issues which mitigate against the production of high quality outcomes?

Walberg and Fowler refer quite directly to the importance of closer involvement in the process of education when they indicate why they believe smaller is better:

“Superintendent and central staff awareness of citizen and parent preferences, the absence of bureaucratic layers and administrative complexity, teacher involvement in decision-making, and close home-school relations - these may account for the apparent efficiency of small districts.”¹¹³

The previous section of this chapter examined what the research had to say on division size across a number of variables. Although this information is available to policy makers, is it used in formulating recommendations or making policy decisions?

The following section looks at the use of research in policy making. It examines briefly why research is needed, when it is used and some of the problems associated with using research in decision-making.

¹¹¹ Newman and Brown, p.278.

¹¹² Swanson, p.9.

¹¹³ Walberg and Fowler 1987, p.13.

THE ROLE OF RESEARCH IN POLICY DECISION-MAKING

Research has a role to play in policy formation. Policymakers are frequently faced with decisions they have to make without either the personal experience or the expertise to make them. They are desperate for information that will help them to answer the difficult questions they face.¹¹⁴ In the presence of uncertainty it is easier to make choices by paying attention to the forecast of outcomes which can be identified through research.¹¹⁵ The idea that policy making can be improved by obtaining better information about the decision under study is one that has increased over time.¹¹⁶

There are, however, some serious problems in using the research that is available to policymakers. The following identifies some of the complaints made by politicians with respect to the research information provided to them.

1. An "oversupply" of irrelevant information that cannot be absorbed by busy gatekeepers and policymakers.
2. Information that arrives at the "wrong" time, most often too late to be of any use.
3. Theories of educational practice and performance that are not tested with empirical evidence.
4. Education proposals that are insensitive to the practical and political problems of implementation.
5. Research that ignores the state's fiscal realities.
6. Biased, inaccurate, and / or non-confirmable information."¹¹⁷

In addition the studies available for use by the policymakers often lead to conflicting results. The problem is that politicians do not have the time to read all of the relevant research in order to form their own opinion.¹¹⁸ This makes the information less usable by them in the decision-making process.

¹¹⁴ Beverly Hetrick and Carl E. Van Horn, "Educational Research Information: Meeting the Needs of State Policymakers." Theory Into Practice (Vol. XXVII, Number 2.), p.106.

¹¹⁵ John M. Quigley and Suzanne Scotchmer, "What Counts? Analysis Counts." Journal of Policy Analysis and Management (Vol. 8, No. 3, 1989.), p.483.

¹¹⁶ David K. Cohen and Michael S. Garet, "Reforming Educational Policy With Applied Social Research." Harvard Educational Review (Vol. 45, No.1, February 1975.), p.294.

¹¹⁷ Hetrick & Horn, p.107.

¹¹⁸ Holdaway, p.253.

Even when the information provided to policymakers is easy to understand, relevant, feasible and timely, it is only one of the resources policymakers have to use as they attempt to balance that knowledge with competing interests in an essentially political environment.¹¹⁹

“Simply because information is timely, relevant, objective, and given to the right people in usable form, its use has not been guaranteed...Obviously, utilization is not a simple process.”¹²⁰

The information that is of most use in decision-making is not the applied research which is often not generalizable to other situations, but rather the more basic research which is generalizable.

“They perceived that basic research is more influential in the long run than is research focused upon a particular problem because it has the capacity to provide different conceptualizations, to reformulate problems, to furnish new insights, to sharpen perceptions, and to stimulate discussion and questioning.”¹²¹

Given these factors, however, the research that is actually used by politicians tends to be that research which provides information which is congruent with the position they wish to take.

“Put simply, research provides ammunition for politicians to promote or to fight a proposed policy option.”¹²²

In this case the research used adds credibility and “objectivity” to the position taken by the politician.

¹¹⁹ Lorraine M. McDonnell, “Can Education Research Speak to State Policy?” Theory Into Practice (Vol. XXVII, No. 2.) p.91.

¹²⁰ Holdaway, p.252.

¹²¹ Holdaway, p.255.

¹²² Frank W. Lutz, “Policy-Oriented Research: What Constitutes Good Proof?” Theory Into Practice (Vol.XXVII, Number 2.) p.126.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

The arguments for and against consolidation, and the understandings about division size, have changed over time. The assumption that bigger is better, when it comes to schools and divisions, no longer holds true according to the new information gained through research. These new findings have come about as a result of basically two things. The first is our advanced knowledge and with that our increased ability to evaluate. The second comes as a result of changes that have been made and so are available for study. We have made assumptions about things which affect student learning, which when we implement them, and can study them, we find to not have the result predicted. For example: the assumption that improved teacher qualifications would result in enhanced learning by students has not held true under examination.

One of the problems with this is that increases in knowledge only have an impact on the decision-making process over time. New ideas take time to take root, and previously held beliefs are hard to change. The idea of economies of scale is a prime example of this. This is a deeply rooted idea in common thinking that has been initiated and nurtured through research. We are now faced with educational research which illustrates breakpoints in some jurisdictions which are much lower than previously thought to be true. How long will it take before this notion is easily or commonly understood? And how much longer before this affects our notion of optimal size as it relates to school divisions?

Within the next two chapters the Boundaries Review Discussion Document and the responses of the Official Stakeholders to that document are analyzed in the light of the research on division size. The writer examined these documents to identify what was said, and to what extent it fit with the research findings identified in this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BOUNDARIES REVIEW COMMISSION 1993

BACKGROUND

On July 20, 1993 the former Minister of Education and Training, Rosemary Vodrey, announced the appointment of a Commission to conduct an independent review of Manitoba school division / district boundaries.

The Mandate and Terms of Reference for the Commission were stated as follows:

"Mandate and Terms of Reference

A. Mandate

The Mandate of the Manitoba School Divisions / Districts Review Commission is to study, consult and make recommendations to the Minister of Education and Training on any adjustments in school division / district boundaries for the Province of Manitoba.

B. Terms of Reference

- I Develop and release a consultation paper.

- II Consult with the citizens and associations / organizations of Manitoba to examine the following areas, determining their impact on, and resulting consequences of, boundary alterations in furtherance of educational excellence in Manitoba:
 1. Education legislation reform
 2. Demographics
 3. Patterns of transportation
 4. Economic activity in various parts of the Province
 5. Pupil enrollment patterns and program offerings
 6. Tax assessments
 7. Cost efficiency and effectiveness
 8. Governance of Francophone schools

9. School/division/district/department roles and responsibilities
 10. Policy-making structures (role of advisory committees, elected officials, mechanisms for parental input, etc.)
 11. Technology, including distance education, and its impact on, and possibilities for, program development and delivery
 12. Municipal boundaries
 13. Current trends in education reform
 14. Administrative and personnel matters, including employment contracts and the transfer of assets and liabilities
- III Consult with appropriate authorities to ascertain regulations and practices associated with boundary establishment.
- IV Determine and recommend the best governance structure which will:
- (a) further educational excellence
 - (b) facilitate effective and efficient program delivery and development in the public school system
 - (c) facilitate the goals of education of the province and ensure that education reflects principles such as equity, openness, responsiveness, excellence, choice, relevance and accountability
 - (d) ensure flexibility in student movement between and among divisions
 - (e) acknowledge the increasing applicability of technology to facilitate program delivery
 - (f) foster partnership between / among government, community, parents, labour, business, and industry
 - (g) receive public acceptance"¹²³

Eight members were appointed to the Boundaries Review Commission. William Norrie (previous mayor of Winnipeg) was appointed as the chair of the Commission. The other four members appointed to the commission were: Manson Moir , Ian A. Restall, Joan Wright and Brenda Leslie. Three of the members were appointed to the Commission Secretariat which assisted with the work of the Commission. Earl

¹²³ Boundaries Review Commission Discussion Document, p.1.

Backman was appointed as the Executive Director of the Commission Secretariat. Joan Moore was appointed as the Research Analyst and Louise Gauthier was appointed as the Administrative Assistant.

The Commission's first task was to prepare a discussion document to focus the discussion on pertinent issues surrounding the terms of reference mandated by the government. During January, February and March the Commission planned 23 public meetings in more than 20 Manitoba centres. Interest was such that extra meetings had to be planned to meet the requests for presentations. Three hundred and eighteen presentations were made at the public hearings and a further one hundred and fifty written presentations were submitted to the Commission. The Commission presented its report and recommendations to the Minister of Education and Training on November 30, 1994 as planned.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

This section of the thesis is an examination of the Boundaries Review Commission Discussion Document. The BRC discussion document is an important part of the political process, and bears examination because it frames the thinking about the boundaries issue and influences the responses made by the official organizations to the Commission.

The discussion document stated that a number of issues had to be considered in order to review the boundaries. To assist in that consideration the discussion document provided some background information to the reader. Each issue identified had a brief introductory set of statements inclusive of some factual or tabular information which shed some light on the current situation and / or the events leading up to the current situation. The statements about each issue were then followed by a series of questions. Although the document stated that the questions were neither limiting nor all inclusive on the topic, presenters to the commission were asked to attempt addressing the questions if they chose to respond to those particular issues.

The issues and questions in the Boundaries Review Commission discussion document were examined by the writer to see how they compared to the research questions in the literature on optimal size. For the most part the research reviewed looked at the effect of size on: cost, quality, curriculum, student achievement, staffing and governance. To compare the BRC discussion document to the research the writer sorted the issues and the questions in the BRC discussion document into the categories used in the research reviewed. New categories were identified by the writer for issues and questions in the document which did not fall into the categories discussed in the literature review.

The process used to sort the issues and questions was subjective. To sort the issues the writer read the title, the introductory statements and the charts a number of times in order to determine what the issue was "mostly about." In some instances the title is very indicative of the main idea surrounding the issue, for example: Issue #7: Cost Efficiency and Effectiveness. The chart included with this issue indicates the total and per pupil cost of education per division. The introductory statements talk about the need to do the same or more with less, the variation in per pupil costs across the province, the cost of administration, and examples of cooperation which have resulted in cost savings. The title is an accurate reflection of the main idea talked about in the introductory statements of the issue. The writer placed this issue in the "cost" category.

In other instances the title is more ambiguous, for example: Issue #12: Municipal Boundaries. From the title one might infer that the issue is about the logistics of boundary formation or about governance. (Several of the respondents did, in fact, respond to this as if it were a governance issue.) The introductory statements, however, indicate that differences in educational and municipal boundaries result in divergent rates of taxation. The emphasis in this issue is on problems related to educational finance due to differences in educational and municipal boundaries. The writer decided that this issue was really about equity, fairness and efficiency in funding, and placed this issue also in the "cost" category.

The issues

There are fourteen issues identified in the document.

1. Education legislation reform
2. Demographics
3. Patterns of Transportation
4. Economic activity in various parts of the province
5. Pupil enrollment patterns and program offerings
6. Tax assessments
7. Cost efficiency and effectiveness
8. Governance of Francophone schools
9. School / division / district / department roles and responsibilities
10. Policy-making structures (role of advisory committees, elected officials, mechanisms for parental input, etc.)
11. Technology, including distance education, and its impact on, and possibilities for program development and delivery
12. Municipal boundaries
13. Current trends in education reform
14. Administrative and personnel matters, including employment contracts and the transfer of assets and liabilities

Of these fourteen issues **one** is clearly focussed on **cost** (#7), **two** associated issues talk about equity in **funding** (#s 6 & 12), **two** are related to the **quality of education** (#s 1 & 13), **two** issues are concerned about the **curriculum** (#s 5 & 11), **three** issues raise questions pertaining to **governance** (#s 8, 9, & 10), and **one** issue is related partly to **staffing** (#14). None of the issues talk about student achievement or student learning, either directly or indirectly. **Three** of the issues have to do solely with the **logistics of how divisions** came to be defined as they are today (in terms of population, tax base etc.), or the logistics of how they might be redefined. (#s 2, 3 & 4). Three other issues have the logistics of boundaries also embedded within the issue (#s 5, 12 & 14).

The questions

There are fifty seven questions asked in the document. They are as follows:

Issue #1

1. How can school divisions / districts boundaries be designed to be compatible with education principles?
2. How do we best ensure that boundaries aid rather than impede achieving the goal of equity, where the best learning opportunities are provided to all Manitobans regardless of background or geographic location?
3. Are legislative reform considerations necessary to ensure that boundaries are sufficiently

- transparent to allow and promote inter-divisional cooperation, resource sharing and collaboration.
4. Following implementation of any changes to school division / district boundaries as a result of recommendations from this Commission, how should future boundary issues be handled? Should the previous vehicle, the Board of Reference be reactivated in its previous form with the same or different authority?

Issue #2

5. Is 56 an appropriate number of administration units to deliver education in Manitoba? Should there be more? Should there be less?
6. How have the population shifts affected educational delivery? How have they affected the divisional unit?
7. How has the decreasing family size affected the delivery of education?
8. Have immigration and relocation of ethnic / linguistic groups affected the divisional unit? Does or should this have any effect on school division boundaries?

Issue #3

9. How have the changing transportation patterns of Manitobans affected our education delivery system and vice versa?
10. Are school division / district boundaries in tune with the normal transportation patterns Manitobans follow for other purposes, or are they in conflict?
11. Do children attend a local elementary school only to have to attend a high school in a location that is inappropriate due to boundaries that were set many years ago?
12. Are boundaries sufficiently transparent that cooperative ventures between divisions / districts are easily accomplishable or do existing boundaries act as impediments to such cooperation?

Issue #4

13. How do the changing patterns of economic activity interact with and affect school division / district boundaries?
14. Do the patterns of commerce and resultant transportation patterns mesh with education delivery mechanisms or are they at odds?
15. Has the education system been able to keep pace with the changing economic patterns and do the existing political units (divisions / districts) adequately reflect that ability?
16. Could other political and administrative units respond more appropriately, or do existing units adequately serve us, and will they be able to serve us appropriately in the future?

Issue #5

17. Do the division / district boundaries adequately reflect the changes in current student enrollment?
18. Are changing pupil enrollments having an impact on the divisions / districts ability to operate schools in areas of shrinking or expanding enrollments?
19. Should boundaries be designed with student numbers as a major factor?
20. How much should geographic considerations play in determining optimum division / district size?
21. How are changing student enrollments affecting the ability of the school divisions / districts to provide quality programs to meet present provincial curriculum requirements?
22. How have funding levels affected the ability to provide basic, current and / or optional programs?
23. Would changes in the size of units permit expansion of the variety of programs that can be offered in your schools? Would shared use agreements between divisions be an alternative?
24. Has the current economic climate had an impact on student selection of programs offered, such as vocational programs, and are there changes in the number of students requesting access to programs not offered in the divisions in which they reside?

Issue #6

25. Is the wide disparity in assessment bases for the fifty-six divisions / districts a problem?
26. Should assessment base be a factor in determining educational boundaries? If so, to what extent?
27. How does and to what extent do the different assessment bases affect the ability of each educational unit in providing similar educational opportunities to all Manitoba students?
28. How serious is the issue of different taxation levels being generated by different combinations of municipal and school division boundaries?

Issue #7

29. Could the efficiency and effectiveness of our education delivery system be improved via alternate forms of administrative and political structures, groupings and / or boundaries?
30. How can boundaries be designed such that they aid in cooperation between divisions and districts rather than act as impediments to such cooperative efforts?
31. Does / can expansion or amalgamation of administrative / political units result in actual quantifiable efficiencies and if so, how will these efficiencies affect the quality of education?

Issue #8

32. How will the implementation of the Francophone school division affect existing school division boundaries?
33. Will the residual portions of divisions be sufficient to stand alone or will integration be necessary for viability of administrative units?
34. How can administration and financing of the residual units best be accomplished?

Issue #9

35. What are the consequences of boundary changes relating to the roles and responsibilities of each entity in the delivery of education?
36. Would altered divisions and ward areas affect local influence? Would more comprehensive units allow for objective decisions on a broader scale, without parochialism?
37. Would altered boundaries enhance the education of students?

Issue #10

38. Would boundary adjustments have an impact on the role of the policy-making structures?
39. If division / district boundaries were adjusted, do these boundaries have to be the same for all aspects of education? Can the boundaries affecting pupil transportation, vocational education, distance education, for example, be regional in nature?
40. Would regional boundaries for some aspects of education promote creative cost-effective educational program selection and delivery?
41. Can utilization of local school committees ensure that parents' voices are heard irrespective of the size of divisional units?

Issue #11

42. How will advanced technology have an impact on program delivery in your area?
43. Do you see sharing of technologically advanced systems and equipment between schools or divisions as addressing some of our fiscal problems?
44. If the education system is to provide up-to-date technology programs and utilize interactive technological delivery systems, will these serve to make division boundary lines more transparent?
45. Will these encourage inter-divisional agreements?
46. How do you see advanced technology affecting division boundaries?

