SCHOOL DIVISION/DISTRICT AMALGAMATION IN MANITOBA:

A CASE STUDY OF A PUBLIC POLICY DECISION

BY

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ABSTRACT

On November 8, 2001, the Honourable Drew Caldwell, Minister of Education, Training and Youth, Government of Manitoba, announced that the number of school divisions and districts in the province would be reduced from 54 to 37, and that this would occur before the next round of school board elections in October 2002. With that policy announcement, Manitoba embarked upon the most significant restructuring of school board governance arrangements since the late 1950s. By mid-July 2002, legislation had been passed, legacy boards had fallen away, new school division boundaries were established, and interim governing boards for the new entities put in place.

The purpose of the research was to examine in some detail the school division amalgamation initiative as a case study in policy-making by the Government of Manitoba. The study investigated the nature of this initiative, including its origin, development and eventual conclusion and implementation. The fundamental question addressed by the study was this: Why was school division amalgamation an idea whose time had come in Manitoba? Discussion of amalgamation had been active within the Progressive Conservative administration of Premier Gary Filmon since the early 1990s, but despite the recommendation in 1995 of a provincially established Boundaries Review Commission to move forward with division/district consolidation at governmental direction, the idea languished until a newly-elected provincial government under Gary Doer, leader of the New Democratic Party, assumed power in 1999.

The theoretical framework used in addressing the question posed relied primarily upon the work of John Kingdon, whose important book Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies, contends that there must be a timely coupling or convergence of three key aspects of policy formation: problems, solutions and politics. Therefore, the study examined the key role of elected officials in promoting and sponsoring certain policy ideas and their impact on the decisions of government at specific times. It also compared and contrasted the differing policy approaches taken by the Filmon and Doer regimes on this question and assesses the opportunities and constraints which explain the differences found.

Methodologically, the study relied on extant public documents and other primary sources and especially the expressed view or position of certain elected officials and supporting staff, political and bureaucratic, gained through one-on-one in-depth interviews. The focus of the analysis was an attempt to assess the interplay of problem, policy and politics, especially whether or not the policy-making process revealed what Kingdon has called “windows of opportunity” for decisive action by government.

The study showed that, indeed, the window of opportunity for amalgamation occurred with the convergence of three forces by 2001: pervasive indicators of a problem that begged the attention of bureaucrats and policymakers; promotion of amalgamation as a policy solution previously tried in Manitoba and elsewhere; and the election of a new government in 1999 which, compared to its predecessor regime, was receptive to pursuing some greater degree of change with respect to school division governance and organization.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When composing a dissertation it is prudent to keep the advice of Kingsley Amis firmly in mind: "The art of writing is the art of applying the seat of one's trousers to the seat of one's chair." It is, essentially, as basic as that. Focus, determination, and a willingness to invest countless hours of hard work are what are required to achieve a desired goal.

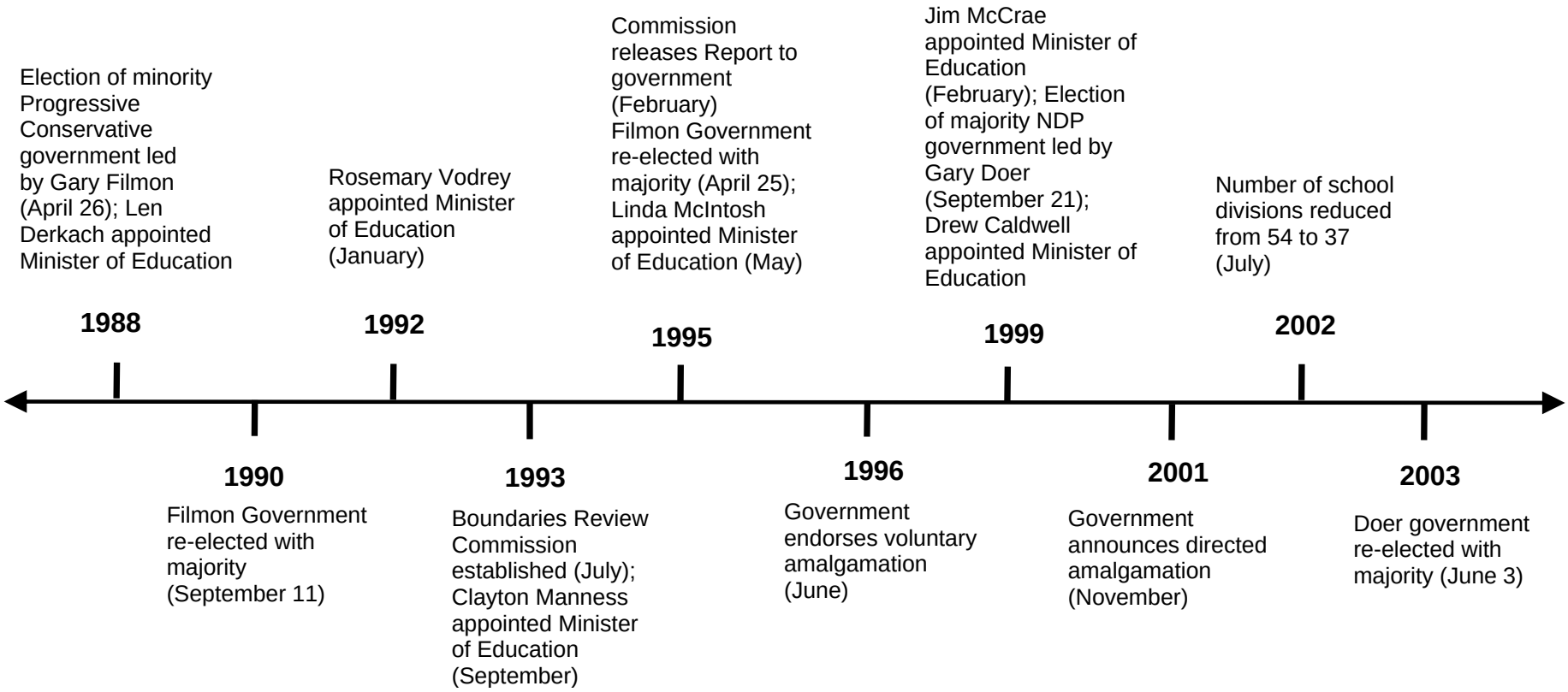
More important, however, is the assistance and encouragement one receives in such a pursuit. In my own case, I was blessed by the support of many: my wife, Laurel, and daughter, Jacynthe, were unflinching in their belief that success was possible, tolerated my absence on numerous evenings and weekends with nary a word of complaint, and who now can rightfully share in the satisfaction of this project's completion; my parents, Rosemarie and Dale, and parents-in-law, Charlene and Peter; and my colleagues in the Education Administration Services Branch, particularly Joëlle Lavallée and Sharon Curtis, Joanne Michaud for her technical expertise, and Joy Moorhead who graciously (and patiently) transcribed several interviews and prepared many chapter drafts. To each of you, I am grateful.

I must also acknowledge and extend thanks to my advisor, Dr. John Long, a very fine teacher who was generous with his time, thoughtful in his criticism, enthusiastic in approach, attentive to detail, provided valuable advice and insight, refined my inelegant writing style, and seemed to know when to push a bit and when to back off a little. He indeed saw me through. As well, I benefited enormously from the guidance and teaching provided by Dr. John Stapleton and Dr. Paul Thomas, two distinguished scholars at the University of Manitoba. I thank them for their considerable help throughout the doctoral program.

I would be remiss if I did not give special mention to two former public servants who I hold in high regard and to whom I owe much in my own career in the Department of Education. I served a ten-year apprenticeship under the direction of Brian Hanson and learned much from him about the legislative, regulatory and education policy process. His strength of character and resolve, and considerable analytical powers, served the Department well for many years and I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to draw on those attributes and skills during that time. Leo McGinn, an educator who served as my Branch Director from 1989 to 1993, has been a friend, role model and mentor for almost twenty years. He embodied the best qualities of the professional public servant and I have tried, undoubtedly with only marginal success, to emulate that level of skill and standard of conduct. Without the help and support of both gentlemen the opportunity to be a witness to and participant in the school division amalgamation initiative, and thus to be able to write a dissertation on the topic, would not have been possible.