Issue #12

47. What problems, if any, are caused by the fact school division / district boundaries and municipal boundaries are totally different?
48. If they exist, how significant are those problems and should they be a consideration in any changes to school division or district boundaries?
49. What benefits, if any, could be obtained by having education and municipal boundaries either partially or totally coincidental?
50. Would there be any educational benefits to such coincidental boundaries or would all considerations be administrative and political?
51. Is there any merit to simplifying the election process with collaboration of boundaries and municipal officials and trustees?

Issue #13

52. Do existing boundaries allow us to entertain desired current educational trends?
53. How can boundaries be designed such that they will be more responsible to educational trends?
54. How do we ensure that today's judgments and resulting decisions will stand the test of time rather than be perceived as adoption of some of the negative aspects of historical trends in educational delivery?

Issue #14

55. If school division / district boundaries were altered, what would be the most practical way of dealing with differences in employment contracts, especially pertaining to salary levels, benefit levels, tenure and seniority provisions?
56. What are the best ways to deal with disposition of tangible assets under any alteration of boundaries which would see change in the make-up of the political units administering the jurisdictional areas?
57. What is the best way to deal with reserves and liabilities of existing divisions or districts should they be affected by boundary changes?

A similar process was used to determine the main idea of each of the 57 questions under the fourteen issues, with key words and phrases being used to assist in the identification. Some questions were relatively easy to categorize. The following is a "cost" question. It speaks directly to the impact of size on cost.

31. Does / can expansion or amalgamation of administrative / political units result in actual quantifiable efficiencies and if so, how will these efficiencies affect the quality of education?

(The writer also identified this as a quality question because the second part of the question goes on to ask how efficiencies achieved might impact on quality.)

Other questions required more study to discern the main intent of the question. The following question (#12) was also identified by the writer as a "cost" question. That decision was made because throughout the discussion document cooperative

ventures are referred to as a way to achieve economies of scale, and thus directly reduce the cost of education, or enable one to purchase more for the available dollars. Thus a question asking about the impact of boundaries on cooperation was also asking about the impact of boundaries on cost.

12. Are boundaries sufficiently transparent that cooperative ventures between divisions / districts are easily accomplishable or do existing boundaries act as impediments to such cooperation?

It should be obvious from these examples that some of the issues and questions were open to more than one interpretation. In the instances where the writer was unable to make a decision regarding the main idea of the issue or question it was placed in more than one category. For the writer this happened ten times. Question #31, mentioned above, is an example of one of these.

The fifty seven questions were looked at to determine which were "research related" questions.¹²⁴ As mentioned ten of the questions were overlapping and applied to one or more areas which explains the duplication in question numbers. The percentage was determined using 57 as the divisor which explains the total percentage being greater than 100.

Of the fifty-seven questions in the discussion document **eleven** (#s 12, 13, 18,22, 25,27, 28, 29, 31, 40 & 43) **are finance related** (approximately 19%). These questions attempt to get at whether or not there exists a problem with funding education as the boundaries are currently structured, and whether or not a change in boundaries would enhance our ability to fund education. These questions also attempt to identify whether a change in boundaries would reduce the overall costs of education.

Fourteen of the questions (#s 1, 2, 6,7,9,21,27,29,31,37,50,52,53 &54) ask about the **quality of education** (approximately 24%). They try to get at whether or not the quality of education has been affected by things like changing demographics and funding capability. The underlying definition of quality is **equity**, equity in the provision of both programs and services.

¹²⁴ See appendix 1

Five of the questions (#s 21,22,23,24 &42) ask about **curriculum** (approximately 9%) and how it is, or might be, affected by boundaries and technology changes?

Five of the questions (#s 16, 35,36,38 & 41) are directly related to **governance issues** (approximately 9%) and how boundary changes might affect who controls what actually goes on in schools?

Three of the questions (35,36 & 55) in the document relate directly to how boundaries affect **staffing** (approximately 5%). These questions attempt to get at how the roles of the stakeholders (which include educators) might change and how boundary changes, which might affect their welfare contractually, should be handled.

Only **two** of the questions (#1 & 37) **might** be considered to be **student achievement** questions. (3.5%)

Two of the questions (#s 3 & 5) ask directly about the **need for boundary change**. This is approximately 3.5% of the questions asked.

The remaining questions have to do with the logistics of boundaries as they currently exist and how changes to the existing boundaries might best be made. These questions number **twenty five** (the **logistics of current status** #s 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17 & 47, and the **logistics of boundary change** #s 4, 8,19, 20, 26, 30, 32, 33, 34, 39, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 51, 56 & 57). These questions comprise about 44% of the questions asked in the discussion document.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS re: THE BRC DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

On pages ii and iii of the Boundaries Review Commission Discussion Document there are messages from both the Minister of Education and Training and the Chairperson of the Commission. According to both of these people no decisions have been made regarding boundary change and the Commission has the authority to arrive at unbiased conclusions.

On page one of the Boundaries Review Discussion Document the Mandate and Terms of Reference for the Commission are listed. Here the message is different. The focus of the mandate and terms of reference is clearly on boundary reorganization. The question under study seems to be not whether the boundaries should be changed, but rather how changes would affect certain aspects of the current system. This is underscored in point III of the terms of reference which directs the Commission members to find out the regulations and practices associated with boundary establishment. The implication seems to be that some changes will be made.

In examining the issues and questions in the discussion document several things emerged.

The first thing that emerged was the focus of attention identified in the issues within the Boundaries Review Commission Discussion Document. Three of the issues were about cost, three were about governance, two were about quality, two were about curriculum, one was about staffing and none of the issues were about student achievement. The fact that more issues were dedicated to cost and governance is not surprising for two reasons. Firstly the government was examining boundary reorganization as a possible strategy to reduce educational costs, and secondly the establishment of the Francophone Division has raised the question of school governance. (The fourth term of reference guiding the Commission is devoted entirely to governance.) What was more surprising was the lack of attention given (in either the issues or the questions) to student learning or student achievement. None of the issues focussed on student achievement and only two of the questions asked could be said to relate to this important question.

The second finding that emerged was the definition of quality implicit in the discussion document. Whereas the recent research literature identifies student achievement as the definition of quality, the discussion document uses equity, an earlier research definition, as its definition of quality education. Why is this? Is it because of lack of knowledge of the recent research? Is it because the program and service equity we worked so hard to achieve within the province has suffered as a result of a serious decline in enrollments in a number of divisions? Or is it because equity is a more

worked so hard to achieve within the province has suffered as a result of a serious decline in enrollments in a number of divisions? Or is it because equity is a more easily quantifiable measure of quality?

The third finding that emerged was that the number of issues did not predict the number of questions that would be asked on each of the research variables. For example: both cost and governance had three issues dedicated to both giving and gathering information about them. Yet there were eleven questions asked related to cost and only five asked related to governance. This might not matter except that on p.13 of the discussion document respondents speaking to an issue were asked to address the questions related to the issue. If the respondents did so they would wind up thinking about, and discussing some aspects of boundary reorganization much more than others. (see appendix #1) This in itself could bias the response and perhaps the recommendations made with respect to boundary reorganization.

The fourth finding was the amount of attention given in the discussion document to the logistics of boundary change. Three of the issues in the document were related to logistics. In addition the highest number of questions asked (25) were dedicated to gathering information related to the logistics of how divisions came to organized as they are, or how they might be better organized for the future. To what extent does this direct the thinking towards boundary change?

The sixth point that emerged was that none of the research on division size was mentioned in the discussion document.

When the discussion document and the Commission process are framed this way what are implications for the findings of the Commission?

The examination of the Boundaries Review Commission Discussion Document led the writer to wonder what role Commissions played in the formation of public policy. The following are two literature findings with respect to Commissions.

COMMISSIONS AND THEIR ROLE IN RESEARCH & POLICY MAKING

Commissions and committees of inquiry involve a process which is in itself a mode of research. The process of investigation and information gathering conducted by Commissions usually involves interaction with a broad base of stakeholders who might have something to say on the question and / or who might be affected by any changes which are made. Weiss identified commissions as one example of a decision-driven model whereby research enters social problem solving.¹²⁵ In addition, the information that has been gathered through commissions and committees of inquiry adds to our knowledge base and so contributes to the research on the question.

One of the differences between more academic research, and Commission research, is the impact on policy decisions. The findings from Commissions can often be more immediate, in terms of impact, than other forms of research.

“The findings of such research, clearly targeted upon a particular problem area, are far more likely to have substantial impact.”¹²⁶

One explanation for the increased impact of commission research and its recommendations on policy formation is found in the process itself. In the literature Lindblom and Cohen defined interactive problem solving as “to undertake or stimulate action-usually interaction-so that the preferred outcome comes about without anyone’s having analyzed the given problem or having achieved an analyzed solution to it.”¹²⁷

Another explanation is that commissions are set up by governments in areas in which those governments have already decided that policy changes are desirable. This also is supported in the literature. Bulmar claimed that “Commissions may also act as a device to enable governments to do what they want to do anyway, sometimes clothing

¹²⁵ Holdaway, p.255.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.259.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.254.

it in the legitimacy provided by research.”¹²⁸

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS WITH RESPECT TO COMMISSIONS & THE BRC DOCUMENT

The Commission process is an important strategy in policy formation. In the interaction process it provides the opportunity for the politicians to do several things.

Through the Commission process the government can disseminate information to the general public to create an awareness of the problem at hand. The establishment of a Commission signals to the public that the government is seriously thinking about this issue and discussion around the topic is stimulated. The Boundaries Review Commission held over twenty public meetings throughout the province. They heard from all of the representative employee groups, business people and parents. In addition to enabling the government to obtain information the Commission process enabled it to share a lot of information about the respective divisions (in terms of things like enrollment and per pupil costs) with a large group of people.

The Commission process can also be used to generate consensus around an idea. The notion that governments do not establish Commissions except in areas where they wish to make changes is commonly understood, and can serve to create a consensus around the idea that it will happen. The writer spoke to a number of people about the Boundary Review Commission. In all cases these people said that they thought that the government had already decided to reorganize the boundaries and that the findings of the Commission would not make any difference. The structure of the process used by a Commission can serve to diminish or enhance the notion that the decisions have already been made. As mentioned already there was an attempt to dispel the notion that any decisions had already been made. This was stated in the opening messages of the Boundaries discussion document.

“There are no preordained decisions on this matter and the Commission will draw its own conclusions and formulate its

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.256.

own recommendations at the end of the process.”

“The other Commissioners and I undertook this task on the basis of being allowed the freedom to conduct our review totally independently in order to arrive at unbiased conclusions.”¹²⁹

Yet the Mandate, Terms of Reference and the number of issues and questions dedicated to the logistics of boundary formation and change might direct one to think otherwise. It is little wonder that a number of people were coming to accept the idea of boundary reorganization prior to any recommendations or decisions. In addition, during the time in which the Boundaries Review Commission was meeting and formulating recommendations, the Minister of Education and Training, Mr. Manness, issued a New Directions Document for Education in Manitoba which emphasized the role of parents in the educational process. Governance was ostensibly a question under discussion by the Commission. The expectations outlined in the New Directions Document raise questions about the value of the feedback from the Commission around the question of governance, and could cause one to speculate to what extent contradictory feedback would be heeded.

The Commission process also allows the government the opportunity to test the level of consensus around the decision under discussion. The interactive dialogue within the process allows the government to find out what people think in relation to the issue prior to making a decision. If the idea gains general acceptance (or already has general acceptance) then it is more likely that the government will have the political will to move in that direction. If it does not have general acceptance then the recommendations from the Commission can be shelved or delayed until there is acceptance.

In addition the process also provides the opportunity for alternate ideas and solutions to emerge or to be highlighted. For example: an alternative to boundary realignment might be more cooperation and shared use agreements among divisions. This strategy has been encouraged by the Department through funding but has not been utilized as frequently or as effectively as it might. A Commission might strengthen the

¹²⁹ Boundaries Review Commission Discussion Document, p.ii and iii.

will to make these alternate strategies be utilized to a greater extent in lieu of less acceptable alternatives.

The writer noted in the analysis of the Discussion Document that no mention was made of the research on division size. The interactive nature of the Commission process does, however, allow the presenters to bring forth information not only pertaining to their opinions, but also to the research findings. In this way individuals and organizations have an opportunity to introduce research findings which may influence the outcome of the decision.

The next chapter is dedicated to the responses of the official organizations to the Boundaries Review Commission. What did they say in response to the issues and questions outlined in the Discussion Document? To what extent did they follow the format structured by the Commission? To what extent did they parallel and / or use research findings in their presentations?

CHAPTER FIVE

AN ANALYSIS OF THE OFFICIAL STAKEHOLDERS' WRITTEN PRESENTATION TO THE BOUNDARIES REVIEW COMMISSION

The briefs from the official stakeholder groups were obtained from the organizations directly. The writer phoned and asked each organization to send a copy of their brief and it was sent. The writer examined each of the briefs noting the following:

1. the format and content of the submission,
2. the extent of support for the notion of boundaries revision, and
3. what the respondents had to say on the research questions related to optimal size, and the suggestions and formally identified recommendations they made to the Commission.

1. The format and content of the submissions:

In this section the writer examined the extent to which the organizations responded to the issues and questions identified in the Discussion Document. The writer also identified the length of the documents.

CUPE: The Canadian Union of Public Employees spoke to six of the issues (#s 1, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 14) identified by the commission, and answered six of the questions relating to those issues (#s 3, 25, 31, 33, 36 & 55). The CUPE submission contains eight recommendations. The document is 24 pages long.

MASS: The Manitoba Association of School Superintendents responded to all of the questions asked in the discussion document. The MASS submission contains nine recommendations. The document is 33 pages long.

MAST: The Manitoba Association of School Trustees made an introductory statement on school governance and followed that with thirteen recommendations to the commission. The document is 26 pages long and has two appendices which total 16 additional pages.

MTS: The Manitoba Teachers' Society responded to all of the issues identified in the discussion document and made seven formal recommendations to the commission. There were a number of other recommendations made by the MTS "buried within" their responses to the identified issues. The document is 37 pages long. In addition it has 31 pages of tables in appendix one and it has 16 pages in appendix two.

MAP: The Manitoba Association of Principals submitted a paper which contains seven recommendations to the commission. The document is 2 pages long.

MASBO: The Manitoba Association of School Business Officials organized their response around three topics:

- * what is working well in the system
- * where improvements could take place in the system, and
- * what are some of the possible consequences and / or implications, both positive and negative, from possible boundary revisions or alterations.

This document did not contain separately identified recommendations although there were eight things which the association noted should or must be done. The document is 15 pages long with 2 additional pages of appendices.

HSPTFM: The Manitoba Home and School Parent - Teacher Federation formally identified five issues and one question to which they formulated responses. The document, which is 9 pages long, contained some suggestions but did not contain any formally identified recommendations.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS ON FORMAT & CONTENT

The responses of the official stakeholders varied in both format and content. For example: the commission requested that the presenters at the hearings respond to the questions identified in the discussion document but only one of the official stakeholders (MASS) chose to do so in the document they presented to the Commission. The rest of the official organizations used other structures to get their message across to the members of the commission.

The documents varied in length ranging from two pages (MAP) to thirty seven pages (MTS). Three of the documents had appendices (MTS, MAST and MASBO). Five of the organizations made official recommendations (CUPE, MAST, MTS, MAP and MASS). MASBO and HSPTFM did not make formal recommendations, although MASBO did make eight suggestions.

CONCLUSIONS ON FORMAT & CONTENT

The structure of the discussion document did not predict the way in which the official organizations would respond to the Commission. Each of the stakeholders responded differently (in terms of format) in the documents they prepared for presentation.

The length of the document is a reflection of the extent to which the organization has the capacity to research and prepare presentations. This lack of infrastructure (money and human resources) also restricts the extent to which the organization can be influential.

The content of the discussion document did influence the responses made by the official organizations. Although the organizations emphasized issues and questions differently depending upon their perspective, they did not introduce new issues or questions.

2. The extent of support for boundaries revision:

This question is implicit within the whole process, but is also directly asked in question numbers 3 & 5 in the discussion document:

- #3. Are legislative reform considerations necessary to ensure that boundaries are sufficiently transparent to allow and promote inter-divisional cooperation, resource sharing and collaboration?
- #5. Is 56 an appropriate number of administration units to deliver education in Manitoba? Should there be more? Should there be less?

The writer examined the documents to determine the extent of support for boundary revision.

(Note: the page numbers of the quotes from the documents are found in parentheses at the end of each quote. The parts which are in bold do not appear in bold in the actual documents. This emphasis has been added by the writer.)