FIGURE 1

TIMELINE OF STUDY



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PROLOGUE

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast. . . .
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there.
I let my neighbour know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each. . . .
He only says, "Good fences make good neighbours."
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
"*Why* do they make good neighbours? Isn't it
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offence.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down!" . . .
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, "Good fences make good neighbours."

-- Robert Frost
"Mending Wall"
(1915)

CHAPTER 1

PURPOSE AND NATURE OF THE STUDY

> "And it is worth noting that nothing is harder to manage, more risky in the undertaking, or more doubtful of success than to set up as the introducer of a new order."[1]
>
> Niccolò Machiavelli

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

On November 8, 2001, the Honourable Drew Caldwell, Minister of Education, Training and Youth, Government of Manitoba, announced that the number of school divisions and districts in the province would be reduced from 54 to 37, and that this would occur before the next round of trustee elections in October, 2002. With that policy announcement, Manitoba embarked upon the most significant restructuring of school board governance arrangements since the late 1950s. By mid-July, 2002, enabling legislation had been passed, legacy boards had fallen away, new school division boundaries were established, and interim governing boards for the new entities were put in place.

The purpose of this research is to examine in some detail the school division amalgamation initiative as a case study in policy-making by the Government of Manitoba. It examines the nature of this initiative, including its origin, development, and eventual conclusion (see Figure 1, page viii, for a

[1] Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince. Robert M. Adams, ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1977), 17.

timeline of the study). The amalgamation of small school divisions/districts into bigger administrative units was not a new experience for school boards in Manitoba. It had happened before. Nor was this a policy event unique to the province. Indeed, within the Canadian context, Manitoba was among the last of provincial jurisdictions to re-employ this particular policy approach in recent years. School division/district amalgamation had been widely utilized in most other provinces, as well as across the United States and elsewhere, by collapsing small districts and consolidating them into larger ones, ostensibly on the grounds of improved program viability and greater economic efficiency.

The fundamental question to be addressed by the research is this: Why was school division amalgamation an idea whose time had come in Manitoba? Discussion of amalgamation had been active within government since the early 1990s, but despite the recommendation in 1994 of a provincially established Boundaries Review Commission to move forward with division/district consolidation, the idea languished until a newly-elected provincial government assumed power in 1999. The framework to be used in addressing this question relies upon the work of John Kingdon, whose important book Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies contends that there must be a convergence of three key aspects of policy formation: problems, solutions, and politics for a policy issue to be formally articulated and a response to it expressed as public policy. Kingdon theorizes that a problem, issue or idea “is most likely to achieve public agenda status when public problems, policy alternatives, and political

opportunities intersect."[2] Kingdon's framework straddles what Douglas Mitchell once described as the "two distinct strands of research" emergent in education politics and policy-making: an examination of political power and control to explain the dynamics of policy formation, but an exploration as well of the dynamic character of decision-making and the importance of "timing" in moving a policy initiative forward.[3]

This study examines, first, the nature of the "problem" as it came to be defined by political actors, central Policy Management staff, and bureaucratic officials within the Department of Education, Training and Youth. It will review the extent to which a number of policy options and solutions were canvassed – in other words, how was amalgamation settled upon as the preferred policy approach and why were particular consolidations sponsored or favoured? Second, Kingdon suggests that, consistent with democratic theory which requires that elected officials take a lead role in promoting policy and enacting such decisions, elections and the placement of key individuals within particular Departments or Ministries play a very large part in moving certain ideas forward on a government's agenda at specific times. For this reason, the study considers, along with the extant public documents and other primary sources, the views of elected officials and supporting staff (political and bureaucratic) in an

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[2] John Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies, 2nd ed. (New York: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers, Inc., 2003), ix.

[3] Douglas E. Mitchell, "Educational Politics and Policy: The State Level" in Norman J. Boyan, ed., Handbook of Research on Educational Administration (New York: Longman Inc., 1988), 453-466. On the historical reluctance, but eventual recognition and acknowledgement of the interrelationship of education and politics in the United States, see Jay D. Scribner and Richard M. Englert, "The Politics of Education: An Introduction" in Jay D. Scribner, ed., The Politics of Education (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), 1-29; also Scribner, Enrique Aleman and Brendan Maxcy, "Emergence of the Politics of Education Field: Making Sense of the Messy Center" (February 2003), 39, 1, Educational Administration Quarterly, 10-40.

attempt to assess the interplay of policy and politics, especially whether or not the policy-making process reveals what Kingdon calls “windows of opportunity” for decisive action.

While the decision to implement school division restructuring was a significant event in the history of elementary and secondary education in Manitoba, it was in actuality a fairly modest adjustment to the *status quo* relative to other options available to government. It represented, as a previous era of school district consolidation has been similarly described, the “intermingling of those twin currents of change and continuity.”[4] Why did the Government of Manitoba choose to adopt a moderate, incrementalist approach to restructuring as opposed to, say, amalgamation on a more comprehensive scale as proposed by the Boundaries Review Commission in 1994? Was governance reform, as adopted in other provinces (for example, New Brunswick) ever considered and, if so, why rejected? What of other policy options? Were they ever seriously considered? If not, why not?[5]

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

To date, no comprehensive examination of the 2001-02 amalgamation initiative has been conducted. It was a policy decision which taxed the time, attention and analytical capacity of staff within the Department of Education,

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[4] Alexander Gregor and Keith Wilson, The Development of Education in Manitoba (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1984), 137.

[5] An analysis of the options considered by policy-makers is important because, as one scholar has suggested, it helps to clarify more precisely why the actual decision was taken:

“. . .it could fairly be claimed that historians implicitly operate with short-range counter-factuals in terms of alternatives to immediate occurrences or developments. Otherwise, they are unable to ascertain the significance of what actually did take place.”

Ian Kershaw, Fateful Choices: Ten Decisions That Changed the World, 1940-1941 (New York: The Penguin Press), 6.

Training and Youth, already stretched thin as a consequence of other legislative and policy changes happening in response to a number of events and initiatives. The policy analysis capacity of government is, in the estimation of the provincial Auditor General, under-resourced and limited, [6] and the almost simultaneous occurrence of other significant events and initiatives – alterations in teacher collective bargaining arrangements, the dissolution of the Morris-Macdonald school board and consequent changes to adult education policy, development of the *K-S4 Education Agenda*, and implementation of a comprehensive assessment model for Grade 3 students, all in addition to school division/district amalgamation – represented a significant challenge to a relatively small cadre of bureaucratic staff to support the formulation and implementation of government's decisions in these areas. Each of these issues individually might have occupied the attention and resources of government during a term of office. What circumstances and considerations, especially by government, kept school division amalgamation high on the public policy agenda?

The research also expands upon the observations made by Ben Levin in his chapter on amalgamation contained in his book, Governing Education. His review is primarily descriptive in nature, and provides an interesting chronicle of the tumult of events throughout the months up to, and during, the amalgamation process. That account is, as he acknowledges, based less upon a particular

[6] Manitoba, A Review of the Policy Development Capacity Within Government Departments (Office of the Provincial Auditor, November 2001). For a discussion of the growth, decline (and resurgence?) of policy analysis capacity in the Canadian public sector see Leslie A. Pal, Beyond Policy Analysis: Public Issue Management in Turbulent Times, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Thomson/Nelson, 2006), 24-28.

theoretical model and most directly from his own experience as a senior bureaucratic official. It is, he states, "a picture of government as experienced from the inside."[7] While the picture that emerges in the following pages is, unavoidably, one painted by someone from inside (albeit at a different level within the organizational hierarchy of the Department of Education), its brush strokes will also reflect the conceptual framework developed by Kingdon. It is hoped that this research, along with Levin's review will, together, provide readers interested in the school division/district amalgamation initiative of this period with a more complete account of the key developments as well as a useful analytical perspective. This perspective is a distinctive contribution of this study since it attempts to determine the general applicability of Kingdon's scheme, on this particular issue and at the provincial level of government in Canada, for analyzing and exploring how an idea moves on to government's agenda, through to decision and implementation. Although Kingdon's study was conducted within the context of the American political system, the institutional structures of which are significantly different from the Canadian federal and parliamentary model, there appears to be some evidence of utility in applying Kingdon's agenda setting framework to the Canadian context.[8] The student of public policy is, therefore, urged to assess whether or not Kingdon's theory and methodology constitute "a useful road map for field research and scholarly studies", and whether or not this

[7] Ben Levin, Governing Education (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), p. xi. Dr. Levin, formerly a member of the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba and a former Dean of Continuing Education at that institution, became Deputy Minister of the Departments of Education, Training and Youth and of Advanced Education in November, 1999, and remained in that position until September, 2002.

[8] Michael Howlett, "Predictable and Unpredictable Policy Windows: Institutional and Exogenous Correlates of Canadian Federal Agenda-Setting" (September 1998), 31, 3, Canadian Journal of Political Science, 495-524.

analytical approach “rings true” for those who work inside the public policy-making system.[9]

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of the study is to examine the amalgamation of certain school divisions and districts in Manitoba as a case study of a public policy decision, notably by the Doer Government in 2001-2002. Therefore, a first requirement is to identify the basic concepts that capture the essential substance and scope of the study. A second requirement is to characterize the core hypothetical structure that guides the selection and interpretation of the data of the study. Meeting these two requirements yields the two main parts of the discussion entitled “theoretical framework”. In combination, these two parts are intended to convey the distinctive nature of the inquiry by revealing the currents of scholarship that, in turn, bear most directly on the substantive focus and analytical perspective of the inquiry.

The Study of a Public Policy Decision: Key Concepts

What does the study of a public policy decision necessarily involve? Practically, we want to understand why a particular government took the decision it did and implemented it in the manner that it did. From the viewpoint of scholarship, it is critical to provide an explanation of the idea of public policy, its connection with politics, and the process of policy-making by government.

[9] Kingdon, *supra*, viii-ix.

Public policy. Many definitions of "public policy" exist, some notable for their parsimony and others for their complexity. Thomas Dye suggests that public policy may be conceived of in very simple terms: it is "whatever governments choose to do or not to do."[10] Certainly governments choose or choose not to regulate many aspects of daily life, manage conflict inside and outside of government, distribute rewards, benefits and services to members of society, and obtain monies in the form of taxes. Public policy can be one or a series of decisions. It may, or may not, be supported by a particular program, or legislation and/or regulations. It can consist of what is not, as well as what is, being done. Even a lack of government action has been described as purposive in intent.[11]

Brooks and Miljan agree for the most part with Dye's definition, arguing that a conscious choice of government to do something frequently leads to some form of deliberate action, for example, the passage of a law, some allocation of money or resources for a particular initiative, or a speech outlining a position on a matter. They quarrel with Dye inasmuch as choosing not to do something does not properly distinguish between a failure to act and choice not to act. They suggest that where a problem has not been identified, it makes no sense to speak of policy; once a problem has been identified, inaction by policy-makers

[10] Thomas R. Dye, Understanding Public Policy, 10th ed. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 1.

[11] Winston Churchill once characterized British defence policy as a deliberate course of inaction where government had "decided only to be undecided, resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, all powerful for impotence." Churchill, as quoted in Hugh Heclo, Modern Social Politics in Britain and Sweden (London: Yale University Press, 1974), 4.

becomes a deliberate policy choice.[12] Indeed, Anderson states that public policy is "a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern."[13] In his examination of transferability among post-secondary institutions in Alberta in the early 1970's, Long described public policy as "an output of the political system which represents the official and general intention or attitude or decision of the government with respect to a matter such general decision intended as a guide for subsequent regulation or action regarding that matter."[14] The Auditor General for Manitoba has recently defined public policy as "those plans, positions and guidelines of government which embody or reflect government direction and influence decisions by government."[15] In the same vein, Manzer says that public policies, however they come to be determined, "are courses of action that deal with public problems" and imply a degree of "collective consciousness and choice."[16] The strength of definitions such as these is that they couple government action with the perception, real or otherwise, of the existence of a problem which requires some type of formal, authoritative response.

Hogwood and Gunn claim that public policy is comprised of many elements, including decisions of government, policy as authorization, policy as a

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[12] Stephen Brooks and Lydia Miljan, Public Policy in Canada: An Introduction, 4th ed. (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5.
[13] Michael Howlett and M. Ramesh, Studying Public Policy: Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems, 2nd ed. (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2003), 7.
[14] John C. Long, "The Transferability Issue in Alberta: A Case Study in the Politics of Higher Education" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alberta, 1979), 10.
[15] Manitoba, A Quality Assurance Guide for Policy Development (Office of the Auditor General, November 2005), 6.
[16] Ronald Manzer, Public Schools and Political Ideas: Canadian Education Policy in Historical Perspective (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 4.

program, policy as output and outcome, and policy as a process.[17] They summarize by defining public policy in this way:

> Any public policy is subjectively defined by an observer as being such and is usually perceived as comprising a series of patterns of related decisions to which many circumstances and personal, group, and organizational influences have contributed. The policy-making process involves many sub-processes and may extend over a considerable period of time. The aims or purposes underlying a policy are usually identifiable at a relatively early stage in the process but these may change over time and, in some cases, may be defined only retrospectively. The outcomes of policies need to be studied and, where appropriate, compared and contrasted with the policy-makers' intentions. Accidental or deliberate inaction may contribute to a policy outcome. . . . For a policy to be regarded as a "public policy" it must to some degree have been generated or at least processed within the framework of governmental procedures, influences and organizations.[18]

For the purposes of this study, I shall take the view that public policy is best conceived, fundamentally, as "a course of action or inaction pursued under the authority of government".[19] However, I shall be cognizant of and incorporate into the analysis and interpretation of the study, several of the elements specifically addressed by Hogwood and Gunn, namely, the subjective definition of a public policy by observers and participants; the circumstances and influences – personal, group and organizational – which contribute to an official course of action and its implementation; the aims or purposes which can be identified, even retrospectively, as underlining a policy and the changes, if any, in them over time; a comparison of the actual policy outcome with the policy

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[17] Brian W. Hogwood and Lewis A. Gunn, Policy Analysis for the Real World (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 15-19.
[18] *Ibid*., 23-24.
[19] Heclo, *supra*, 4. Pal describes public policy similarly: "a course of action or inaction chosen by public authorities to address a given problem or interrelated set of problems."
Pal, *supra*, 2.

makers' intentions; and, notably, the policy-making process within the auspices and framework of government. As will be evident shortly, the work of Kingdon is of special relevance to the study's focus on the policy-making process.

Politics. Politics, writes Crick, arises from the acknowledgement of different interests within a territorial unit under common rule. Politics represents "at least some tolerance of differing truths, some recognition that government is possible, indeed best conducted, amid the open canvassing of rival interests."[20] Political activity seeks "creative compromise" in the resolution of differences, thus ensuring a reasonable degree of stability and order in free societies. Politics is an activity whereby differing interests within a given unit of rule are conciliated by giving them a share in power proportionate to their importance to the welfare of the whole community. Political solutions to the problems of government are to be preferred over others.[21] Likewise for Miller, politics is essentially a means of settling differences, and the role of government is to resolve disagreement through the formulation of policy which he defines as "a matter of either the desire for change or the desire to protect something against change."[22] Therefore, in its broadest sense, public policy is about politics and popular control over public policy means that policy-making will remain ultimately political since, according to Lindblom, elections, votes of legislatures, and decisions by

[20] Bernard Crick, In Defence of Politics (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1962), 18.
[21] *Ibid*., 21, 160-161.
[22] J.D.B. Miller, The Nature of Politics (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1962), 14.