CUPE: This organization was not in favour of boundary change.

“...we are not convinced that the existing school boundaries need to be changed. (p.1) We fear that amalgamation will simply be used as an excuse to reduce services and jobs in the public school board sector. (p.11).....**we are not advocating boundary changes.**” (p.17)

MASS: This organization identified the need for some changes but qualified what might be gained from the changes.

“Realistically there is not need for 56 administration units to deliver education in Manitoba.” (15)

“**Some boundary changes are needed**...(p8)...boundary alterations in and of themselves will not constitute a sufficient response to the challenges we face in education. (p.8)...boundaries represent only a small subset of the range of responses which may be contemplated in addressing the need for reform.” (p.5)

MASS suggested several times in their document that parents should have more choice with respect to the schools their sons and daughters attend. If this were the case the organization stated that it would effectively remove some of the need for boundary change.

“...it is advisable to have more flexibility with regard to attendance. Perhaps parents should be able to choose schools for their students, ...” (p.16)

“...this occasional problem can best be addressed by giving parents and students some reasonable choices insofar as school placements are concerned.” (p.17)

“If parents are given more freedom to move their students to schools of their choice, parents will be less likely to try to obtain boundary changes.” (p.14)

MAST: The Manitoba Association of School Trustees was not in favour of legislated changes to boundaries. The association favoured the retention of the Board of Reference (p.18) to make boundary revisions. The association was also not in support of consolidating urban divisions. MAST had already studied the possibility of amalgamating urban divisions following the implementation of Unicity and had decided at that time that further urban consolidation was undesirable. (p.8) If boundary changes were to be made the association indicated that they should be undertaken only if there were clear educational benefits. In addition the association members were against breaking up divisions in the creation of new boundaries.

“A number of notable changes in school governance have occurred as the province has developed over the last 25 years. (p.8)...These developments are evidence that the system by which public education is governed in Manitoba continues to evolve in response to emerging needs of the people that it serves.” (p.9)

“A further review of school governance took place following the implementation of Unicity...The proposals on consolidation of urban school divisions were not supported

by MAST." (p.8)

"Unnecessarily changing division boundaries will divert energies from other urgent change initiatives which would make a difference in the province's classrooms. **Boundary changes should only be initiated to achieve clearly identified educational benefits.** (p.10)

"The Manitoba Association of School Trustees recommends, that wherever possible, existing boundaries be utilized when school division or district consolidation is to occur." (p.18)

MTS: The Society was in favour of boundary review and change.

"**The Society** has called for a review of division / district boundaries for over a decade. In 1983, it **advocated a province-wide study of divisional and district boundaries.** We have continued to affirm this policy." (p.2)

"There should be statutory provisions for automatically reviewing Manitoba's public school division boundaries at least once every 10 years." (p.6)

"An effective redrawing of boundaries would address many aspects of unequal access to education programs. It would restore economies of scale and could improve program access." (p.17)

MAP: The official organization representing the principals of Manitoba supported the notion of a boundaries review, both currently and on a regular basis. They did, however, add a qualifying statement.

"...**the Manitoba Association of Principals** wishes to emphasize that it **favours a review of school boundaries.** It would also support a provision for periodic review of any new structure which arises. (p.2)...There should be a detailed explanation of how the interests of the students and communities will be better served from any specific changes." (p.2)

MASBO: Although this association did not directly state a position for or against boundary change one can sense from what is said in the document both a desire to maintain the status quo and an understanding that changes might be necessary. They did state, however, that any changes made to boundaries should be made using the current system for doing so.

“...the present school divisions are, for the most part of a size where they can respond to problems in a direct and timely fashion.” (p.6)

“Society and education, in particular, are always in a state of change and **the members of MASBO understand that boundary changes may be necessary.**” (p.15)

“Residents have had the option of pursuing boundary revisions through Board of Reference Hearings. This system has worked well and should be retained.” (p.6)

HSPTFM: The parents' association had some concerns with changing the school division boundaries and indicated that changes should only be made if those changes resulted in an improvement in the quality of education.

“Parents are emphatic that **boundaries should only be altered if there are efficiencies to be realized and only if these savings could be allocated to benefit the child in the classroom.** Present administrative figures illustrate that bigger is not necessarily better.” (p.2)

“Whether reform requires alterations in boundaries is another question” (p.2)

The association had several questions of its own in relation to boundary change. One gets the sense that the answers to these questions would provide them with more information on which to make a recommendation regarding boundary change.

“Is a boundary change going to ensure a smaller class size, or more resources to enable each child to reach his / her full potential? Is it going to ensure that each participant in education including government, administrators, teachers,

parents, and students, know their responsibilities and are accountable?" (p.9)

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS ON SUPPORT FOR REORGANIZATION

The response to this question is mixed. Two of the organizations supported boundary revision - MAP and MTS. Two organizations were clearly against boundary revision - CUPE and MAST. Two of the organizations were not for revision but indicated that there might be a need for it - MASS and MASBO. The Parents Association said it should only occur if it would be better for the education of their children.

No matter what their overall position most of the official stakeholders represented here went on to state what should be considered *if* changes were made to the boundaries. In addition four of the official stakeholders (CUPE, MASS, MAST and MASBO) requested the opportunity to respond to any recommendations made by the Commission before they are implemented.

CONCLUSIONS ON SUPPORT FOR REORGANIZATION

If the Commission were to base its decision solely on what the majority of organizations said with respect to whether reorganization should take place it would not be able to make a recommendation. If other variables were considered (like membership numbers or power or influence) then the MTS recommendation would carry more weight than the others were the Commission certain it reflected the views of the majority of the membership. This could be assessed to some extent by comparing the responses of the parent organization with the responses of the local associations.

The fact that the organizations asked for an opportunity to respond to any recommendations before they were implemented implies an expectation that there will be boundary reorganization.

3. What the respondents had to say on the research questions related to optimal size - and their suggestions and recommendations to the Commission.

ON COST:

The Canadian Union of Public Employees opened its presentation by urging the Commission to ensure that if changes to boundaries were recommended they not be driven by the government's determination to reduce spending on education. (p.2) CUPE did not advocate changing boundaries to do this. In addition they stated that they did not see amalgamation as an effective way to reduce costs.

"It is clear from other regions of that county that amalgamation is being rejected and one of the reasons is that it doesn't save money." (p.11)

In the report, property taxes (which were cited on p.6 as an inequitable source of revenue), declining provincial support and inappropriate use of funds were blamed for some of the funding difficulties being experienced in the public education system in the province.

In lieu of amalgamation CUPE suggested the following ways to ensure adequate funding and to reduce costs:

1. reduce the dependence on property tax and move towards full provincial funding, (p.6)
2. remove funding from the private schools - and give it to the public schools, (p.10)
3. review existing funding formulas and regulations to ensure that there are no impediments to division and district cooperation, (p.5) and
4. assess the number of trustees with a view to reducing the numbers and the associated costs. (p.15)

The union expressed the fear that amalgamation would be used as an excuse to reduce services and jobs (p.11) and were against this being used as a cost saving measure. The Canadian Union of Public Employees made two formal recommendations to the Commission related to finance.

RECOMMENDATION #3 (p.11)

We strongly recommend that the discussion about tax assessments take place in the context of a review of how education dollars are generated, including the declining role of provincial government funding and shift in funds to private schools. We urge the Commission to recommend that the Provincial Government move the funding of public education from the property tax base to full direct provincial funding.

RECOMMENDATION #4 (p.13)

Guidelines for the sharing of services and pooling of resources must include provisions for ensuring that the necessary services continue or be improved and that those services be performed by public sector employees in order to maintain accountability and service control and preserve jobs.

The Manitoba Association of School Superintendents made two significant introductory statements which explain part of their hesitancy in changing the size of divisions to make them more cost efficient. The first was their statement that when we face major financial constraints it is easy for substantive issues in education to be overshadowed by fiscal and administrative expediency. (p.6) The second was their statement that new understandings about governing structures and school organization render previous understandings about relationships among size, cost and outcomes obsolete. (p.7)

The Superintendents were uncertain that significant savings or efficiencies of scale would result from boundary alterations. (p.8) In addition they stated that there would no significant savings gained through a reduction of trustees or administrators. (p.9)

MASS suggested that:

1. the province should provide a greater share of the funding of education, (p.21)
2. regional boards could be established which might create savings, (p.26) and
3. funding formulas and regulations should be reviewed to examine how the Department might change these to encourage more cooperation among divisions and districts. (p.9)

The Manitoba Association of School Superintendents did not make any formal recommendations related to cost.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society stated in their document clear support for the notion of amalgamation and the economies of scale that would result from that amalgamation. (p. 4 & 22) The Society also presented factual information about division size and administration costs to support their position. (p.8 & 22) In addition they indicated that other savings may result when duplication in services, such as transportation, are reduced through consolidation. (p.19) On the other hand they did not present consolidation as the only solution but also stated that it must be recognized that small schools are a tradition in Manitoba, and that there are extra costs which will always be associated with the provision of education in low density remote areas. (p.22)

The Society's presentation also spoke directly to the problems with how education is financed. In their presentation to the Commission they noted that some school boards regard keeping school taxes down as a duty affecting not only the local contribution but also the entitlement to some components of provincial funding. (p.17)

A key point in their presentation was that the object of examining costs should be on gaining better value for the money spent - not on cutting costs. (p.21) To do this the MTS suggested that:

1. public school divisions in rural and northern areas should be reorganized around major regional centres to strengthen them educationally and economically, (p.12)
2. that the province should provide full funding for public schools, (p. 20)
3. that the divisions and districts should be reorganized in a way that narrows the range of MAPP (Market Assessment Per Pupil) values, (p.20) and
- 4.that a mechanism for revenue equalization be included in the finance model for education in the province. (p.20)

The Manitoba Teachers' Society made two recommendations related to cost.

RECOMMENDATION #3 (p.37)

Long term viable school divisions with the potential for funding, tax and program equity should be created.

RECOMMENDATION #5 (p.37)

The criteria used in establishing new boundaries should be:

- (a) a scale of operation sufficient to offer a full range of programs, and

- (b) provincial funding for programs or a market assessment per pupil close to provincial average with equalization payments to redress inequities.

The Manitoba Association of School Trustees indicated in their presentation that it should not be assumed that a reduction in divisions will result in any administrative savings. (p.10) They also stated that recent studies have shown that the savings associated with school division reorganization are at best modest, and do not reach the levels promised by advocates of larger size. (p.10)

On funding they suggested that:

1. local ratepayers should continue to have a say in education through their financial contribution, (p.14) and
2. the government should review funding formulas to remove impediments to joint use agreements and adjust those formulas to provide allowances for divisions who initiate and participate in joint ventures. (p.16)

MAST made two recommendations related to cost:

RECOMMENDATION # 5: Right to Levy Taxes (p.14)

The Manitoba Association of School Trustees recommends that the government of Manitoba recognize the inherent right of local school boards to levy and determine the rate of property taxes without legislative restriction, so that the educational services at the local levy may be adequately funded and maintained.

RECOMMENDATION #7: Inter-divisional Cooperation (p.16)

The Manitoba Association of School Trustees supports the provision of opportunities to increase inter-divisional cooperation in the provision of education service. MAST recommends that the funding formula be adjusted to provide allowances for divisions who initiate and participate in joint projects which benefit the children of Manitoba.

The Manitoba Association of Principals made the following recommendation related to cost:

RECOMMENDATION #4 (p.2)

That any administrative savings which result from boundaries revision should be retained in the system and be used to support equal access to programs and services.

Although not directly stated one can infer from this recommendation that the Principals'

Association believes that there will be some reduction in administrative costs as a result of amalgamation.

The Manitoba Association of School Business Officials indicated that there was no consistent relationship in Manitoba between size and costs per pupil or between size and administrative costs. (p.6) Their presentation included a table to show this. They also stated that the administrative costs (at an average of 4.2%) were reasonable and confirmed efficient administration of multi-million dollar operations. (p.6 &7) The report also indicated that boundary revision could result in contract changes which could mean a general overall increase in costs. (p.11) In addition the association predicted that larger divisions could mean that additional staff might be required rather than fewer. (p.11) Although the association did see the amalgamation of divisions as having the potential to reduce duplication of services and capital investments in some areas, one can infer from the overall presentation that MASBO does not see amalgamation as a way to reduce costs. Their position on this was explained in the section of their document entitled What are the Implications of Boundary Revisions. In this section they pointed out that the relationship between cause and effect was a complicated one with any change having the possibility of differing outcomes depending upon the other variables which come into play. The association suggested that if fiscal efficiencies were a goal then the recommendations for boundary revisions should be based on a careful analysis.

MASBO did note several things that might result in fiscal efficiencies. The association suggested:

1. formalizing some of the informal arrangements between divisions for bulk purchases, transportation services, consultative services and educational programs, (p.7)
2. applying the model presently being used for sharing of services of clinicians to other areas such as computer technicians, curriculum consultants and library specialists, (p.9) and
3. improving the Schools' Finance Program as it discouraged flexibility of fiscal arrangements across boundaries. (p.10)

The Manitoba Association of School Business Officials made no separately identified recommendations in their document.

The Manitoba Home and School Parent-Teacher Federation report talked about the cost of education more directly in relationship to what it means to the student and the quality of education. Their report stated that the issue of the economy in itself was not appropriate unless there was some significant educational gain to be made. (p.2) The document did state that the rural areas were under tremendous pressure to provide quality education with a shrinking economic base and reduced provincial funding (p.3) and it also noted problems in urban areas with crowded conditions and lack of classroom supports. (p.4) Although the report noted that there had been feedback stating that the public feels highly taxed, the parents group saw these monetary concerns as having more to do with the value received for the money spent (an accountability issue) than solely the amount of money spent. (p.7)

The parents' association did not see the cost factor of trustees as a major issue. (p.4) What the association did see as a major issue was the focus on finances and not on education.

“Too many financial decisions detract from the child! This process and the present period of financial constraint have caused school boards to spend a great deal of time struggling with financial decisions in the day-to-day running of the educational organization. This change of focus has stolen time that should be used in the development of leadership for the delivery of quality education for the child, who is the very reason for the existence of the organization.”
(p.8)

Although the Manitoba Home and School Parent-Teacher Federation did not make any formal recommendations with respect to cost it did suggest that:

1. business needs to look at education as an investment, (p.6)
2. sharing between divisions would be a positive incentive, (p.3)
3. the Department of Education and Training should facilitate transparent boundaries but that local initiatives are more productive than legislation with respect to most co-operative arrangements except perhaps bulk purchases or access to technology, (p.3) and
4. there were unanswered questions around the process whereby arbitration boards do not consider the employers' ability to pay. (p.7)

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS ON COST & COMPARISON TO THE LITERATURE

The research findings in the literature are mixed. While there are some economies of scale that can be achieved with amalgamation they occur at much lower enrolment levels than was believed previously. There is also research which indicates that cost gains predicted may not materialize because of costs which occur with larger organizations that are not accounted for in the studies. Administrative costs, which are assumed to be reduced in larger organizations, do not result in significant savings because: (a) they are often such a small percentage of the overall budget, and (b) increases in size tend to lead to increases in bureaucracy which lead to increases in administrative costs. The studies also show new knowledge about diseconomies of scale which begin much earlier than previously thought as an organization increases in size.

The concerns expressed by the official organizations with respect to gains made through amalgamation would appear to be similar to that found in the research. Except for the MTS the organizations were generally "uncertain" as to the cost advantages of amalgamation, or did not see amalgamation as a viable strategy to reduce costs. MASS (p.8) went so far as to state that extensive research from several sources clearly shows that creating larger units would not significantly reduce costs or improve education. The Teachers' Society was the only organization clearly in support of amalgamation with economies of scale being used as an argument in their position. In support of the Teachers' viewpoint it is unlikely that in a province of small schools and small divisions, such as Manitoba, amalgamations would become so large, in terms of enrolment, that they would create some of the diseconomies spoken of in the research. Whether some of the other factors raised in the research and in the other official presentations would offset any gains made becomes the question. For example: in rural and northern Manitoba increasing divisional size also means increasing geographic size. This change, while addressing some of the concerns with purchasing and administrative costs could bring about other concerns in communication and transportation which could create further inefficiencies rather than correcting them.

The mixed findings in the research literature is partly a function of the time in which the studies were conducted. The earlier studies are more favourable towards economies of scale achieved through amalgamation. The later studies, which are less favourable towards amalgamation as a way to reduce costs, tend to examine more variables (ie costs associated with large bureaucracies) which impact negatively on fiscal gains made and introduce other outcome concerns (student achievement) which are affected by size. Because the information for the Commission in Manitoba has been collected recently it is of little surprise that more of the associations presenting express some doubt as to fiscal gains that will be made through consolidation. This is especially understandable for those associations that actually referred to the research in their presentations. (MASS, MAST, CUPE)

The research studies in the literature are also inconclusive because the relationship between inputs and outcomes is both complicated and difficult to evaluate. Monk noted this complexity in his studies and MASBO, the organization most directly responsible for understanding divisional finance, referred to this same concern in their presentation.

There is, however, persistent consensus in the literature in two areas. One persistent consensus is that economies of scale, with respect to both resources and staffing, do accrue to larger organizations. This belief might explain the MTS position on amalgamation. It might also explain why the other groups recommended some form of inter-division cooperation arrangements which could be seen as a type of partial, voluntary amalgamation. (These cooperative arrangements are, however, mostly aimed at increasing divisional size on the management side of the enterprise while maintaining a smaller divisional size on the educational side of the enterprise.)

The other persistent consensus in the literature is that there appears to be no relationship between the amount of money spent on education and student achievement. What this consensus of findings assumes is that the implementation of strategies to reduce costs will not affect student performance. What it does not tell us is whether this is true for all and any of the strategies which might be implemented. The responses of the official organizations to the Boundaries Review Commission

does not give us any new information related to this thinking. Although the Commission did ask the respondents how boundaries might be designed to be compatible with the education principles from the summary report of the panel on Education Legislative Reform, it did not directly ask them how changes in division size or cost might affect student achievement. It should therefore be of little surprise that the documents from the official stakeholders do not tell us what they believe about this relationship.

One research finding that bears more investigation indicated that students had higher achievement in areas where some of the funding for education was locally based. This finding supports the MAST recommendation that some local levy be retained, but is in contradiction to those official stakeholder groups (ie: CUPE, MTS, MASS) which support a move towards greater or full provincial funding.

CONCLUSIONS ON COST

An examination of the literature and the presentations from the official organizations casts doubt on the effectiveness of amalgamation as a strategy to reduce costs in education. What also emerges, in contradiction to this finding, is the persistent consensus of belief that costs will be reduced in larger organizations.

ON QUALITY:

The Canadian Union of Public Employees indicate in their presentation that the government should be addressing the real problems facing the education system instead of redrawing boundary lines. Those problems they defined as: declining provincial government funding for education, deteriorating standards and growing violence. (p.22) While the CUPE document did not formally define quality, adequate staffing to sustain a well maintained, safe learning environment came across as key to their definition. The association described their members as contributing to the maintenance of that environment and being cornerstones to the learning process.(p.13) In their document the union referred to the needs of students being negatively affected by boundary changes and the union tied expenditures to quality.

“We remind this Commission that the educational needs of students are negatively affected not only by reductions in programs, teaching and support staff but also by community upheaval, and family trauma. Boundary changes could create all of this.” (p.22)

“Provincial funding levels have not even been keeping pace with inflation, never mind keeping pace with the needs of a quality education system.” (p.8)

CUPE made two recommendations related to the quality of education.

RECOMMENDATION #1 (p.4)

We recommend that the Commission consider the issue of violence in the context of this review particularly as you look at such issues as education legislation reform, cost efficiency and effectiveness, school / division / district / department roles and responsibilities, policy-making structures and current trends in education reform.

RECOMMENDATION #2 (p.5)

We recommend that legislative reforms be considered if they clearly allow for greater inter-divisional cooperation, resource sharing and collaboration and at the same time meet the essential educational themes. Further, we recommend that no legislative reforms be considered that will result in job losses.

The presentation of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents contains a number of statements questioning how boundaries revision will affect the quality of education in Manitoba.

"...the question of boundaries revision is not in and of itself the overarching educational problem facing Manitobans today...Boundaries represent only a small subset of the range of response which may be contemplated in addressing the need for educational reform." (p.5)

"...simply redesigning boundaries will not necessarily enhance these eight principles." (p.13)

"Altered boundaries would not necessarily enhance the education of students. It depends on how they are altered, and whether or not equity is enhanced." (p.25)

"...boundary alterations in and of themselves will not constitute a sufficient response to the challenges we face in education." (p.8)

Although MASS did not formally define quality in their document there were several statements which referred to the need for equity throughout the province.

"The benefit to rural and northern divisions will be realized only with a high level of "equity" subsidization by Manitoba Education and Training." (p.13)

"...this number should be decreased only if the resulting structure provides better educational opportunity..." (p.15)

"All students should have access to these schools." (p.20)

"There is a great disparity in services." (p.22)

"All students should have equal access, as much as possible, to all programs, and all boundary changes should be carried out with this principle in mind." (p.25)

"Distance Education...In many ways this is an equity issue." (p.28)

"The province should provide a base level of educational opportunity which is available to all Manitoba students and make funding available for those needs.....The Minister must provide leadership to ensure that equity is a strong provincial goal." (p.10)

"Technology and distance education must be utilized in the best ways possible to help achieve equitable program delivery." (p.11)

Three statements in the document suggest that MASS holds a broader definition of quality than equity.

"M.A.S.S. agrees with all eight "education principles" outlined on pages 14 and 15 of the Review Commission's "Discussion Document." (p.12)

"The new challenges, complex demands and higher expectations of present day society make it necessary for us to continually re-examine the purposes, structures and practices of education...Issues and recommendations which have emanated from previous initiatives such as the Provincial Commission on Education Reform, could provide some of the substance for dialogue concerning the society we envision for future jurisdictions and the frameworks we construct to achieve it." (p.6)

"Because of constantly changing needs in education, there needs to be a significant research component to inform the ongoing changes." (p.10)

The MASS report also spoke on the issue of size in relationship to quality.

"...larger divisions / districts do not always provide better, more efficient, or less costly educational services." (p.13)

"...smaller schools have some characteristics that make them better than larger schools...there is no research to show that schools can be opened or closed on the basis of absolute numbers. Circumstances vary greatly." (p.15)

The Manitoba Association of School Superintendents made two recommendations with respect to the quality of education.

RECOMMENDATION #2 (p.8)

Co-operation within regions should be encouraged to increase and equalize educational opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION #6 (p.10)

The Minister of Education and Training should try to achieve equity for all students in Manitoba.

The report presented by the Manitoba Teachers' Society defined quality as equity and clearly linked size with equity.

“Student equity includes not only equity among programs and services offered by different school divisions, but also equity in opportunities for individual students, regardless of their differing learning needs.” (p.15)

“Student equity does not mean sameness either in curricular offerings or per pupil expenditure. It does require access to a uniform offering of education programs and services throughout Manitoba public schools.” (p.17)

“Differing policies of public school boards also promote unequal access to programs.” (p.16)

“The province-wide FRAME reporting structure shows evidence of wide disparities in program delivery and program expenditure among school divisions. “ (p.16)

“Student equity is seriously impaired by the existing divisional and district boundaries of Manitoba.” (p.15)

In the presentation by the Teachers' Society equity was not only described in terms of equal access by students to programs and services, it was also described in terms of teacher equity (teachers having equal access to resources and services) and taxpayer

equity (taxpayers being asked to make a similar effort to support education).

It is clearly the position of the Manitoba Teachers' Society that the quality of education in the province would be improved if the equity issues were solved. Further they clearly indicate that changing the boundaries to enlarge the divisions would be an important part of the solution to the equity problem.

"The foundation of public education is equity. When equity is upheld and continually strengthened, the public education system can provide quality educational services. When equity is fettered, that ability is diminished." (p.3)

"An effective redrawing of boundaries would address many aspects of unequal access to education programs. It would restore economies of scale and could improve program access." (p.17)

In their presentation the Teachers' Society spoke to the purpose of education and student learning under issue #13 Current Trends in Education Reform. Although educational trends dialogue was stated as "of interest" the report indicated that this dialogue did not bear directly on the mandate of the Boundaries Review Commission.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society made one recommendation with respect to the quality of education.

RECOMMENDATION #3 (p.37)

Long term viable school divisions with the potential for funding, tax and program equity should be created.

The Manitoba Association of School Trustees had Furthering Student Interests as their first recommendation. Although they did not formally define quality education the association stated within the explanation of this recommendation that the mission of public schools was to educate every child to the fullest of his or her potential. The association further stated that when this is met it is because the schools' every effort is devoted to enabling students to succeed in their quest for increased understanding.

On quality the association further stated:

“Unnecessarily changing division boundaries will divert energies from other urgent change initiatives which would make a difference in the province’s classrooms. Boundary changes should only be initiated to achieve clearly identified educational benefits.” (p.10)

The association made one recommendation related to quality.

RECOMMENDATION #1 (p.10)

The Manitoba Association of School Trustees recommends that any changes to the boundaries of school divisions and districts must meet the needs and further the interests of students and thereby fulfil the educational mission of schools.

With respect to the quality of education the Manitoba Association of Principals stated that the educational system should reflect equal access to services for all students and that present inequities should be narrowed as much as possible. The association made two recommendations to support this.

RECOMMENDATION #4 (p.2) *also a cost recommendation*

...the Manitoba Association of Principals recommends that any administrative savings which result from boundaries revision should be retained in the system and be used to support equal access to programs and services.

RECOMMENDATION #5 (p.2)

There should be a detailed explanation of how the interests of the students and communities will be better served from any specific change.

The Manitoba Association of School Business Officials identified their responsibilities as supporting the best possible learning environment for students. (p.1) Although a high quality education was referred to several times in their document quality was not defined nor could the writer definitively infer it from the document. MASBO did, however, identify some problems with quality in the system as it exists.

1. "Boundaries tend to prevent some decisions that would benefit students. For example rather than being able to cross boundaries to attend a school in a closer neighbouring school, some students are required to travel longer distances to attend a school within the Division of their residence." (p.8)

2. "As the Department of Education and Training continues to reduce its consultative support in many areas, the co-ordination and provision of services, is becoming non-existent...This lack of leadership at the provincial level creates the problem of maintaining a high quality education." (p.9)

In addition, when looking at the implications of boundary revision, MASBO noted that each school division had its own priorities and policies and that time needed to be given for reconciliation and standardization of educational philosophies. The fact that school divisions have different priorities and policies speaks to the differing notions of what constitutes a high quality program.

The Manitoba Home and School Parent-Teacher Federation document talked more about children and the classroom than any of the other official documents. They explained this in the beginning of their presentation by stating:

"Our only interest is in regards to the welfare of children. Therefore our comments are focussed on areas where parents see the quality of their child's education is in question." (p.1)

HSPTFM made a number of statements directly relating to the quality of education.

"Educational reform is necessary and imminent." (p.2)

"Focus is often on short term gains rather than on long term values." (p.2)

"Change for the sake of change was not appropriate...if there was not some significant educational gain to be made." (p.2)

"Supports must be in place to ensure that teachers are not hindered in their attempts to facilitate learning." (p.2)

"Parents have declared that the mandate of education needs to be more clearly defined." (p.2)

"Parents want to be assured that children will have the same quality of education no matter where they go to school."
(p.4)

"An amalgamation of divisions in rural areas creates an instant concern that children will be transported longer distances." (p.4)

"Parents want assurances that more equal opportunities will exist between rural and urban divisions." (p.6)

"Current administrations spend too much time on the process of decision making rather than focus on the "vision" of education." (p.7)

One of these statements speaks to the notion of equity as a component of quality. The others express concern for the improvement of quality in ways that boundary changes would not affect (ie: the need for vision, for clarifying the mandate, for identifying long term values). On the second last page of the parent document there were several quotes, one of which was by Larry Martz: Making Schools Better. It talked about what was needed to improve schools. This would not be achieved simply by redrawing boundaries.

"Making schools better comes down to reaching deep within the community that is a school. It involves giving both the adults and the children a sense of hope, a faith that the daily rhythms in their classrooms really will amount to something." (p.8)

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS ON QUALITY & COMPARISON TO THE LITERATURE

The literature shows that there is a difference between the findings of researchers depending upon when that research was conducted. The research studies are affected by not only the knowledge of the time, but also by the definition of quality used in those studies. The earlier the research on school division size, the more it focuses on economies of scale and spending efficiencies, with program diversity and staffing considerations being used as the measures of quality. Because being larger made it possible to afford more (more programs, more expertise), consolidation efforts received very favourable reports. The later the research, the more there is a tendency to focus on outcomes as opposed to inputs. Those outcomes involve how size affects students personally and socially, how size affects governance, and how size affects student achievement. In the later research it is these outcomes that form the definition of quality. This research has found that these quality outcomes are not linked to program diversity or staff qualifications and/or experience. In addition it would lead us to believe that larger organizations are less effective, not more effective, at producing these high quality outcomes.

In Issue #1 in the Boundaries Discussion Document eight principles of education were identified. They came from the report on Education Legislation Reform. These eight essential themes indicated the shoulds and musts for education legislation. The assumption here is that these principles form the basis of a quality education. Here equity is balanced with other considerations like Excellence, a Respect for Learning and Accountability. Some of the official presentations (CUPE, MASS and HSPTFM) did indicate support for the eight principles from the Legislation Reform Report. Although the MTS supported some of the principles it expressed concerns with four of them - numbers 3 (Partnership), 4 (Fair Resolution of Disputes), 7 (Accountability) and 8 (Coordination of Services).

Within the rest of the document quality was referred to several times - but was not clearly defined. The most specific references regarding quality were those that talked about equity.

"This makes meeting the goal of equity in education difficult to achieve."¹³⁰

"One of the goals of the Department of Education and Training is to ensure the provision of equity in terms of access to education irrespective of location in the province."¹³¹

"ie. is there an increasing need for transparent boundaries in order to minimize cost duplication and provide some form of equitable education irrespective of population base or location?"¹³²

In the official presentations to the Commission there was no clear consensus on the definition of quality. Equity was, however, talked about more than other dimensions of quality. The importance of equity appeared directly in four of the presentations made to the Commission by the official stakeholders (MTS, MASS, MAP and HSPTFM). These associations variously referred to it as the need for equal access, equal opportunity and equal services. The need for equity was given the most emphasis by the Manitoba Teachers' Society who illustrated, with information from the Department of Education and Training, some of the differences in programs, program delivery and services which exist throughout the province.

The parent presentation hinted at the broadest definition of quality when it talked about the need for vision, the need to take into account long term values, the need for a clearer definition of the educational mandate, and the need for more accountability.

In the section on cost the writer identified the cooperative arrangements (recommended by several of the organizations) as a way to increase the management size of the division while maintaining a smaller educational size. The assumption here is that some costs and duplication of services might be reduced with no adverse affects on quality. It is on this point that other official groups appear to disagree with the MTS position that increased size will also mean increased quality. MASS did, however acknowledge that there exists a growing popular view that costs can be

¹³⁰ BRC Discussion Document p.21

¹³¹ BRC Discussion Document p.26

¹³² BRC Discussion Document p.30

reduced significantly by eliminating or reducing boards and senior administration with little negative impact on the quality of education. (p.6)

CONCLUSIONS ON QUALITY

It is evident from the presentations that equity, an earlier research definition of quality, is being used as an important measure of quality in Manitoba. This could be a function of a number of things. Demographic shifts within the province have led to significant enrollment drops in some school divisions. (In 1992 thirty two jurisdictions had an eligible enrollment of fewer than 2000 students.) These changes, in combination with reduced provincial funding, are affecting the ability of these school divisions to provide levels of programming and services found elsewhere in the province. Perhaps in a democratic society the solving of inequities assumes dominance and must be addressed before more sophisticated measures of quality can be used. As stated in the CUPE presentation:

“The public school system is an essential component of our democracy.”¹³³

It might also be a function of the way the discussion document was structured. Although the first issue hinted at a broader definition of quality only one question (#1) referred to this, and it was asked in such a broad, general way that it did not solicit opinions with respect to the effect of size on other dimensions of quality like student achievement. Whatever the reason, no clear consensus on the definition of quality emerges and only MASS cast doubt on the notion that larger would mean more effective.

If equity is used as the definition of quality a reorganization of divisions could be said to be justified. If a broader definition is used reorganization would not likely be a recommended strategy as it could have a negative impact on the quality of education.

ON CURRICULUM

The Canadian Union of Public Employees did not make any recommendations with respect to curriculum. Programs were only mentioned twice in their presentation to the Commission. Both references had to do with reductions in programs and the effect on quality and the needs of students. The union saw technology as having a positive impact on the ability of divisions to provide programs.

“Faced with declining revenues, School Divisions are being forced to cut programs and jobs...programs such as band, music and drama have been eliminated; and now discussions are taking place on the elimination of nutrition programs, child guidance personnel, ESL, Summer School, Literacy Program and the list goes on...” “Creative management and prudent spending,” to quote Education Minister Clayton Manness, can only go so far before the quality of education begins to suffer.” (p.9)

“We remind this Commission that the educational needs of students are negatively affected ...by reductions in programs...”(22)

The Manitoba Association of School Superintendents made a number of comments about programs in their document. The association linked smaller divisions with a lessened ability to provide programs.