elected officials all represent the primacy of politics in policy-making.[23] As Thomas Axworthy has suggested, the interconnectedness of politics and policy is critical to successful government. "Policies that ignore politics," he writes, "quickly come to grief. Ukases that come down from on high with neither public support, nor a plan to garner any, are more commonly a failure of government than an administration with few ideas."[24] Indeed, Campbell, *et. al*., in their study more than four decades ago of the American school system, wrote that "educational policy making at all governmental levels is immersed in politics and by definition educational policy making is political action."[25] These observations, and the foregoing discussion of public policy, clearly imply that in the political system – that "persistent pattern of human relationships that involves to a significant extent, control, influence, power or authority"[26] – the right to promulgate policy belongs uniquely to the institution of government. On this view, the creation of public policy represents an idea, issue or concern which has formally reached the agenda of government. That agenda, as Kingdon defines it, is "the list of subjects or problems to which governmental officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time."[27] The potential list of subjects which could form the basis of that agenda is limitless, although in practical terms it is

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[23] Charles E. Lindblom, The Policy-Making Process, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980).
[24] Thomas S. Axworthy, "Of Secretaries to Princes" (1988), 31, 2, Canadian Public Administration, 253.
[25] Roald F. Campbell, Luvern L. Cunningham and Roderick F. McPhee, The Organization and Control of American Schools (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books, 1965), 404.
[26] Robert Dahl, Modern Political Analysis, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1991), 4.
[27] Kingdon, *supra*, 3.

narrowed considerably by government's capacity to be able to attend to only a fraction of such matters by acting on some issues and ignoring others.

Given the limited capacity of government to respond to the myriad issues confronting it by individual citizens, the media, interest groups, politicians, bureaucrats and others, upon what basis is the agenda constructed? What issues merit the government's attention? Governments may have, as Levin suggests, an *a priori* ideological commitment to act in a certain fashion in order to deliver a particular policy outcome, but governments are also "fundamentally about politics, and politics involves getting elected and staying in office as well as accomplishing goals while there."[28]

So far it has been argued that the reasons for choosing one policy over another, or declining to act on an issue at all, are fundamentally political, and necessarily involves the exercise of governing, especially where specific legislative and/or regulatory initiatives are advanced to give a policy effective implementation. However, in an environment of limited resources it is impossible to meet the needs, desires and preferences of every individual, group or organization that presses its claim upon the political system, including government. The demands placed on the system are frequently at odds with each other, such that the satisfaction of one demand may have a negative impact upon another. Given that there is inherent disagreement in democratic societies over values and ideas, needs and wants, and the desirability and speed of

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[28] Ben Levin, Reforming Education: from origins to outcomes (London: Routledge/Falmer, 2001), 23. Indeed, as one accomplished practitioner of the art has observed, "To be frank, politics is about wanting power, getting it, exercising it, and keeping it."
Jean Chrétien, My Years as Prime Minister (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2007), 2.

change, satisfying a significant array of public preferences through an accommodation of divergent interests is problematic because of the difficulty in "aggregating the babble of the collective will."[29] Conflict and disagreement, writes Levin, are endemic to politics because "governments are about defining and shaping the kind of society we live in, and people disagree, often fundamentally, on these questions. Even where there is agreement on goals or purposes there may be disagreement on how those goals should be achieved."[30] Issues come and go in terms of relative importance, they can be inconsistent, and can pit the interests of individuals or groups against each other. Further, Lindblom has argued that "democratic theory has tended to discredit the idea that policy making constitutes or accomplishes a search for truth, for correct policies, or for rationality in politics. Instead, it proposes another test of good policy: that it is willed, chosen or preferred, with the choice indicated ultimately by how people vote among candidates."[31] Therefore, it becomes necessary to make some type of adjudication as to which claims will be responded to, which problems will be addressed. Schon expresses it this way:

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[29] Howlett and Ramesh, *supra*, 76.

[30] Levin, Governing Education, 9.
Allison and Zelikow express the idea as follows: "Individuals share power. They differ about what must be done. Differences matter. This milieu necessitates that government decisions and actions result from a political process." Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, Essence of Decision, 2nd ed. (New York: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers Inc., 1999), 256.
While inherent disagreement may exist, that is different from fundamental opposition to society's core values and ideals. "What is called union in a body politic is a very equivocal thing. The true kind is a union of harmony, whereby all the parts, however opposed they may appear, cooperate for the general good of society – as dissonances in music cooperate in the producing of overall concord. In a state where we seem to see nothing but commotion there can be union – that is, a harmony resulting in happiness, which alone is true peace. It is as with the parts of the universe, eternally linked together by the action of some and the reaction of others."
Baron Charles Louis de Montesquieu, Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and Their Decline (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 93-94.

[31] Lindblom, *supra*, 122.

> Because one never comes to the end of listing the issues inherent in the situation, there must be some basis for selection. The selection cannot be made on the criteria of "what is most important", because this would imply a complete inventory of available issues, from which the most important were to be selected; and such a complete inventory is not feasible. Issues can indeed be selected as important, on some criteria, but there is a level of arbitrariness here, because other issues, equally important, might be selected. The political meaning of issues -- their relation to the effort to gain or keep power -- aids in the process of selection.[32]

Although it may not be the only one, an important criterion in selecting which issue deserves the most attention of government at any given time is its "political meaning", says Schon; that is, the relationship of an issue to efforts made to obtain and retain control of the government. Together, the observations of Schon and Lindblom suggest some very important questions for the study proposed here: What political meaning or significance did the amalgamation policy of 2001-02 have in terms of the general disposition of Manitobans to the government's action? How did the government's action, and the timing of its initiatives, relate to the retention of power, if it did? More specifically, to what extent was the government's position a calculation of the likely voting preferences of Manitobans in a provincial election?

Certainly, the single act of voting in an election on an issue assigns political meaning to a matter since the electoral outcome can be used as a means of imposing a solution or resolving evident differences of policy and position. In these circumstances, government is called upon "as a means and as protection" as Miller has expressed this idea:

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[32] Donald A. Schon, Beyond the Stable State (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1971), 142.

> Political activity, then, arises out of disagreement, and it is concerned with the use of government to resolve conflict in the direction of change or in the prevention of change. It is about policy and position. I am not suggesting that agreement never appears in politics; indeed, the resolution of conflict into some kind of agreement . . . is one of the principal aims of political activity. . . . Politics, to be distinguished as a recognizable activity, demands some initial disagreement between parties and persons, and the presence of government as a means of resolving the disagreement in some direction.[33]

It is interesting that the stance of the Doer Government on the amalgamation issue runs clearly in the direction of some degree of change, that is, it chose not to preserve the *status quo*. The intriguing question, however, is why was the particular change relatively modest compared to what might have been done otherwise? This question deserves special attention in this study.

Policy making. The development and use of conceptual models as representation of the policy-making process is long-standing in the fields of political science, policy studies, and public administration. Their virtue can be found in their simplicity, and how they can serve as "splendidly rational blueprints for an unreal world."[34] Models can provide a simplification of key aspects of the real world of politics and policy formulation and enable the analyst of policy-making, within the context of factors which operate in a given situation, to "classify a phenomenon into manageable chunks of reality and to generate or suggest hypothesized relationships we might not otherwise see."[35] A number of process models or theories have been developed as conceptual guides in

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[33] Miller, *supra*, 26.
[34] Mike Wallace and Keith Pocklington, Managing Complex Educational Change (London: Routledge/Falmer, 2002), 9.
[35] G. Bruce Doern and Richard W. Phidd, Canadian Public Policy: Ideas, Structures, Process, 2nd ed. (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1992), 4.

unraveling the mysteries of policy creation in public organizations.[36] No model, though, captures the reality of policy-making in its entirety for as Wilson suggests, "theories will exist, but they will usually be so abstract or general as to explain rather little. Interesting explanations will exist, some even supported with facts, but these will be partial, place- and time-bound insights."[37] In spite of such limitations it is likely that incrementalism, a model which describes the usual method and what is ordinarily possible in policy-making, is the most compelling and is closest to the "real world". As Howlett and Ramesh have observed:

> There is a surprising degree of continuity in public policy. Many observers have remarked that most policies made by governments are, for the most part and most of the time, in some way a continuation of past policies and practices. Ample empirical evidence, from literally thousands of case studies of disparate policy sectors and issues in a multitude of countries, indicates that most policies made by governments are in some way a continuation of past policies and practices. Even what are often portrayed as "new" policy initiatives are often simply variations on existing practices.[38]

In the incremental model or conception, policy formulation is understood primarily as modest adjustment of what already exists. Developed by Charles Lindblom, incrementalism describes a conservative, step by step approach to policy-making which makes marginal adjustments to the *status quo*, identifies the consideration of proximately realistic alternatives and their likely consequences, and places value upon consensus among participants. Lindblom's essential thesis is this:

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[36] For a discussion of such models see, for example, Dye, *supra*, 11-31, and Robert F. Adie and Paul G. Thomas, Canadian Public Administration: Problematical Perspectives (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1982), 96-103.

[37] James Q. Wilson, Bureaucracy (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1989), xi. As Jones and Baumgartner write, "any general model, no matter how complex, is unlikely to predict change very well, or even to describe policy change in more than one policy arena."
Bryan D. Jones and Frank R. Baumgartner, The Politics of Attention: How Government Prioritizes Problems (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 115.

[38] Howlett and Ramesh, *supra*, 235.

> It is a matter of common observation that in Western democracies public administrators and policy analysts in general do largely limit their analyses to incremental or marginal differences in policies that are chosen to differ only incrementally. They do not do so, however, solely because they desperately need some way to simplify their problems; they also do so in order to be relevant. Democracies change their policies almost entirely through incremental adjustments. Policy does not move in leaps and bounds.[39]

It is clear that the incrementalist model views decision-making as that which occurs on the basis of "successive limited comparisons." Public policy is largely a continuation of past government initiatives and activities and is, for the most part, preservationist in inclination – existing programs, policies, and commitments are considered the base, and changes amount to increases, decreases or modifications to that which currently exists. Analysis of policy alternatives is limited, and the scope of those alternatives is only marginally different from policies currently in place. The policy process is, as David Easton claims, "highly interrelated, cumulative, and consistent."[40] Further, it is risk averse, of limited rationality, and promotes only slight improvement of policy outcomes according to Aucoin:

> The fundamental hypothesis of the incrementalist theory is that public policies result from a decision-making process in which decision-makers "muddle through" a limited number of closely related alternatives, that is, alternatives which are incrementally rather than radically different, without attempting to evaluate all possible consequences. . . . [T]he rational strategy in normal

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[39] Charles E. Lindblom, "The Science of Muddling Through" (1959), 19, 2, Public Administration Review, 79-88.

[40] David Easton, A Systems Analysis of Political Life (New York: John Wiley, 1965), 369. Mucciaroni suggests that the significance of "historical antecedents and patterns" as constraints in the selection of policy alternatives should not be underestimated: "Items that reach the agenda in any given period have their roots in the conditions, events, and choices of the past. The past does not determine the future, but it does make certain outcomes more likely and others less so." Gary Mucciaroni, "The Garbage Can Model & the Study of Policy Making: A Critique" (1992), 24, 3, Polity, 470.

> circumstances is for decision-makers to proceed in an incremental (and usually disjointed) manner.[41]

Proponents of the incrementalist model argue that it is a realistic reflection of the world of policy-making in government since policy-makers do not normally engage in a systematic review of the whole range of existing and proposed policies, identify societal goals, research the costs/benefits of an array of options, determine their maximum benefit, and then make a decision. A review in 2001 of the policy development capacity of government departments in Manitoba by the Office of the Provincial Auditor confirms this. In his report, the Provincial Auditor stated that, in his opinion, a criterion of the policy making process should be the development of a conceptual framework of principles and assumptions that provide context for the generating of options. However, he found that departments "seem to rely almost exclusively on underlying assumptions to guide the selection of options. The identification of principles does not appear to be part of the starting point that guides the selection of policy options."[42]

Dye argues that policy is not developed in such a comprehensive, rationalistic fashion for a number of reasons. Policy-makers do not have the time, information or money needed to investigate the whole spectrum of policy alternatives.[43] Levin has observed that the press of daily events and swirl of

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[41] Peter Aucoin, "Public Policy Theory and Analysis" in G. Bruce Doern and Peter Aucoin, eds., Public Policy in Canada (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1979), 5-6.
[42] Manitoba, A Review of the Policy Development Capacity Within Government Departments (Office of the Provincial Auditor, November 2001), 6.
[43] Dye, *supra*, 19.

issues frequently force decisions to be made very quickly, usually with limited information and discussion accompanying it.[44] As Curtis puts it:

> Political action is always based on imprecise knowledge. It can never take account of all the factors entering into any given situation. It can never know all the results after action has been taken. Politics deals with both the contingent and the unknown. Political solutions are temporary at best, irrelevant at worst. Historical analogy may be misleading, because exactly similar factors are never encountered: parallel, but not identical, situations exist.[45]

Those engaged in public policy-making do not have the predictive capacity or means to accurately assess the consequences of policy options, nor can they easily weigh and compare a host of social, political, cultural, and economic values which are frequently at play. "Within the policy process," contend Wallace and Pocklington, "it is impossible to sort out causes from effects and components can be latent, biding their time for a change of circumstances, or dynamic, or simply never happen. . . . Causal linkages between factors could be ambiguous, their expression and interaction unpredictable."[46]

Similarly, Behn argues that the management of public policy making can be described as "climbing sand dunes" – the topography is always changing and one's footing unsure.[47] Direction is frequently ambiguous and contradictory, due to the degree of uncertainty that surrounds many political decisions as a consequence of the limitations (internal and external) and competing expectations placed upon those who make them. As a result, the policy process

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[44] Levin, Governing Education, 33. On the "disproportionality of attention," see Jones and Baumgartner, *supra*, 20-21.
[45] Michael Curtis, "Introduction", in Curtis, ed., The Nature of Politics (New York: Avon Books, 1962), xxiv.
[46] Wallace and Pocklington, *supra*, 8.
[47] Robert D. Behn, "Management by Groping Along" (1988), 7, 4, Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 647-648.

encourages, even forces, policy-makers to "continually build out from the current situation, step-by-step and by small degrees."[48] Incrementalism is politically expedient because agreement is more easily reached when existing policies and programs are merely modified, as opposed to significantly changed such that potentially major gains or losses by various participants may result when new policies or programs replace old ones. Small changes "do not rock the boat, do not stir up the great antagonisms and paralyzing schisms as do proposals for more drastic change."[49] It speaks to compromise, stability and conflict management. The consequence of moving in small steps is that policy-making becomes, in Lindblom's words, "a never ending process in which continued nibbling substitutes for the good bite."[50]

Incrementalism has been viewed as a defense and justification of the *status quo*, and is the *bête noire* of those who advocate significant change. As Bachrach and Baratz argue, it reflects the bias of societies toward the *status quo*:

> While advocates of change must win at all stages of the political process -- issue-recognition, decision and implementation of policy -- the defenders of existing policy must win at only one stage in the process. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that all political systems have an inherent "mobilization of bias" and that this bias strongly favours those currently defending the *status quo*.[51]

Wildavsky acknowledges such bias this way: "Isn't caution, hence conservatism, the inevitable result of knowing more about what not to do than about what to

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[48] Lindblom, "The Science of Muddling Through", 81.
[49] Lindblom, "Still Muddling, Not Yet Through" (1979), 39, 6, Public Administration Review, 520.
[50] Lindblom, The Policy-Making Process, 38.
[51] Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, Power and Poverty (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 58. See also Kingdon, *supra*, 151.

do?"[52] Uncertainty as to the path ahead, and hence resistance to wide scale change, may be a result of a number of limitations to rationality in decision-making. Hogwood and Gunn identify limits to one's powers of cognition and calculation, over the impossibility of assigning values to interests, organizational limitations, cost or resource limitations, and situational limitations (the constraints of precedents, politics and expectations).[53] The consequence of such limitations is that policy-making tends to favour the *status quo*, although as Heclo argues this does not mean stagnation in a government's dealing with pressing social issues:

> Administrative policy making has preserved the *status quo* only if that term is given a peculiar definition -- trying to correct what was done last time around. Attention to corrections in ongoing policy is scarcely directionless, though it may not yield pre-determined policy courses.[54]

"Beyond the Stages Heuristic": Agenda Setting, Convergence and the Policy Window

In his foreword to Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies, James Thurber suggests that Kingdon's work "moves the policy-making literature beyond the stages heuristic."[55] He posits that Kingdon builds upon the work of earlier political theorists, notably David Easton, by moving beyond a description of stages, to a fuller, richer account of the dynamic forces which drive the agenda-setting process of government. The choice of an analytical framework is,

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[52] Aaron Wildavsky, Speaking Truth to Power (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1987), 402. It may also speak to Machiavelli's contention, made almost five hundred years ago, that the "prudent man" should follow the trail set by those who have gone before: "Men almost always prefer to walk in paths marked out by others and pattern their actions through imitation." Machiavelli, *supra*, 16.
[53] Hogwood and Gunn, *supra*, 50-52.
[54] Heclo, *supra*, 303.
[55] Kingdon, *supra*, vii.

of course, a critical one for any researcher. It is all the more so because "models are much more than simple angles of vision or approaches. Each conceptual framework consists of a cluster of assumptions and categories that influence what the analyst finds puzzling, how he formulates the question, where he looks for evidence, and what he produces as an answer."[56] That choice is made more complicated by the seemingly limitless number of models from which one might conceivably make a selection. As Richard Simeon notes, this is a problem which confronts all researchers:

> The student of policy-making looking for a conceptual framework faces a difficult dilemma. He wants a neat, simple framework which highlights a few critical factors, but at the same time does not want to sacrifice the richness and complexity of the data to an arbitrary set of *a priori* categories. The dilemma is the more difficult because there is no consensus on what factors are crucial for decision-making. The result is that models have proliferated.[57]

The basis of that selection comes down, to a significant degree, to an assessment of the strength of a particular model in providing a satisfying and plausible explanation to the question(s) being considered. Kingdon's model, at its core, provides an explanation of how and why issues rise and fall from a government's agenda and how the convergence of certain forces provides an opportunity – a "policy window" – for governmental action. His model, as Howlett suggests, is "now considered the standard in policy studies"[58] and will be used here.

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[56] Allison and Zelikow, *supra*, 379.
[57] Richard Simeon, Federal-Provincial Diplomacy: The Making of Recent Policy in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006 ed.), 11.
[58] Howlett, "Predictable and Unpredictable Policy Windows", 497.

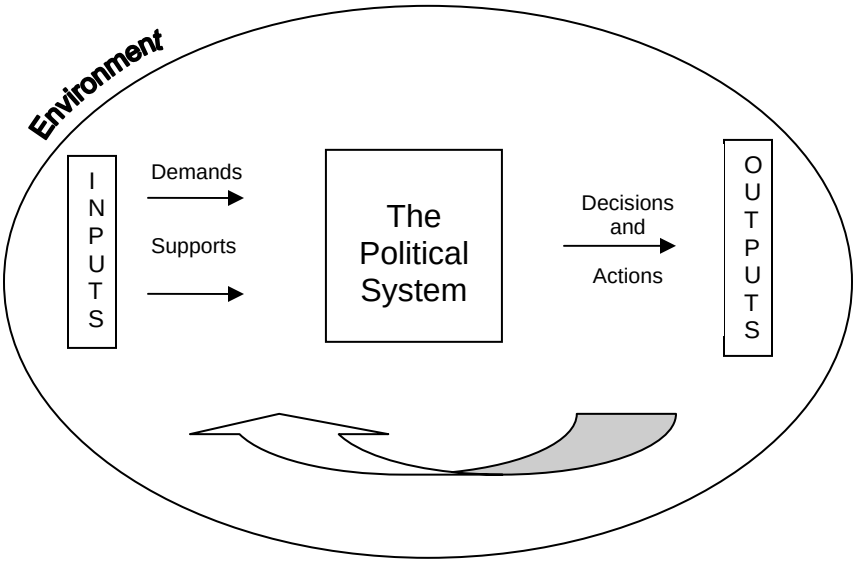
The exploration of the process for agenda setting and decision-making are at the heart of the investigation of the school division amalgamation initiative. Why did the Progressive Conservative governments led by Premier Gary Filmon (1988-1990, 1990-1995, and 1995-1999) reject the findings of the Boundaries Review Commission? Why did it adopt a policy endorsing *voluntary* amalgamation? Why did the New Democratic Party, upon assuming government in 1999, resurrect the findings of the Commission and, while not implementing them in their entirety, opt to proceed with *directed* amalgamation? Who specified which alternatives and how were these determined? What factors favoured the specific configuration of boundaries in the directed amalgamation policy of 2001?

Kingdon's model, it is suggested, gives the student of government policy-making a peek inside the mystical "black box" of governmental decision-making to better understand how and why government officials come to pay attention to certain problems and make authoritative decisions on how to address them. It moves beyond the descriptive and probes the dynamic features of the interplay between problems, policies, and politics. In the best tradition of scholarship, it recognizes its academic lineage, acknowledges the debt owed to those who came before, and attempts to build upon the corpus of knowledge to further advance our understanding of the policy-making process. No analyst, however ambitious or theoretically equipped, can presume to know with absolute certainty what goes on inside the "black box".

In his 1965 work, A Framework for Political Analysis, David Easton attempted to describe how political systems cope with stress and respond to

demands placed upon them. A political system exists within the larger social and physical environment and is exposed to the influences generated by the environment. As political life is about the set of interactions on the part of individuals and groups, a political system is identified as the set of interactions, abstracted from the totality of social behaviour, through which values are authoritatively allocated for society.[59] In order for a political system to persist, and to ensure that the authoritative decisions it makes are met with compliance from its members most of the time, it must take into account and provide some response to the stresses or demands being placed upon it. In its most elemental construction, says Easton, a political system is a means whereby certain kinds of inputs are transformed into outputs:

FIGURE 2



[59] David Easton, A Framework for Political Analysis (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), 57.

This well known conception provides a simplified model of the political system, essentially stripping political processes "to their bare bones."[60] The model represents, as Easton states, "a vast conversion process. In it, the inputs of demands and supports are acted upon in such a way that it is possible for the system to persist and to produce outputs meeting the demands of at least some of the members, and retaining the support of most. The system is a way of translating demands and supports for a system into authoritative allocations."[61] The outputs of the system, those "authoritative allocations of values or binding decisions and the actions implementing and related to them,"[62] are public policies. Those courses of action [or inaction] pursued under the authority of government can include statutes, administrative decisions, decrees, rules and policies. The continuous feedback loop, as Easton envisages it, is information about the state of the system and its environment, conveyed back to the political system in the form of demands and supports, and allows decision-makers within government "to be able to respond by adjusting, modifying, or correcting previous decisions, including the failure to make a decision."[63]

Easton's model is a valuable general description of the policy process, but does not get us inside the "black box" of government wherein the authoritative allocation of values is made. His model is, as he acknowledges, an attempt to find "economical ways of summarizing – not of investigating – the outcomes of

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[60] *Ibid*., 112.
[61] *Ibid*., 131. For an examination of Easton's conversion model as applied to a provincial Ministry of Education, using negotiation processes among organizational components or subsystems as an explanation for allocative outcomes, see John J. Stapleton, "The Politics of Educational Innovations: A Case Study of the Credit System in Ontario" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1975).
[62] *Ibid*., 126.
[63] *Ibid*., 129.

internal political processes."[64] As Allison and Zelikow suggest, however, to better understand the actions of government "it is necessary to open the black box and look within the state actor to its disaggregated moving parts."[65] It is at this jumping off point, Thurber argues, that Kingdon's work builds upon the contribution of Easton by investigating agenda setting in government: that is, that list of issues or problems to which governmental officials are paying some serious attention. What are the political and environmental forces which drive the agenda setting process? Why do some issues come to government's attention, and others do not? Why do some gain prominence, and subsequently fall from the agenda? By asking questions such as these, Kingdon's theoretical framework allows us to peek inside the "black box".