“It is obvious that smaller enrollments have made it more difficult for divisions and districts to provide the program options much in demand today. “ (p.19)

“The present Provincial financial restraints have certainly affected the ability of divisions / districts to provide programs. There is no doubt that there have been educational losses.” (p.19)

“The existing “regional vocational schools” were created to serve groups of divisions and districts, and these arrangements have worked reasonably well...All students should have equal access to these schools and all of them

do not at this time.” (p.20)

“Divisions and districts with lower assessments, at the present time, obviously find it more difficult to fund educational programs.” (p.21)

“All students should have equal access, as much as possible, to all programs...”(p.25)

“Advanced technology can have a very positive impact on all areas. (of program delivery) (p.27)

“Advanced technology will enhance program delivery...”(p.29)

The only recommendation the association made was in reference to how technology and distance education might be utilized to somewhat equalize educational opportunities for students in rural and northern Manitoba.

RECOMMENDATION #7 (p.11)

Technology and distance education must be utilized in the best ways possible to help achieve equitable program delivery.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society expressed a number of concerns about curriculum in their presentation. Those concerns related not only to the equity issue, but also to roles and responsibilities in the area of curriculum. The Society clearly linked size and curriculum.

“The criteria for gauging student equity in schools is equality of access to educational programming and related services.” (p.3)

“Equitable access to educational programming and related services should be provided to all public school students, regardless of where they live. Student equity includes not only equity among the programs and services offered by different school divisions, but also equity in opportunities for individual students, regardless of their learning needs.” (p.15)

"Within the scope of a broad provincial curriculum, school divisions should be allowed to develop curriculum to meet the unique needs of their communities." (p.24)

"Distance education technologies can be used to forward the cause of equity in program offerings among schools and divisions." (p.30)

"The Department of Education and Training must be held accountable, not only for the development of new curricula, which is its legislated responsibility, but for the implementation of curricula." (p.5)

"The Department of Education must take a leadership role in the implementation of curricula and reform." (p.33)

"Differing policies of public school boards also promote unequal access to programs" (p.16)

"School divisions cannot provide a full range of education programs and services to students in geographic areas which are too small. Equal access to programs and services can be achieved by creating greater symmetry in operating scale among school divisions." (p.2)

"Access to public school programs should not be limited by place of residence, socio-economic conditions, local jurisdictional policies, or the relative affluence of community tax bases." (p.2)

"Applying the principle of operating scale to public education would mean enhancing program offerings and related services by ensuring an optimum number of students per service unit. If the number of students is inadequate, the possibilities for providing programs and related services are severely reduced." (p.4)

"The diseconomies of scale present in most Manitoba school divisions /districts in the opening years of the 1990s have raised barriers to uniform access to education programs and services throughout the province, and a burden on teachers striving to maintain the quality of education. (p.4)

"In small scale jurisdictions, it is usually too expensive to

offer anything but the most basic programs.” (p.15)

“Attempts by school divisions and districts to function at a miniature scale of operation are comparatively more expensive. There are four possible consequences within a school division:...the program or service is offered despite a relatively high unit cost...the curricular scope has been narrowed...the program has been eliminated....the program has never been offered.” (15 & 16)

“The analysis of how money is spent by school divisions / districts throughout Manitoba reveals...disparities in the provision of education programs and services from one division to another.” (p.21)

“...creating divisions with a specified minimum population is only one aspect of delivering equitable and cost-effective programs.” (p.22)

The Teachers' Society made one recommendation related to programming.

RECOMMENDATION #5 (p.37) *(also a cost recommendation)*

The criteria used in establishing new boundaries should be:

- (a) a scale of operation sufficient to offer a full range of programs, and
- (b) provincial funding for programs or a market assessment per pupil close to provincial average with equalization payments to redress inequities.

The Manitoba Association of School Trustees talked about program and curriculum in the context of decision-making and governance. The association did not see current boundaries as interfering with program delivery.

“We believe that school boards must have a mandate to meet the educational needs of their communities, while fulfilling the responsibilities assigned to them by the provincial government.” (p.4)

“Local control of public schools ensure that decisions on school programming are made by elected representatives...” (p.5)

"This brief identifies the role of the school board in representing the communities that it serves, acting as a responsible employer, and ensuring that curricula reflect community needs." (p.12)

"Local levy funds allow school boards to provide those programs which may not be funded by the province, but which the local community has deemed important in the light of its specific priorities and circumstances." (p.14)

"Communities have the right to decide what programs they want in their schools, and they must be free to decide how much they are willing to pay to support them." (p.14)

"...these institutions are exploring ways of delivering educational programming through interactive television." (p.19)

"Current boundaries have not prevented an amalgamation of effort in order to improve the delivery of programs." (16)

MAST made one recommendation in the area of curriculum.

RECOMMENDATION #10 (p.19) Distance Education and Technology

The Manitoba Association of School Trustees recommends the implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force on Distance Education and Technology. In particular, MAST recommends that the resources required to coordinate, develop and maintain regional consortiums, as proposed in recommendation #1 of the Task Force, be provided.

The Manitoba Association of Principals made one recommendation related to curriculum.

RECOMMENDATION #4 (p.2) *(also a cost & quality recommendation)*

...any administrative savings which result from boundaries revision should be retained in the system and used to support equal access to programs...

The Manitoba Association of School Business Officials mentioned some of the inequities in programming that currently exist. They suggested that there were problems with funding and leadership that contributed to those problems. They, did

however, suggest that increasing the size of divisions would increase the ability of those divisions to offer more in the way of programming. They also identified technology as a possible strategy to consider in order to maintain or increase the level of programming provided by a division.

“Each school division has its own priorities and policies...Some divisions have introduced an aggressive program of computerization. Some divisions have comprehensive music programs; while others, because of costs, have eliminated the same programs.” p.13)

“The current Schools' Finance Program.....is a complex formula....and it is often quite difficult for divisions to fully assess the impact of various cost cutting measures or the implications of sharing students and / or programs.” (p.10)

“The number of curriculum consultants working out of the Department has been reduced. This lack of leadership at the provincial level creates the problem of maintaining a high quality education.” (p.9)

“...amalgamation...could result in a more comprehensive program selection for students.” (p.10)

“Larger divisions ...would allow for the employment of specialists in such areas as...curriculum...” (p11)

“...such possible solutions as distance education should be identified as a priority.” (p.9)

The Manitoba Home and School Parent-Teacher Federation expressed some concern about the ability of small schools at the secondary level to provide adequate programming. HSPTFM posed the possibility that distance education might create more program equity within the system. The federation also saw a role for business in some school programming.

“...there is recognition at the secondary school level that “small” may not afford the choices necessary to prepare

young people for post secondary education or the world of work.” (p.6)

“Distance education opportunities will help reduce the gap.” (p.6)

“Business needs to look at education as an investment. ...Cooperative work experiences, apprenticeships, mentorship programs can all lead students towards making decisions more relevant to their futures.” (p.6)

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS ON CURRICULUM & COMPARISON TO THE LITERATURE

The research has shown that larger schools and school divisions do offer a broader curriculum. There are, however, recent questions that have been raised with respect to four things related to that expanded curriculum:

- * the kinds of courses that are added and their pedagogical value,
- * the link between more programs and student achievement,
- * whether the social and personal “losses” which occur for students in a larger environment are offset by any gains in course offerings, and
- * the degree to which equity is attained when most of the additional courses seem to benefit a small percentage of students at both ends of the spectrum and draw resources away from the average student.

The questions around these issues, and the findings that are emerging in response to the questions, have raised some doubts about the value of increasing size merely to realize gains in curriculum offerings.

In the presentations from the official stakeholders the disparity in programming between schools and divisions was mentioned. Three of the groups (MASS, MTS and MASBO) directly indicated agreement with the research finding that larger schools and school divisions are able to offer more in the way of programming. In addition several of the presentations expressed concern that students in smaller schools and divisions might be at a disadvantage because of this. MAST tied the diversity of programming more to governance than to size.

None of the presentations by the official organizations reflected the recent questions being asked in the research literature. None of the organizations questioned the value of the programs that were not available in smaller schools or divisions. Instead they tended to suggest alternatives whereby the inequities that exist might be addressed. These alternatives included: shared use agreements, transparent boundaries allowing freer movement of students, more parental choice among schools and divisions, and the use of distance education technologies. These were offered as alternatives to simply redrawing boundaries to achieve program equity. One could infer generally from their presentations that the more programs a division offered the better it was.

CONCLUSIONS ON CURRICULUM

Equal access to programming and services was seen as a plus less in the literature and more in the responses of the official organizations. This difference could be predicted from the difference in the definitions of quality. Where equity is the prime definition it is understandable that there would be a concern that all students do not have the same educational opportunities.

If increased curriculum offerings were a reason for reorganization one could infer, both from the literature and from the presentations by the official stakeholders, that it would be a viable strategy. Whether this would make a difference in terms of a student achievement definition of quality is the issue.

ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

In a couple of the documents there were references to the educational needs of students.

“...the public school system exists to meet the educational needs of students.” (MAST p.4 & 22)

“Members of the Manitoba Association of Principals regard themselves as educational leaders as well as teachers and see their most important priority to enhance the effectiveness of schools to be able to meet the educational needs of their students.” (MAP p.1)

The only group to talk about learning, however, was the Manitoba Home and School Parent- Teacher Federation. In their document HSPTFM indicated the importance of providing the supports to teachers to facilitate that learning. In addition the parents group questioned the value of any boundary changes unless it would make a difference to the students and their potential to learn.

Other than these comments by the parents not much was said about learning or achievement, and how that might be affected by any changes to the present boundaries.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT & COMPARISON TO THE LITERATURE

It would seem from the research that student achievement has emerged as an important variable when determining the quality of schooling. It has replaced both cost and a definition of inputs (for example: class size, teacher qualifications and experience, diversity of programming). Perhaps this is because “accountability” has become a more important issue contextually.

While the relationship of student achievement to divisional or district size is still

considered ambiguous, recent studies would seem to suggest that student achievement is lower in larger divisions. They would also suggest that failure rates are higher in larger divisions. Assuming that the research findings related to failure and student achievement are accurate this could have a negative impact on the quality of school life for students.

What is more consistent in the research is the relationship found between school size and student achievement. Here researchers have found that the relationship is an inverse one. That is: the larger the school the lower the student achievement, the smaller the school the higher the student achievement. Since one of the effects of consolidation is an increase in school size it would seem to call into question the merits of division reorganization unless the division falls below an enrolment of 500.

The only official organization to speak to the issue of size and student achievement was the parents' group. This group wanted to be assured that if changes were made the supports would be in place to ensure that teachers were not hindered in their attempts to facilitate learning. (p2) While the federation did not offer an opinion about the effect of divisional size on achievement it did ask the following questions:

“Is boundary change going to ensure a smaller class size, or more resources to enable each child to reach his / her full potential? Is it going to ensure that each participant in education including government, administrators, teachers, parents, and students, know their responsibilities and are accountable?” (p.9)

As mentioned earlier the lack of attention paid to the effect of size on student achievement may be a function of the way in which the discussion document was structured. None of the issues or questions made any specific reference to student learning and achievement. Nor did the issues or questions lead the readers to speculate as to the effects of size on achievement. The effect of division size on students was discussed in terms of how the educational opportunities for students would be affected, leaving the impression that the capacity to provide more programs and services would mean that the quality of education would be improved. The inference to be made is that students would automatically learn more. This notion is

not supported in the recent research on size.

The only concern expressed about students in relation to division size had to do with the time spent on busses. The groups speaking to this issue were not in favour of long bus rides and suggested that a maximum time should be set for travel. The inference here is that student travel time might be related to student learning.

CONCLUSIONS ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Accountability is currently an important issue, and has been identified as such in the New Directions Document recently put out by the Minister of Education and Training. Yet there is very little emphasis given to student learning and achievement in the Boundaries Review Discussion Document. This may be because the link between size and learning is only recently being explored. Researchers are only just beginning to understand that there is a relationship between what students learn and the size of the organization, and to draw some conclusions about that relationship. From what has been found the writer would suggest that if reform of the public school system were to focus on ways to increase student learning, then reorganization aimed at creating large divisions and large schools would probably not be one of the strategies under discussion.

ON STAFFING

The Canadian Union of Public Employees stated the concern for their membership very directly. In their presentation the Union cited several examples of job reductions and what that has meant to the quality of education. In addition to their concern for job loss and increased workload, the union was also concerned with the protection of their members (contracts, benefits etc.) should there be changes to the boundaries.

"We also believe that such cooperation must not result in any job losses during these times of economic difficulty."
(p.5)

"Faced with declining revenues, School Divisions are being forced to cut programs and jobs. We have seen the jobs of teachers, custodians, maintenance, workers, teacher assistants and clerical workers eliminated..." (p.9)

"We fear that amalgamation will simply be used as another excuse to reduce services and jobs in the public school board sector." (p.11)

"...we do not accept that increasing efficiency has to mean staff reductions." (p.17)

"In order to minimize the uncertainty and potential industrial strife which may accompany a boundary realignment, it is essential that legislation affecting any such realignment contain clear provisions ensuring no loss of jobs. " (p.17)

"Boundary changes may also potentially jeopardize employees' rights, especially pertaining to salary, benefits, tenure and seniority. Therefore any legislation affecting Division boundaries should contain provisions which ensure that these rights are preserved. It should contain provisions which recognize and support the continuation of employment, opportunities for advancement and benefits earned through years of good service." (p.17)

"This is most equitably achieved by utilizing the best such conditions and rates in effect as between those Divisions being merged." (p.18)

"Protections which are afforded to teaching staff affected by boundary change should be afforded to non-teaching similarly affected." (p.18)

CUPE made one recommendation regarding staffing to the Commission.

RECOMMENDATION #7 (p.21)

The Commission should recommend labour adjustment measures in its report which protect employees' jobs, their opportunities for advancement and their wages and benefits. These measures must be developed at the provincial level in close consultation with the Unions and enshrined in law. Furthermore, that if the Commission recommends any boundary changes, a recommendation be made to set up a single defined benefit pension plan for all Manitoba non-teaching School Division employees.

The Manitoba Association of School Superintendents was also concerned with the welfare of school division employees and made one recommendation related to staffing and boundary change.

"The Commission should take into account the fact that major boundary changes may have very serious consequences on employees and the communities where they work and live. If any major changes are implemented, special steps should be taken to ensure that employees are re-assigned, wherever possible, to new and similar responsibilities." (p.11)

"If school division / district boundaries were altered, the most practical way of dealing with differences in employment contracts would be to go to the normal collective bargaining process. Unresolved disputes, as usual, can be given to boards of arbitration." (p.32)

RECOMMENDATION #8 (p.11)

Any major boundary changes should consider the impacts that these changes will have upon employees and their communities.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society stated their concern for the welfare of teachers in the introduction to their presentation and in their response to issue #14.

"Teachers are the direct providers of educational programs. Their well-being and morale directly affect the quality of education. Any changes to boundaries must consider the needs of teachers and ensure their salaries, benefits, and working conditions are protected." (p.2)

"Teachers should not lose benefits they now enjoy, including salary, accumulated sick leave, or rights as a result of boundary changes... Teachers must be protected from negative effects of geographic transfers due to reorganization of school division boundaries." (p.34)

The Society defined equity in three ways: equity for students, equity for teachers, and equity for taxpayers. In the definition of equity for teachers the welfare of teachers was expanded into working conditions.

"Teacher equity is served by ensuring that learning and working environments throughout Manitoba's public schools are conducive to delivering quality educational services. All teachers should have the resources and support services needed to address the expectations placed on public schools." (p.3)

The Society also identified the role teachers would play in instances where the technology was used to narrow the gap in program delivery to rural and northern centres.

"The interactive technology does not eliminate the need for certified on-site teachers to oversee the program, work in partnership with the distance education teacher, provide support and remedial instruction, administer tests, and supervise distance education classrooms." (p.29)

The Teachers' Society made one recommendation directly relating to the welfare of teachers in the event that divisions were re-aligned.

RECOMMENDATION #7 (p.37)

Teachers must not lose salary, benefits, sick leave accumulations or rights due to reorganization of school division boundaries.

The Manitoba Association of School Trustees expressed concern for the welfare of school division employees and made one recommendation with respect to staffing.

RECOMMENDATION #11 (p.20)

The Manitoba Association of School Trustees recommends that any boundary changes be implemented in such a way as to minimize negative impacts on all school division / district employees.

The association raised the additional point that amalgamation might upset the economic viability of some areas. They suggested that this should be taken into consideration when any changes were recommended.

“In many communities, the school division or district is the single largest employer, and makes an important contribution to that community’s economic viability. If school divisions and districts are consolidated, a great deal of personal dislocation and distress may occur. We must ensure that any change to school boundaries minimizes this potential.” (p.20)

The Manitoba Association of Principals made one recommendation with respect to staffing. Again, the recommendation was directly related to staff welfare.

RECOMMENDATION #6 (p.2)

The government must honour the contractual obligations of any present employees in the system who may be affected by the changes.

The Manitoba Association of School Business Officials did not make any formal recommendations in this area but it did identify one issue and suggest how that might be resolved.

“Further, if a reduction in the number of divisions results from this process, serious consideration will need to be given to the implications for incumbent employees. All possible measures should be taken to ensure that the incumbents are given maximum opportunities to retain and / or secure positions in the new divisions. A comprehensive plan should be designed to help minimize the effect on employees who have given faithful service to their present division. Issues to be considered in such a plan should include redeployment requirements, contractual obligations, retirement options, retraining, outplacement and related counselling.” (p.11)

The Manitoba Home and School Parent-Teacher Federation did not comment on staffing issues nor on any of the problems that might accrue to staff as a result of boundary changes.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS ON STAFFING & COMPARISON TO THE LITERATURE

Two findings in the research are significant. The first is that qualifications and experience, two factors cited in arguments for consolidation during the sixties, do not seem to make a difference in terms of student achievement. The second is that specialization, another early argument for consolidation, loses its effect at a much lower enrolment level than was previously thought to be true. One finding that needs more study is the effect of size on staff morale. Initial information in this area would lead us to believe that staff morale may be negatively related to size. What effect this could have on student achievement also needs more study.

In the presentations almost nothing was said about the effect of amalgamation on

teacher qualifications or workload. There was, however, considerable concern expressed by most of the organizations regarding the importance of being fair to all employees in any process of change. This was expressed in terms of loss of: employment, benefits, seniority, location of work, etc. In addition to these concerns CUPE also identified some of the effects of reorganization on the workload of their members and on the organization. CUPE gave a number of actual examples of workload which had changed and the impact of that change on schools and students.

A number of the official organizations made suggestions about the kind of process that should be used to ensure that consolidation was fair to all.

CONCLUSIONS ON STAFFING

In 1959 the Royal Commission on Education in Manitoba recommended reorganization as a way to address concerns about the quality of teaching. With reorganization came an increase in the qualifications necessary for teaching, and a standardization of those qualifications. It was assumed that increased professionalization would have a positive effect on the quality of education in the province.

At that time the MTS was clearly in support of boundary reorganization to not only increase the professionalism of teaching but to also improve the welfare conditions for teachers.

In the Boundaries Review Commission of 1993 the key issue regarding staffing seems more related to job and benefits security than to the effects of reorganization on the improved ability to produce a high quality education. Only the Teachers' Society presented the case that an increase of size, and therefore tax base, would impact positively on the ability of teachers to work more effectively.

ON GOVERNANCE

Governance was an important issue of discussion in the boundaries review process. It was the fourth term of reference identified in the discussion document put out by the Boundaries Review Commission and it was carefully spelled out. That term of reference read as follows:

IV Determine and recommend the best governance structure which will:

- (a) further educational excellence
- (b) facilitate effective and efficient program delivery and development in the public school system
- (c) facilitate the goals of education of the province and ensure that education reflects principles such as equity, openness, responsiveness, excellence, choice, relevance, and accountability
- (d) ensure flexibility in student movement between and among divisions
- (e) acknowledge the increasing applicability of technology to facilitate program delivery
- (f) foster partnership between / among government, community, parents, labour, business, and industry
- (g) receive public acceptance¹³⁴

The official stakeholders tended to comment on the issue of governance in relation to four areas: the present structure, municipal boundaries, parent committees and divisional size.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees was not in favour of altering the present method of governance. Although they suggested that the number of trustees might be reduced, the structure whereby elected representatives govern the educational process was not questioned.

“The current structure allows for the Divisions to be response to cultural, social, economic, and geographic factors particular to a community.” (p.15)

“School Divisions should play an important role in facilitating the involvement of staff, students and parents in education and administrative policy decision-making

¹³⁴ BRC Discussion Document p.1

processes.” (p.15)

“Some consideration should be given to assessing the number of trustees required to adequately represent the community...”(p.15)

CUPE made one recommendation related to governance.

RECOMMENDATION # 6 (p.15)

We encourage the Commission to recommend that School Divisions and their governance structures be designed such that democratic and public control of the education system is enhanced, not restricted and the boundaries respect, protect and promote the community of interests that exist within this province.

The Manitoba Association of School Superintendents emphasized the varying roles the participants play in the process and the importance of leadership.

“For any discussion concerning the alteration of delivery of educational service to take place, the participants must recognize the underpinning roles played by the various partners in the educational enterprise.” (p.6)

“...the most productive schools require both “top down” as well as “bottom up” initiatives as well as real collaboration and mutual support.” (p.6)

“Superintendents have a specific role in leading educational organizations into the next century.” (p.7)

“The role of the provincial government...must be strengthened.” (p.10)

“The Department of Education and Training needs to play a stronger role than at present.” (p.24)

“...current trends demand that there be strong leadership at all levels.” (p.25)

The association was clearly in favour of retaining the current structure of governance.

"School boards, as presently constituted, have served Manitoba very well over the past several decades. No major changes are needed." (p.9)

"..."existing units" (school boards) serve us adequately at present and should be able to serve us appropriately in future as well." (p.19)

The association did not see an advantage in making the school division boundaries coincident with municipal boundaries which they obviously thought could lead to schools being governed by municipal officials.

"The Commission should not try to change school division boundaries to coincide with those of municipalities...the benefits of these would be minimal...There would be not educational benefits. Elected school trustees should continue to administer the schools, and elected municipal officials should continue to look after their current responsibilities." (p.30)

"The schools should not be run by the same municipal officials who are responsible for other essential municipal services." (p.9)

The association favoured school committees but did not see them replacing trustees in the governance structure.

"School committees are an essential ingredient in the operation of an effective school division. However, there needs to be a clear definition of roles and functions as well as opportunities for people both within and outside the school community to learn to work effectively with each other." (p.10)

"Local school committees may promote an opportunity for parents' voices to be heard, and we are in favour of these committees. However, elected school trustees should continue to hold their present powers and responsibilities." (p.27)

The Manitoba Association of School Superintendents expressed some real concerns

about the effect of larger divisions on local control.

“Very large divisions would certainly reduce the impact of local influence. But where does “positive local influence” end and “negative parochialism” begin” (p.25)

“Larger jurisdictions tend to have less “local control.” (p.26)

The association suggested the formation of regional boards to facilitate co-operation between the divisions.

“A region would consist of several compatible divisions and / or districts which would set a governance structure to oversee co-operative ventures among member divisions.” (p.23)

“...regional boards could deal with matters of common concern such as vocational schools.” (p.26)

The association made three recommendations with respect to governance.

RECOMMENDATION #3 (p.9)

Manitoba superintendents strongly believe that school divisions and districts should continue to be independent entities governed by democratically elected boards with large measures of taxing authority and substantial control over their budgets.

RECOMMENDATION # 4 (p.9)

The foundation of local school / community councils should be encouraged.

RECOMMENDATION # 5 (p.10)

Manitoba Education and Training has the responsibility to establish a vision and provide the necessary leadership and support.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society was primarily concerned with the role teachers play in governing the school system.

“Representation by population, community input, and a voice for all the partners in public school education - including teachers - should be a part of any proposed governance model.” (p.2)

The concern expressed by the Teachers' Society was primarily based on two recent legislative bills (Bills 25 and 34 of 1993) which ignored the role of teachers in the governance models for both the Frontier School Division and the Francophone School Division. (p.5) This trend of increased authority for parents, and reduced teacher involvement ¹³⁵, was rejected in the MTS document.

“A review of boundaries should not recommend the French School Division governance model for other divisions. The French model leaves out representation by anyone other than parents on school advisory committees. It ignores all of the other partners in education.” (p.23)

The Manitoba Teachers' Society supported the continuance of the current system of governance which involves the election of trustees, with a clear mandate for policy and hiring. Although the Society also supported the notion of parent involvement through committees, the role the Society would like to see for parents is clearly an advisory one.

“Public school divisions should continue to have duly elected school boards of trustees, but the role and responsibilities should reflect the expectations of the 1990s. The school board's role is to develop policy for the delivery of education and be responsible for employing the administration and the teachers to deliver it.” (p.24)

“Whenever an advisory committee is established for a school, its role should be:
(a) to advise, to give a perspective that may be useful to consider in the usual operational procedures of a school,

¹³⁵ New Directions Document p.

and
(b) to enhance communication between the various groups involved in the education of students." (p.27)

The Teachers' Society also responded to the question of municipal boundaries and suggested a governing structure for distance education.

"If the local levy is retained, school division boundaries should be common or coterminous with the boundaries of municipalities and local government districts...School division boundaries should be established first. Municipal boundaries should then be adjusted to make them coterminous...Most municipalities would be contained within one of the divisions and only minor adjustments would be required to make the remainder coterminous." (p.32)

"Because of the inter-divisional nature of distance education, a government -funded interorganizational body should be established to define, develop, implement, and monitor the system." (p.29)

The one formal recommendation made by the Teachers' Society had to with the inclusion of teachers in the governing of public school education.

RECOMMENDATION #6 (p.37)

Any governance model must include teachers.

Governance issues formed a large part of the Manitoba Association of School Trustees presentation to the Commission. Pages 5 to 9 of their presentation were devoted to the purpose of school boards and the history of school governance in Manitoba. The association was clearly in favour of the retention of the current system and opposed assigning governing authorities for education over to municipal officials. Although MAST was clearly supportive of parent advisory committees this association saw them as advisory and pointed out some of the difficulties that might arise if their authority changed.

"The unique North American institution, the school board, was created in recognition of a bold concept: ordinary people can decide what is best for themselves and for their children. Recognizing this, the leadership of Manitoba's schools is designed to reflect the will of the people." (p.5)

"...school boards must be recognized as full partners in education governance..." (p.5)

"These developments are evidence that the system by which public education is governed in Manitoba continues to evolve in response to emerging educational needs of the people that it serves." (p.9)

"The history of school boards in Manitoba has demonstrated that communities are willing to make adjustments when change can be shown to be in the best interests of their children." (p.11)

"The current Public Schools Act defines the powers and responsibilities of school boards in ways which enable Manitoba's school boards to fulfil these leadership roles." (p.12)

"We affirm the essential features of our education governance system which continue to serve education well, and which must be preserved." (p.22)

"The effectiveness of educational governance would be undermined if assigned to governing authorities such as municipalities which have other areas of responsibility." (p.13)

"School boards especially value the contribution of parent advisory committees..." (p.15)

"Parent committees operating with a definite legislative mandate could evolve into hundreds of school-level boards of education, effectively reversing the consolidation movement of the 1960's." (15)

"Local school committees, no matter how they are constituted...create an additional administrative body and an additional layer of bureaucracy." (p.15)

MAST made three recommendations related to governance.

RECOMMENDATION #3 Maintenance of Duties of School Boards (p.12)

The Manitoba Association of School Trustees recommends that the duties of school boards be maintained in accordance with the current provisions of the Public Schools Act.

RECOMMENDATION #4 Retention of School Board Governance System (p.13)

The Manitoba Association of School Trustees recommends that the current system of school board governance be retained to ensure that voters have the right to elect trustees whose responsibility is to govern education.

RECOMMENDATION #6 School-Level Advisory Committees (p.14)

The Manitoba Association of School Trustees supports the establishment of school-level advisory committees or parent councils, to encourage greater participation and collaboration in educational issues.

The Manitoba Association of Principals expressed concern over the role of parent committees and made three recommendations in this area. Governance was the major topic in the principals' presentation.

“...any school based committees (should) act in an advisory capacity to the school principal.” (p.1)

“...any recommended advisory committee should have its scope defined by law or regulation.” (p.1)

RECOMMENDATION #2 (p.2)

The Manitoba Association of Principals recommends that any advisory committee would be most effective if its area of responsibility were to include:

- review and make recommendations on major school renovations and school capital projects;
- recommend an annual school budget;
- review and make recommendations on school policy, procedures and programs;
- review and recommend short and long term priorities for the school;
- review and recommend policies on the transportation of students;
- promote the involvement of the community in the life and direction of the school

RECOMMENDATION #3 (p.2)

The Manitoba Association of Principals has reviewed a number of advisory models and recommends that any issues regarding the hiring, dismissal or the evaluation of staff should remain under the jurisdiction of the school division authorities.

RECOMMENDATION #7 (p.2)

Governance changes, such as mandated school advisory committees, should be phased in and supported with professional development and training.

The Manitoba Association of School Business Officials supported the present structure of governance involving the election of school trustees. The association also strongly supported parental involvement but identified problems with increasing governance authority at the school level. This association indicated that the current size of divisions allowed them to respond to problems.

"It is our opinion that the present structure of local school boards, duly elected and accountable to the public by ballot, should remain in place with the authority to raise revenue from the local taxpayer to meet local needs and concerns."
(p5)

"The present school systems...are able to address change and conflict in a personal and effective manner at the local level." (p.5)

"As previously stated, we believe that the best interests of the public education system and the students it serves will be best addressed through a corporate school board made up of school trustees duly elected by the local electors..."
(p.13)

"It is important to develop and maintain a high level of parental involvement at the school level." (p.13)

"A decision to provide governance authority, control and responsibility at the school level will add another level of bureaucracy to the system. It may also lead to multi "administrative" units to handle daily operations of payroll, personnel, accounting, purchasing, etc. The results could

be a significant loss of efficiency and effectiveness ...We strongly recommend that the Commission consider this issue very carefully." (p.14)

"...the present school divisions are, for the most part, of a size where they can respond to problems in a direct and timely fashion." (p.6)

The Parents Federation did not question the cost of trustees, which leads one to infer that the federation was not questioning the current system of governance. The federation did not support combining school and municipal jurisdictions. The federation did express the viewpoint that parents are willing to assume a more active role in the education of their children although they did not define the nature of that involvement. They also suggested the exploration of alternative models currently being tried elsewhere, suggesting an openness to other ways of involving parents. The federation was not in favour of combining urban divisions because of perceived lack of parental input which might occur.

"The cost factor of trustees in particular was generally not a major issue." (p.4)

"To combine school administration and municipal jurisdictions was not a desirable option for parents." (p.7)

"There are present inconsistencies within the province concerning parents and their opportunities for input and access to information regarding administration of education." (p.1)

"Many parents have a keen interest in education and are prepared to accept responsibility where opportunities exist." (p.1)

"Educators are just now generally accepting the value of community input..." (p.2)

"Other administrative models which occur in Calgary, P.E.I., U.S. site based models, or charter schools could be an alternative." (p.5)

“Combining urban divisions creates a concern among parents regarding loss of autonomy.” (p.4)

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS ON GOVERNANCE & COMPARISON TO THE LITERATURE

Although this is not an area directly studied in the literature on size its importance does come through in these studies, and in studies related to the effectiveness of organizations. What has been found is that larger organizations experience more difficulties in producing high quality outcomes in part because the people who work in the organization, and the people who are served by the organization, have less involvement in the decision-making process. As a result the workers are less committed to the goals and the system is less responsive to the needs of the clients served by the organization.

MASS and MASBO were the only organizations which seemed to support this concern. MASS indicated that larger jurisdictions have less local control and MASBO indicated that larger organizations could mean more more staff and more bureaucracy. MASBO also indicated that too much decentralization of authority could lead to governing problems which could negatively influence effectiveness and efficiency. The other organizations did not talk about size in relation to governance.

Currently trustees play an important role in the governance of education. What did not appear in the research on optimal size read by the writer was whether education should continue to be governed by trustees. While there is current literature on site-based management and charter schools which talk directly to alternative models of governance, the writer does not know what role trustees play in these alternative models, nor if a connection is made in this literature to school division size.

In the presentations to the Commission the official stakeholders were clearly in favour of retaining the current governance model which includes the election of trustees.

Considerable support was given to this model by CUPE, MASS, MTS, MAST and MASBO. Although HSPTFM did not clearly state support, the document mentioned no concern from its membership about the costs associated with trustees, leading one to infer that the system of governance including trustees is supported.

CUPE, MASS, MAP, MASBO and MTS talked about the roles and responsibilities of other partners in the governing of education. Three of these groups mentioned the department of education. (MASS, MASBO and MTS) All of the groups emphasized the role their membership plays in the furthering of education, and the importance of that role.