While Easton's model is useful in describing the nature of the political system within the larger environment, and the stages (inputs, throughputs, outputs) in which demands and supports from the environment are converted into outputs, it does not adequately address why, of the myriad demands placed upon the political system and the problems confronted by it, some issues receive the attention of government and others do not. As Kingdon writes, "That question is actually part of a larger puzzle: What makes people in and around government attend, at any given time, to some subjects and not to others?"[66] His quest is to examine "how they [issues] came to be issues in the first place. We will try to understand why important people pay attention to one subject rather than

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[64] Easton, "Categories for the Systems Analysis of Politics," in David Easton, ed., Varieties of Political Theory (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1966), 152.
[65] Allison and Zelikow, *supra*, 404.
[66] Kingdon, *supra*, 1.

another, how their agendas change from one time to another, and how they narrow their choices from a large set of alternatives to a very few."[67]

The agenda-setting process, the narrowing of the set of conceivable subjects to the set that becomes the focus of government's attention, is, argues Kingdon, determined by the convergence of three largely separate elements: problems, solutions (policies), and politics. When certain events and circumstances in either the problems or politics streams occur, a policy window opens for which a solution can be attached and action can be taken.

Problems. Problems come to the attention of government decision-makers either through the presence of pervasive indicators (ie. routine monitoring, budgets or studies), or as a result of public pressure from a focusing event such as a crisis.[68] In the former, the magnitude of problems or some change to them, can grab the attention of decision-makers; in the latter, some unforeseen event which serves as a powerful symbol with the public of a larger problem, can provoke government to respond. In both instances, people associated with government become convinced that something must be done to correct the problem. Jones and Baumgartner argue that, for policy-makers, "attention is a scarce good, and its allocation to a policy objective is an important indicator of governmental commitment."[69] In terms of this study, were there problems with the existing set of governance arrangements in education which

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[67] *Ibid*., 2.

[68] Rochefort and Cobb have suggested that the nature of a problem has multiple dimensions: severity, incidence, novelty, proximity, and crisis (emergency). How it comes to be represented is a significant factor in whether or not government chooses to act in some fashion.
David A. Rochefort and Roger W. Cobb, "Problem Definition, Agenda Access, and Policy Choice" (1993), 21, 1, Policy Studies Journal, 64-66.

[69] Jones and Baumgartner, *supra*, 117.

convinced decision-makers that a change was necessary? What were those problems? What focused government's attention on those problems?

Solutions (policies). For a problem to rise on to the government agenda, and beyond that to the decision-making agenda, a viable solution to a problem must be available. Those solutions, Kingdon suggests, are largely a recombination of existing ideas which have emerged as a result of discussion and refinement from amongst participants within the policy community. For a policy to be accepted, it must meet certain criteria, including technical feasibility, congruence with the values of those within the policy community, budget constraints, public acceptability, and political receptivity.[70] What solutions did policy-makers consider as a means of addressing the problems in the governance arrangements for elementary and secondary education in Manitoba? Why was amalgamation the preferred solution over others? What winnowing of alternatives occurred? Did the policy option selected meet the criteria Kingdon identifies as noted above?

Politics. The political stream is composed of factors such as election results, changes in government, pressure campaigns by interest groups, and even shifts in national or provincial mood – that is, changes in the perceptions of citizens. Kingdon claims that this complex of factors has an extremely powerful impact on policy agendas. A new administration, he says, "changes agendas all over town as it highlights its conceptions of problems and its proposals, and

[70] Kingdon, *supra*, 200.

makes attention to subjects that are not among its high priorities much less likely."[71] What political factors were at play which discouraged the Progressive Conservative administration from acting upon the recommendations of the Boundaries Review Commission report? Why did the New Democratic Party, upon taking office, choose to move forward on directed amalgamation? Why was it, as a party, critical of directed amalgamation when in Opposition but favourable toward it once in Government? What partisan considerations were at play? What role did key actors such as the Premier and Minister of Education have? Did they, in fact, act as policy "entrepreneurs"[72] lending their leadership to and assuming the political risk in promoting this initiative? Provincial premiers tend, generally, to dominate owing to their position as party leader and "architect not only of personnel choice but of cabinet structure as well."[73] Joan Grace has suggested that, in the design of the Cabinet in Manitoba, power has been concentrated centrally. The Manitoba Government is a government "that is clearly centred around the premier. As head of government, the premier is the most prominent politician, chairs the most important cabinet committee, and is also the minister of federal-provincial relations."[74] Indeed, given the

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[71] *Ibid*., 198-199.
[72] *Ibid*., 122-124.
[73] Christopher Dunn, The Institutionalized Cabinet: Governing the Western Provinces (Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 12. See also George White, "The interpersonal dynamics of decision making in Canadian provincial cabinets," in Michael Laver and Kenneth Shepsle, eds., Cabinet Ministers and Parliamentary Government (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 252, 265-266.
[74] Joan Grace, "Cabinet Structure and Executive Style in Manitoba." Luc Bernier, Keith Brownsey and Michael Howlett, eds., Executive Styles in Canada: Cabinet Structures and Leadership Practices in Canadian Government (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 183.
As an illustration to emphasize the point, Don Leitch, who served as Clerk of the Executive Council in the Filmon administration, observed that while Mr. Filmon would attempt to seek consensus around the Cabinet table "if he had a different view from other Ministers he didn't hesitate to make that point. There were times when he would say, 'look, here is where I come

concentration of power within the Premier's Office and, to a lesser degree, the Cabinet, it would tend to support Howlett's speculation (at least when considering the amalgamation issue) that within the Canadian context there is as much evidence to suggest that "the government agenda drives the public as there is for the reverse situation. It could be argued that this is due to the institutional structure of parliamentary regimes, which deliver extensive agenda-setting powers to governments."[75] Within the limitations of access to key decision-makers and to documentary evidence, one's understanding of the decision-making process can therefore be enhanced, as Simeon has suggested, by studying the decision-makers themselves: their goals, their styles, their positions within government, the tactics they wish to employ to achieve their goals, and the political resources they bring to bear on an issue.[76]

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down as Premier,' and typically when Premiers come down on something there are a few prerogatives that Premiers get in Cabinet government, and one of them is to often times set some pretty strong, direct policy courses."
Telephone interview by author, tape recording, Winnipeg, Manitoba, November 16, 2007.

[75] Michael Howlett, "Issue-Attention and Punctuated Equilibria Models Reconsidered: An Empirical Examination of the Dynamics of Agenda-Setting in Canada," (March 1997), 30, 1, Canadian Journal of Political Science, 27.

[76] Simeon, *supra*, 308.

In a similar vein, Schoettle has argued that the mobilization of elite political actors on a given issue is a function of their role, perceived self-interest, the amount and kind of political resources at their disposal, and their willingness to invest those resources in a given phase of political activity.
Enid Curtis Bok Schoettle, "The State of the Art in Policy Studies." Raymond A. Bauer and Kenneth J. Gergen, eds., The Study of Policy Formation (New York: The Free Press, 1968), 167.

The late Alan Clark, a Minister of State in the government of Margaret Thatcher, suggested that the motivations of political actors are a key factor to be considered in the study of policy formulation. As he described it, "It is an awkward thing to say, other than to those you can trust, but policies are neither determined nor evolved on a simple assessment of National, or even Party, interest. Personal motives – ambition, mischief making, a view to public obligations and opportunities in the future, sometimes raw vindictiveness – all come into it."
Alan Clark, Diaries (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1993), 64.