Three of the stakeholders groups were clearly against making municipal and school division boundaries coterminous (MASS, MAST and HSPTFM). One got the sense from their presentations that they feared this might lead to the governing of education by municipal officials. The MTS was in favour of coterminous boundaries but made no reference to the involvement of municipal officials in the governing of education.

Six of the official stakeholders (MASS, MTS, MAP, MAST, MASBO and HSPTFM) clearly supported the involvement of parents in the governing of education. Although the Parents Federation did not clearly define how that might take place the group did indicate that parents were willing to take a more active role and increase their level of responsibility. The other groups were definite that parental involvement should be advisory only. MAST stated that increasing parental authority could effectively undermine previous consolidation efforts by creating the hundreds of mini school boards that the amalgamation of the sixties was designed to eliminate. Only the Parents Federation suggested the examination of alternate governance models. This group mentioned that site - based models or charter schools might be an alternative.

CONCLUSIONS ON GOVERNANCE

Prior to the division and district reorganization of the 60's and 70's the community membership had considerable control over the school which was located within the

community. This small and parochial organization led to problems associated with funding, curriculum offerings, standardization, teacher qualifications and welfare, and accountability for student learning. The reorganization of school divisions and districts, from over 1800 to the 56 we have today, helped to address some of these concerns.

In 1993 governance has again become an issue. Why?

One might speculate that the government might see strengthening the vehicle for parent input and decision-making as a way of getting parents more involved in the system. There has been a general concern over lack of involvement by parents in the schools and some thinking that this has contributed to a growing dissatisfaction on the part of parents. Increasing parental control might be seen as a way of holding the system more accountable and ensuring that parents were, in fact, getting the education for their children that they wanted.

One thing is obvious. It will not be feedback from the Commission that decides this issue. Two divisions are already organized in a way that gives parents more control - the Francophone School Division and the Frontier School Division. In addition the New Directions Document has clearly spelled out a much stronger role for parents. This was done prior to the report of the Commission which has had feedback expressing some concern with this direction.

An interesting question that has emerged in this study is which aspects of education are best centralized and which are best decentralized? What we believe in response to this question could have an effect on what we believe in terms of divisional size and how divisions might be organized. Several of the official stakeholders recommended the formalization of some shared use agreements, suggesting a voluntary enlarging of divisional boundaries for some specific functions primarily related to administration and transportation. This voluntary amalgamation for specific administrative functions would mean the retention of divisional boundaries for functions related directly to teaching and learning. This was referred to in both the cost and quality sections.

CONCLUSIONS ON THE RESPONSES FROM THE STAKEHOLDERS & THE COMPARISON TO THE LITERATURE

It is impossible to make a generalization regarding the fit between the research and the responses made by the official organizations. Agreement and disagreement with the literature findings ranged across both the research variables and the official organizations. There were, however, five things which seemed to stand out when comparing the stakeholder responses with the research.

The first is that earlier research findings (both those related to economics and quality) played a more dominant role in the commission process.

The second is that academic research, from outside of the province or country, played less of a role in the responses from the official stakeholders than either internal research (Manitoba findings) or the Boundaries Review Discussion Document.

The third is that some of the organizations did use research in their presentations. The extent to which it was used varied, however, with the organization's ability to devote time and resources to the presentation to the Commission. The most research was provided by MTS and MAST. MAP and HSPTFM provided the least research. In addition to more internal research being used, the research that was used by the organizations tended to validate the points that the organizations were making. If it was congruent with their thinking then it was used to support their argument. For example: the MTS used research on provincial program and service information to support their position related to equity. The research MAST used had to do with the history of consolidation and how changes in divisional organization were related to governance. CUPE used external sources (for example: from Ontario) to support their case on costs, and internal information to support their case for the protection of jobs.

The fourth thing noticed by the writer was that each organization had a message to get across in its presentation to the Commission. That message varied not only with the organization's beliefs about how reorganization might affect both children and

education in Manitoba, but also with their beliefs about how reorganization would affect their members.

With CUPE the key issue was jobs.

With MAST the key issue was governance.

With MTS the key issue was equity.

With MASS the key issue was leadership.

With MASBO the key issue was finance.

With MAP the key issue was governance.

The exception was HSPTFM, for whom the key issue was how the proposed changes would affect their children.

The last conclusion of note was the difference found between the presentation by the Manitoba Teachers' Society and the other organizations. The Society was quite different from the others in the strong support it gave to the notion of reorganization. Since this support differs from the other stakeholders, and differs from the research findings, one wonders why this is so. Part of the reason may be found in the differences between teaching in the urban areas and teaching in the rural areas. Since the writer has only had the former experience, and the MTS has experience in the latter, there may be a solid reason for their recommendation which is based on the needs in the rural and northern areas. On the other hand there may be not only teacher and student gains, but also organizational gains that would be made if boundaries were realigned making smaller, more powerful division associations which might be easier to coordinate into a strong provincial body.

In addition to the above findings the writer noted some interesting things about the formal recommendations made by the official stakeholders. The first finding of note is that not all groups made formal recommendations. (MASBO and HSPTFM were two groups that did not make any formally identified recommendations.) The second is that within the formally identified recommendations increasing inter-divisional cooperation was mentioned four times by three groups (MASS, MAST and CUPE). Only the MTS made a direct recommendation to restructure divisions to make them more viable.

The third finding of note is that the importance of equity was mentioned only four times within the formal recommendations by only two groups (MASS and MTS). This is

surprising since equity came across as an important consideration in both the overall presentations and the discussion document.

The fifth is that the areas of recommendation which were most congruent among the stakeholders had to do with staffing and governance. Five of the groups (CUPE, MASS, MTS, MAST and MAP) made staffing recommendations, all of which referred to employee consideration and protection. Three of the groups recommended the maintenance of elected school boards (CUPE, MASS and MAST), and three of the groups recommended the inclusion of parent advisory boards in the governance model (MASS, MAST and MAP).

The last finding of note is that none of the stakeholder groups made recommendations in the area of student achievement. Two groups, did however, make recommendations which spoke about the needs of students under the quality dimension (MAST and MAP).

Since the formal recommendations might carry more weight with the Commission it is interesting to note the kind and frequency of recommendations actually made by the stakeholder groups.

The responses from the official stakeholders are not, however, the only information used by the Commission to make decisions. The Commission also had feedback from many subgroups of these organizations, individuals and other groups which had to be taken into consideration before making recommendations. These overall responses would also have to be considered in terms of the context within the province.

In addition there are factors related to policy decision-making itself which would also influence the outcome of the decision. The next section is devoted to a brief look at some of these political factors.

LITERATURE FINDINGS ON THE CONTEXT WITHIN WHICH POLITICAL DECISIONS ARE MADE & SOME CONCLUSIONS ON THE EFFECT OF THAT CONTEXT ON DECISION-MAKING

Policy making is a complex process in which information on problems and solutions is only one of the aspects which must be considered by those making the decisions.¹³⁶ Internally politicians operate in a distinctive organizational culture which impacts on the decision-making process. That culture pays attention not only to the identified problem, and to the information available about that problem, but also to the power and influence of the parties proposing or supporting the suggested policy. In the political world certain policymakers hold more power and influence than others. This may vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. The fact that power and influence is differentiated among individuals and groups holds constant, however. Between 1983 and 1985 Mitchell, Wirt and Marshall conducted a study in six states in the United States to identify a rank ordering of policymakers in terms of their power and influence. What they found ranks the policy makers as follows:

1. Individual members of the legislature (usually chairs of education committees)
2. Legislative committees
3. The legislature as a whole
4. The chief state school officer
5. Teachers' organizations
6. All education interest groups combined
7. The governor and executive staff
8. Legislative staff
9. The state board of education
10. The association of local school boards
11. The administrators' association
12. The courts
13. Federal policy
14. Non-educator interest groups
15. Lay groups
16. Research organizations
17. Referenda
18. Producers of educational materials

¹³⁶ Betty Malen, Michael J. Murphy and Sue Geary, "The Role of Evaluation Information in Legislative Decision Making: A Case of a Loose Cannon on Deck," Theory Into Practice (Vol. XXVII, No. 2), p.111.

The literature suggests that an "inner circle" of the top-ranking actors develops, and that these groups are best able to reflect the choices and direction of policy goals.¹³⁷

This notion of source weighting assumes that some information will be considered more important or valuable because of the source, not because of the inherent value of the information. For example, if the circle of influence is the same in Manitoba as Mitchell, Wirt and Marshall found, one might predict that the provincial school division boundaries would be changed on the basis that such change is supported by members of the top five ranking groups in power and influence. The Legislative Committee on Educational Reform has identified the need for reform. The Commission was established by the former Minister of Education and Training Rosemary Vodrey and supported by the current Minister of Education and Training Clayton Manness. The Manitoba Teachers' Society has clearly stated its position in support of boundary reorganization.

In addition the organizational culture of policy makers limits the actions they might take without losing their own power and influence. One aspect of that culture is an assumptive world domain which defines what are acceptable and unacceptable policy ideas. For example, policy makers will lose power and influence if they initiate, or try to get passed, policies which open debate on issues which diverge from the prevailing value.¹³⁸ When reorganization of boundaries was proposed in 1959 it fit with prevailing beliefs such as: changes in the workforce demand a more skilled employee, secondary education should be accessible to all students wishing it, and greater centralization would lead to a more uniform curriculum and higher standards. Today the reorganization of boundaries fits with prevailing beliefs such as: it is necessary to downsize administrative staff in order to cut costs, larger organizations can capitalize on economies of scale and so reduce expenditures, and reform of the public school system is needed in order to raise standards. The congruence with context creates both a mindset favouring reorganization and / or an acceptance of it as inevitable. It also makes it difficult for policy makers to take issue with the question without losing either power or influence.

¹³⁷ Catherine Marshall, p.99.

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, p.99.

The other internal problem which policy makers have is that they have to work within a very short time frame.¹³⁹ The electoral time constraint which they are under means that they have to act quickly even if an optimal policy solution is not available.¹⁴⁰ It also means that they have to choose an option that can produce as least some results in the short term which are both politically and administratively feasible, and which also meet other organizational and distributional goals.¹⁴¹ The timing of a report in relationship to an election call can have serious implications for the extent to which recommendations are accepted or rejected, regardless of their educational value.

In addition to the organizational culture of politicians which dictates how they might both act and respond, each of the official organizations is restricted by its own internal politics. Each of the organizations has as its mandate an expectation to look after the welfare of its members. This mandate was referred to in the documents presented by both MASS and MTS.

"The purpose of M.A.S.S. IS:

- to promote education which is in the best interests school age children, and
- to provide services to M.A.S.S. members."¹⁴²

"The Society was founded in 1919 and is the official voice of the province's public school teachers. It operates under Chapter 262, An Act Respecting The Manitoba Teachers' Society, contained in Chapter T-30 of the Revised Statutes of Manitoba. Among its objectives are to:

- (a) promote and advance the cause of education in Manitoba;
- (b) advance and safeguard the welfare of teachers in Manitoba;
- (c) enhance the teaching profession in Manitoba;
- (d) address the social issues that affect the teaching profession in Manitoba; and
- (e) cooperate with other organizations...having the same or like aims and objects."¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Holdaway, p.253.

¹⁴⁰ McDonnell, p.92.

¹⁴¹ McDonnell, p.96.

¹⁴² MASS presentation, p.1.

¹⁴³ MTS presentation, p. 1.

The politicians would be aware that the mandates of the organizations would influence their feedback to the Commission and would have to take this into consideration as they decided which recommendations to make. The fact that five of the organizations made recommendations in this area, and that there was a high degree of congruence among the recommendations, supports the importance of this mandate in each of the organizations. It also calls into question the extent to which any of these organizations could be expected to support changes which would affect the welfare of their members.

The degree to which the internal political considerations plays a role in which recommendations are actually made and implemented is an important question which bears further examination.

CHAPTER SIX

WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED FROM THE STUDY OF SCHOOL DIVISION REORGANIZATION IN MANITOBA?

In this thesis the writer has examined the question of boundary reorganization and division size as a vehicle to understanding policy decision-making in education, and the role of research in that process.

Throughout the thesis the writer has summarized the findings within each chapter, and has drawn some conclusions about those findings.

Currently no policy decisions have been made with respect to boundary reorganization. The Commission has completed its work and has placed its recommendations before the politicians. What will ultimately be decided is, as of yet, unknown.

The writer has, however, learned much about policy decision-making from this study. This chapter contains a brief synopsis of those findings.

The study of division size and boundary reorganization has demonstrated that policy decision-making is a complicated process. It is complicated for a number of reasons.

The first is that, based on this study, there does not seem to be such a thing as completely objective information. Information is biased as a result of differing definitions, which of the available information is used in the process, and the vested interests of the stakeholders sharing the information.

The second is that the information, both gathered and disseminated within the

decision-making process, can be contradictory in nature. The broader the base of information the more likely it is that contradictions will appear which will make it even more difficult to assess not only which is the best decision - but for whom.

The third is that information gained through the research literature is often difficult to use because it is not easily understood and not readily generalizable. In addition, as we learn more the findings from research change, but those changes in thinking require time before they are adopted by either the general population or the decision-makers.

The fourth is that information about the problem under study is only one variable that influences decision-making. The decision under study is also affected by the source of the information, in terms of power and influence, and the context of the information, in terms of the economy, the culture and the society.

The fifth is that in order to make political decisions one must have support. In a democratic society politicians are elected to their roles and so taking positions on unpopular issues can interfere with their ability to be re-elected. The level of support an idea has can be determined by the power and influence of the people supporting it, or it can be determined by the degree of consensus surrounding it. If the support is based on the power and influence of the supporters then the politicians must be certain that those supporters have either the resources or the numbers to gain acceptability for a proposed decision. If the support is based on the degree of consensus around an idea it becomes easier to make a decision if it has a broad base of acceptability because making the decision will not reduce the power and influence of the politicians in favour of it.

The need for support can interfere with making good policy decisions in several ways. The first has to do with the fact that it is possible to obtain support around ideas that are not truly the best response to the problem at hand. For example: when decisions are desired by groups in control it is possible to create the conditions (for example: through the media) to develop acceptability around an idea that will not necessarily bring about outcomes which are in the best interests of the majority of the

stakeholders. The second is that, since research findings take time to permeate thinking, and once learned are difficult to eradicate, consensus may coalesce around an idea that no longer has merit. Yet that may become the only decision it is politically possible to make because of the amount of consensus that exists supporting it. The third is that there are many cases where the analytically correct policy for achieving some objective is known but does not have the support to enable it to be adopted politically. The result can be that some less effective, but more widely supported, policy decision becomes the one that is made.

The net finding is that if the school division boundaries are reorganized in Manitoba, research information about the optimal division size, for either efficiency or effectiveness, will play only a minor role in the ultimate decision.

FINAL NOTE:

The findings from the study of this question may have limited applicability because of two things: (1) the limited number of presentations studied by the writer in the preparation of this thesis, and (2) the kind of decision under study. Not all policy decisions have the far reaching implications of this one. Boundary reorganization is not simply about school finance and the quality of education. It is also about jobs, community viability, loyalties, the differences between rural and urban settings, control and choice. This makes division size and boundary reorganization a more emotional issue with a broad effect. It also makes it, in every sense, a more political decision.

The examination of the boundaries question has led the writer to believe that, in this case at least, what is in the best interests of students is both difficult to assess and not the central question. The central question appears to be "What needs to be done to maintain the system?" The system appears to be suffering from both a crisis of finance and a crisis of confidence. In this context, boundary reorganization, coupled with a strengthened role for parents, becomes a viable strategy. The tax base will become more equitable. The trustees will be more removed from their constituents creating the

potential for cost reductions to be made through hard decisions such as the closing of small schools, the cutting of programs and the creation of magnet courses and programs. In addition parents will have more choice about where they send their children to school, making, in theory, the school more accountable.

What we don't know, and what the writer has come to doubt through this research, is whether it will have any positive impact on student learning.

"Each reform movement began with a vigorous media attack on education. Each had its own "gimmick" or technological innovation. Each argued that ...business was endangered by a poor education system that threatened its competitive posture with other nations. Each reform movement, although addressing the waste and inefficiency of the public schools, ended up increasing the cost of public education. ...If such revelations are not startling enough, there is still another, perhaps more interesting aspect, about these reforms - all of the "reforming" led to little change."¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Lutz, p.127.

CHAPTER SEVEN an addendum

TO WHAT EXTENT DOES THE ACTUAL BOUNDARIES REPORT SUPPORT THE FINDINGS OF THIS THESIS?

In this addendum to the thesis I will comment briefly on the extent to which the final published report of the Boundaries Review Commission fits with the findings of this study.

The report of the Boundaries Review Commission was given to the Minister of Education and Training, Mr. Clayton Manness, on November 30, 1994. It is a comprehensive report which is 178 pages in length. It was distributed to the other stakeholders during January and February of 1995. As of the first week of March 1995 no support to the report or the recommendations has been given by any of the political parties.

The Boundaries Review Commission Report recommends a major reorganization of the school divisions and districts in Manitoba. It recommends that the urban divisions be reduced from 10 divisions to 4, and that the rural divisions be reduced from 34 to 13. It further recommends that the northern and remote divisions and districts be reduced from 7 to 2.

The report deals with some of the same topics covered in this thesis, for example: the history of consolidation in Manitoba, the context of boundary review across Canada, definitions (of size, of quality...) and the research findings on optimal size. It also includes topics not covered in this thesis, for example: the definition of boundaries and the physical and cultural geography of Manitoba.

I believe that the way in which the report is written, and the content of the report, support the findings in this thesis. The following indicates some of the areas of congruence with respect to the thesis conclusions related to the literature variables on optimal size.

ON COST

The Commission report and recommendations support the thesis findings that there is a persistent consensus of belief in two areas: economies of scale and the relationship between cost and effectiveness. This persistent consensus of belief is evident in both the section on Cost (p.62-66) and the section on Future Educational and Financial Implications of Change (p.106-124). The entire latter section also supports the premise of this thesis that Boundary Reorganization is mostly about educational finance. The report leaves the impression that there are net financial gains to be made from reorganization. This was predicted in the thesis, although the writer of this thesis does not support that finding. What was not predicted was the emphasis in the report that any gains made would be moved to the classroom. This was mentioned several times in the report. This emphasis supports recommendations made very directly by MTS, MAP and HSPTFM that changes to boundaries should only occur if there are direct positive consequences for the classroom.

ON QUALITY AND CURRICULUM

The report and recommendations support the thesis findings that equity is the definition of quality being used by the Commission. It is interesting that on page 35 the Commission asked the question DO CHOICES EQUATE TO QUALITY? The question, however, was not answered, and the arguments cited were used instead to support a distinction being made by the Commission between equality and equity. In The Future Educational and Financial Implications Of Change section (p.106-124) the three (out of sixteen) implications identified for the urban and rural areas which were most related to quality were about choice and access, two equity issues. When the report talks about net educational gains it talks about it with reference to equity.

ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The final report and recommendations of the Boundaries Review Commission bear out the findings of this thesis that the effects of divisional size on student achievement have not been studied in this process. The only direct statement about student achievement can be found in the section on School Division Size (p.55-61) where reference is made to the research findings on school and district size related to student achievement. This information, however, is not incorporated into the study or the recommendations. This finding is predicted in the thesis.

ON STAFFING

The report talks about staffing in terms of salary contracts and benefits. This was predicted in the thesis from the issues and questions in the Boundaries Review Discussion Document, and from the responses made by the official stakeholders. The report supports the MTS position that reorganization would improve not only the welfare conditions of teachers, but also their opportunities for increased professional collaboration and development. What surprised the writer was the link made in the report between teacher effectiveness and teacher mobility (p.108). This point was not raised in the thesis, and the writer is unsure as to the thinking behind the connection.

ON GOVERNANCE

The report from the Boundaries Review Commission strongly recommended the retention of elected trustees, the writing of enabling legislation to encourage and promote local parent advisory committees and the strengthening of the role of the principal. It also recommended the reduction and / or rationalization of trustees and superintendents. Given the findings of this thesis the first two recommendations would be expected. In the urban section on Future Implications (P.106-112) the Commission talks about the potential for increased centralization and bureaucracy mentioned in this thesis. It presents the strengthened school unit as the way around this - and assumes that more parental and student freedom of choice will make the schools become more competitive and more accountable. (One assumes that this accountability is in terms of student achievement, although, as mentioned, there is no direct reference to student achievement.) This tension between making the system larger and smaller with both boundary and governance recommendations is also

referred to in the thesis.

The overarching question in this thesis has to do not with optimal division size but rather with how policy decisions are made and the role of research in that process. The writer believes that the content and format of the Boundaries Review Commission Report support the conclusions found in this thesis. To illustrate this the writer is offering the following examples. The reader may wish to read the Commission Report to locate more, or to take issue with the writer.

THE ROLE OF RESEARCH

In the Boundaries Review Commission Report there is a section on school division size (pages 55 to 61). In this section the Commission cites and discusses some of the academic research on optimal size. The report identifies the same difficulty in defining size as did the author of this thesis. The report also identifies the conflicting opinions that exist with respect to optimal size and the effect of size on outcomes. What the report does not do is identify that the conflict has more to do with changes in thinking over time than it has to do with differences in findings. The content of this section of the report, and the way in which it is written, confirm three of the findings of this study related to the role of research in policy decision-making.

1. That politicians find academic research difficult to use in making policy decisions because it can be contradictory and not easily generalizable. This part of the report emphasizes this difficulty throughout the section.
2. That the power and influence of the providers of the information has significance in the process. Note the emphasis given to the MTS findings on page 57, and note that the concluding statement is provided by a Manitoban (Dr. Ball) who is well known and respected in the rural community.

“...There are no clear answers that define the most efficient or effective school district size.” (p.60)

3. That politicians use research which supports their position. Note that although opposing viewpoints are identified more space is given to

positions which support reorganization.

The entire report supports four other findings in the thesis with respect to research and the role of research in the decision-making process.

1. That academic research (from outside of Manitoba) is being used less in this decision than is provincial information provided through research. Note that throughout the report more space and attention is given to this kind of information.
2. That deeply rooted ideas are difficult to change. Note the emphasis given to the economies of scale throughout the document.
3. That research is only one source of information used by politicians as they try to balance competing interests in an essentially political environment.
4. That the Commission process is a form of interactive research conducted in order to solve problems.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT

This thesis noted the importance of context in policy decision-making. The Report of the Boundaries Review Commission supports this notion by the amount of attention paid to context in the report. Pages 14 to 29 provide both the historical context and the current Canadian context with respect to boundary reorganization. Comparison with other provinces occurs several times throughout the document. In addition pages 36 to 53 provide information about the physical and cultural geography of Manitoba with a heavy emphasis on the changes that have occurred in enrolments in the various divisions and districts.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE POLITICAL CULTURE

In September of 1994 the Francophone School Division began operations. The establishment of this division left a number of other divisions in a largely untenable position due to the loss of both schools and enrolment to the new division. This

change in divisional status was an initiating factor in prompting the establishment of the Boundaries Review Commission. It was not, however, the only factor. Had the economy been expanding, had the confidence level been high in the system, had the other provinces not been involved in similar reviews and reorganizations, the government might have selected alternative strategies to solve the problems in the affected divisions. The point I have made in this thesis, and one which I believe is supported in the written report of the Boundaries Review Commission, is that the review of boundaries has not come about as a result of trying to resolve the academic question regarding the optimal divisional size for maximum educational efficiency and effectiveness. This policy decision was recommended because it fits with the current public mindset about downsizing, and it fits with the reform agenda in education already being pursued by the government.

THE PROBLEMS WITH A BROAD BASE OF INFORMATION

During the course of this process the Commission heard from all of the divisions and from a range of stakeholders across divisions. I attended one of the public meetings and read a number of presentations beyond those given by the official stakeholders. Each of those presenters, and the written presentations, spoke positively about the ability of the personnel in their respective divisions to provide a high quality education. At the public meeting Mr. Norrie joked that the Commission had heard why divisions of 1000, 5,000 and 34,000 were the optimal size and that the members were now looking forward to hearing why 13,000 was an optimal size. It is not only academic research which is difficult to sort through to some conclusion - it is all information which comes from people with vested interests in the decision being made.

THE ANSWER YOU GET DEPENDS UPON THE QUESTION YOU ASK

Nowhere do we see this more clearly than as we watch the politicians in Quebec struggle with the question they should ask on the referendum. As mentioned in the final chapter I believe that the central question asked in this review was "What needs to be done to maintain the system?" The sub questions were: "How can boundaries best be realigned to deal with some of the financial pressures in education?" and "What governance model do we need to make the school more accountable?" Given

the questions being asked the recommendations should come as no surprise - to anyone. Had the question been different (for example: Does divisional size make a difference in terms of student achievement?) the report and recommendations might have been different.

FINAL COMMENTS

If anyone takes any part of this thesis as a criticism of the Boundaries Review process, or its members, please let me correct that impression. What I have learned from the commission process is that (a) it is profoundly difficult, and that (b) it is still worth doing. I have a great deal of respect for the work the Commission did in bringing these recommendations to the policy makers. It will be interesting to see which elected politicians decide to advocate the report, and to see if those politicians are able to garner the support to carry through with these recommendations. It will also be interesting to observe both the change process, and the results of the change process, if the politicians do decide to implement the recommendations.

My thanks to my advisor, Dr. Levin, and to my committee members, Dr. Bruno-Joffre and Dr. Osborne, for their assistance and their encouragement.

Appendix 1

Questions from the Boundaries Review Discussion Document organized by the variables related to optimal size in the research literature.

Cost Questions

12. Are boundaries sufficiently transparent that cooperative ventures between divisions / districts are easily accomplishable or do existing boundaries act as impediments to such cooperation?
 13. How do the changing patterns of economic activity interact with and affect school division / district boundaries?
 18. Are changing pupil enrollments having an impact on the divisions / districts ability to operate schools in areas of shrinking or expanding enrollments?
 22. How have funding levels affected the ability to provide basic, current and / or optional programs?
 25. Is the wide disparity in assessment bases for the fifty-six divisions / districts a problem?
 27. How does and to what extent do the different assessment bases affect the ability of each educational unit in providing similar educational opportunities to all Manitoba students?
 28. How serious is the issue of different taxation levels being generated by different combinations of municipal and school division boundaries?
 29. Could the efficiency and effectiveness of our education delivery system be improved via alternate forms of administrative and political structures, groupings and / or boundaries?
 31. Does / can expansion or amalgamation of administrative / political units result in actual quantifiable efficiencies and if so, how will these efficiencies affect the quality of education?
 40. Would regional boundaries for some aspects of education promote creative cost-effective educational program selection and delivery?
 43. Do you see sharing of technologically advanced systems and equipment between schools or divisions as addressing some of our fiscal problems?
-

Quality Questions

1. How can school divisions / districts boundaries be designed to be compatible with education principles?
2. How do we best ensure that boundaries aid rather than impede achieving the goal of equity, where the best learning opportunities are provided to all Manitobans regardless of background or geographic location?
6. How have the population shifts affected educational delivery? How have they affected the divisional unit?
7. How has the decreasing family size affected the delivery of education?
9. How have the changing transportation patterns of Manitobans affected our education delivery system and vice versa?
21. How are changing student enrollments affecting the ability of the school divisions / districts to provide quality programs to meet present provincial curriculum requirements?
27. How does and to what extent do the different assessment bases affect the ability of each educational unit in providing similar educational opportunities to all Manitoba students?
29. Could the efficiency and effectiveness of our education delivery system be improved via alternate forms of administrative and political structures, groupings and / or boundaries?
31. Does / can expansion or amalgamation of administrative / political units result in actual quantifiable efficiencies and if so, how will these efficiencies affect the quality of education?
37. Would altered boundaries enhance the education of students?
50. Would there be any educational benefits to such coincidental (municipal) boundaries or would all considerations be administrative and political?

52. Do existing boundaries allow us to entertain desired current educational trends?
 53. How can boundaries be designed such that they will be more responsible to educational trends?
 54. How do we ensure that today's judgments and resulting decisions will stand the test of time rather than be perceived as adoption of some of the negative aspects of historical trends in educational delivery?
-

Curriculum Questions

21. How are changing student enrollments affecting the ability of the school divisions / districts to provide quality programs to meet present provincial curriculum requirements?
 22. How have funding levels affected the ability to provide basic, current and / or optional programs?
 23. Would changes in the size of units permit expansion of the variety of programs that can be offered in your schools? Would shared use agreements between divisions be an alternative?
 24. Has the current economic climate had an impact on student selection of programs offered, such as vocational programs, and are there changes in the number of students requesting access to programs not offered in the divisions in which they reside?
 42. How will advanced technology have an impact on program delivery in your area?
-

Governance Questions

16. Could other political and administrative units respond more appropriately, or do existing units adequately serve us, and will they be able to serve us appropriately in the future?
 35. What are the consequences of boundary changes relating to the roles and responsibilities of each entity in the delivery of education?
 36. Would altered divisions and ward areas affect local influence? Would more comprehensive units allow for objective decisions on a broader scale, without parochialism?
 38. Would boundary adjustments have an impact on the role of the policy-making structures?
 41. Can utilization of local school committees ensure that parents' voices are heard irrespective of the size of divisional units?
-

Staffing Questions

35. What are the consequences of boundary changes relating to the roles and responsibilities of each entity in the delivery of education?
 36. Would altered divisions and ward areas affect local influence? Would more comprehensive units allow for objective decisions on a broader scale, without parochialism?
 55. If school division / district boundaries were altered, what would be the most practical way of dealing with differences in employment contracts, especially pertaining to salary levels, benefit levels, tenure and seniority provisions?
-

Yes / No Boundaries Questions?

3. Are legislative reform considerations necessary to ensure that boundaries are sufficiently transparent to allow and promote inter-divisional cooperation, resource sharing and collaboration.
5. Is 56 an appropriate number of administration units to deliver education in Manitoba? Should there be more? Should there be less?

Logistics of the Current Situation Questions

8. Have immigration and relocation of ethnic / linguistic groups affected the divisional unit? (Does or should this have any effect on school division boundaries?)
 10. Are school division / district boundaries in tune with the normal transportation patterns Manitobans follow for other purposes, or are they in conflict?
 11. Do children attend a local elementary school only to have to attend a high school in a location that is inappropriate due to boundaries that were set many years ago?
 12. Are boundaries sufficiently transparent that cooperative ventures between divisions / districts are easily accomplishable or do existing boundaries act as impediments to such cooperation?
 14. Do the patterns of commerce and resultant transportation patterns mesh with education delivery mechanisms or are they at odds?
 15. Has the education system been able to keep pace with the changing economic patterns and do the existing political units (divisions / districts) adequately reflect that ability?
 17. Do the division / district boundaries adequately reflect the changes in current student enrollment?
 47. What problems, if any, are caused by the fact school division / district boundaries and municipal boundaries are totally different?
-

Logistics of Boundary Change Questions

4. Following implementation of any changes to school division / district boundaries as a result of recommendations from this Commission, how should future boundary issues be handled? Should the previous vehicle, the Board of Reference be reactivated in its previous form with the same or different authority?
8. (Have immigration and relocation of ethnic / linguistic groups affected the divisional unit?) Does or should this have any effect on school division boundaries?
19. Should boundaries be designed with student numbers as a major factor?
20. How much should geographic considerations play in determining optimum division / district size?
26. Should assessment base be a factor in determining educational boundaries? If so, to what extent?
30. How can boundaries be designed such that they aid in cooperation between divisions and districts rather than act as impediments to such cooperative efforts?
32. How will the implementation of the Francophone school division affect existing school division boundaries?
33. Will the residual portions of divisions be sufficient to stand alone or will integration be necessary for viability of administrative units?
34. How can administration and financing of the residual units best be accomplished?
39. If division / district boundaries were adjusted, do these boundaries have to be the same for all aspects of education? Can the boundaries affecting pupil transportation, vocational education, distance education, for example, be regional in nature? divisions as addressing some of our fiscal problems?
44. If the education system is to provide up-to-date technology programs and utilize interactive technological delivery systems, will these serve to make division boundary lines more transparent?
45. Will these encourage inter-divisional agreements?
46. How do you see advanced technology affecting division boundaries?
48. If they exist, how significant are those problems (between school boundaries and municipal boundaries) and should they be a consideration in any changes to school division or district boundaries?

49. What benefits, if any, could be obtained by having education and municipal boundaries either partially or totally coincidental?
 51. Is there any merit to simplifying the election process with collaboration of boundaries and municipal officials and trustees?
 56. What are the best ways to deal with disposition of tangible assets under any alteration of boundaries which would see change in the make-up of the political units administering the jurisdictional areas?
 57. What is the best way to deal with reserves and liabilities of existing divisions or districts should they be affected by boundary changes?
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In addition, as background, I have read twenty-two other submissions to the Boundaries Review Commission. Seven were from school divisions (Interlake, Lakeshore, Lord Selkirk, Swan Valley, Evergreen, Western and River East), six were from residents (Tuelon, Rosser, Stonewall, Grosse Isle, and Selkirk), three were from teachers' associations (Selkirk, River East and Western), two were from other employee groups (Selkirk CUPE, Interlake Bus Drivers) and the rest were related discussion papers from the MTS Boundaries Review Committee and the MAST Boundaries Review Committee.