Policy Window. Kingdon argues that each of the streams of problems, policies (or solutions) and politics is largely separate, flowing through the governmental system all at once; however, it is their convergence from time to time that is most significant:

> A pressing problem demands attention, for instance, and a policy proposal is coupled to the problem as its solution. Or an event in the political stream, such as a change in administration, calls for different directions. At that point, proposals that fit with that political event, such as initiatives that fit with a new administration's philosophy, come to the fore and are coupled with the ripe political climate.[77]

When this convergence occurs, a policy window, as Kingdon expresses it, opens. Such windows, which he defines as opportunities for governmental action on a policy initiative or initiatives, are open for short periods of time, he says. When conditions change such that political incentives for action wane, key participants are altered, or public attention on an issue diminish, the window closes. It will be shown in this study that the window of opportunity for amalgamation occurred with the convergence of three forces: pervasive indicators of a problem (ongoing reports of declining student enrolments and increasing annual expenditure levels), promotion of amalgamation as a policy solution which had been tried in Manitoba previously and recently in other jurisdictions, and the election of a new government which was receptive to pursuing some degree of change with respect to school division governance and organization. The convergence of these three forces led to the amalgamation announcement in 2001 by the NDP Government of Premier Gary Doer and the subsequent tabling of legislation to give this policy decision legal effect.

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[77] Kingdon, *supra,* 201.

DATA SOURCES

Research into a past event "involves a process that examines events or combinations of events in order to uncover accounts of what happened." It extends beyond a collection of incidents, facts and dates and becomes "a study of the relationships among issues that have influenced the past, continue to influence the present, and will certainly affect the future."[78]

Given the purpose and nature of the study, primary and secondary sources[79] were utilized. Personal interviews were conducted with eighteen candidates, selected because they met one or more of the following criteria:

i) were familiar with the amalgamation initiative
ii) had been involved with it or some aspect related to it
iii) had been an active participant in proposing, deciding, or implementing policy with respect to amalgamation.

The oral testimony of this elite[80] group of individuals – those who held leadership and decision-making roles in political, bureaucratic and educational arenas during the Filmon years and in the first term of the Doer Government, were active in the discussions on amalgamation and who could also claim some expertise about the topic – was critical in assessing whether Kingdon's theory of agenda setting and the "policy window" can be applied to the amalgamation initiative. As

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[78] Bruce L. Berg, Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences, 4th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001), 211.

[79] "In historiography, a primary source is distinguished from a secondary by the fact that the former gives the words of the witness or first recorders of an event – for example, the diaries of Count Ciano written under Mussolini's regime. The historian, using a number of primary sources, produces a secondary source."
Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff, The Modern Researcher, 4th ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 124.

[80] "The influential, the prominent, and the well-informed", as Dexter has defined it. Further, "In elite interviewing…the investigator is willing, and often eager to let the interviewee teach him what the problem, the question, the situation, is – to the limits, of course, of the interviewer's ability to perceive relationships to his basic problems, whatever these may be."
Lewis Anthony Dexter, Elite and Specialized Interviewing (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 5-6.

Goldstein suggests, there are three goals that researchers have when conducting elite interviews: to gather information from a sample of officials in order to make generalizeable claims about decisions which may have been made, to discover a particular piece of information, and to inform one's work when other data sources are used.[81] The data collected for this study was critical in establishing and corroborating certain events and developments; gave interpretations of certain events and an estimate of their significance for the issue; provided a sense of why some policy alternatives were considered and either utilized or discarded; generated insights into the political dynamics surrounding the amalgamation decision; and revealed, from the point of view of the individual, the effect of their own and others' positions. The data gives us, in essence, "the informant's picture of the world as he sees it."[82]

All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. The interviews were semi-standardized, involving a number of predetermined questions. The questions were asked in a systematic and consistent order, but the interviewer was able to digress as the occasion warranted and follow-up as appropriate with probing questions beyond those originally prepared. This approach gave the interview a conversational quality, and afforded the interviewee some latitude in articulating and expanding upon their responses.[83] There was some degree of variation in the content of questions depending upon the particular individuals

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[81] Kenneth Goldstein, "Getting in the Door: Sampling and Completing Elite Interviews" (December 2002), 35, 4, PS: Political Science and Politics, 669.
[82] Dexter*, supra*, 120.
[83] On the value of open-ended questioning when conducting elite interviews, see Joel D. Aberbach and Bert A. Rockman, "Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews" (December 2002), 35, 4, PS: Political Science and Politics, 673-676.

being interviewed: political actors had, for instance, a somewhat different set of questions from those who played a bureaucratic/policy implementation role. All interviews were between 30 to 60 minutes in length. Four former school division superintendents, who for the purposes of this study will remain anonymous, were also interviewed. These individuals were selected because they represented a balance between both urban and rural school divisions, and led divisions which were affected by amalgamation, having pursued it either on a voluntary basis or had been directed by government to merge with a partner. A listing of interviewees is included in section E of Primary Sources Consulted found near the end of this dissertation. The letter of introduction to interviewees is attached as Appendix 1. The questions posed to interviewees are contained in Appendix 2.[84]

Interviews were supplemented by a number of other primary sources. These include:

- Statutes of Manitoba and Regulations
- Hansard
- published policy documents of Manitoba Education, Training and Youth
- Report of the Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission (1994 and 1995)
- Minister/Deputy Minister correspondence to school boards
- commercial media accounts, particularly those contained in the *Winnipeg Free Press* and *The Winnipeg Sun* newspapers.

In combination, these sources facilitated both the collection of information and the interpretation and analysis of the data. As Berg notes, the purpose in collecting and analyzing such information is to uncover the unknown, answer

[84] Both Premier Doer and former Premier Filmon were approached for an interview, but neither was available to participate in the study.

questions, seek implications or relationships of past events and their connections with the present, assess past activities and accomplishments of individuals or institutions, and aid generally in our understanding of human culture.[85] Utilizing multiple research methods such as direct observation, interviewing, and document analysis provides a "different line of sight directed toward the same point, observing social and symbolic reality. By combining several lines of sight, researchers obtain a better, more substantive picture of reality; a richer more complete array of symbols and theoretical concepts; and a means of verifying many of these elements."[86]

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As a qualitative case study of a single event, the examination of school division amalgamation in Manitoba will address both intrinsic and instrumental purposes. It is intrinsic inasmuch as the amalgamation experience is interesting because of its uniqueness as a development in the educational history of Manitoba. It is an instrumental study because it will, hopefully, provide a better understanding of an external theoretical question or proposition.[87]

Because of its intrinsic value as an area of study, its findings may not be wholly generalizeable to other like situations. One cannot presume that the findings, as they relate to the amalgamation experience in Manitoba, will likewise be relevant or applicable to an amalgamation experience in another provincial jurisdiction. There will, undoubtedly, be significant areas of commonality, but

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[85] Berg, *supra*, 212.
[86] *Ibid*., 4.
[87] *Ibid*., 229.

given the influence and impact of individual actors, key events, and local history and political culture, they will not be the same.[88]

"The essence of ultimate decision," contended President Kennedy, "remains impenetrable to the observer – often, indeed, to the decider himself. . . . There will always be the dark and tangled stretches in the decision-making process – mysterious even to those who may be most intimately involved."[89] No study can reveal with absolute certainty the range of ideas, the power of personality and argument (nuanced or otherwise), the shift in circumstances, the calculations, judgments and trade-offs which ultimately influence the eventual policy outcome. That is partly so because no researcher has access to every iota of information which factored into that outcome. For example, in parliamentary systems of government most major decisions of government, although often championed by an individual Minister, are the product of discussion and consensus at the level of Cabinet. Cabinet discussions are, however, confidential and are not accessible to this researcher.[90] Useful information which could be gleaned from those deliberations is simply not available. Key participants in the decision process may not have been identified or available, their memories perhaps uncertain, or were unwilling to share with

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[88] A case study attempts to deduce, and verify, how causes interact in a particular instance to produce an outcome. Extrapolation of findings to similar events or phenomena is risky because "the social world is complex, characterized by path dependence, tipping points, interaction effects, strategic interaction, [and] two-directional causality or feedback loops…." Andrew Bennett and Colin Elman, "Qualitative Research: Recent Developments in Case Study Methods" (2006), 9, Annual Review of Political Science, 457.

[89] Theodore Sorenson, Decision-Making in the White House: The Olive Branch and the Arrows (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), xi, xiii.

[90] "The confidentiality of Cabinet discussions and documents is essential to the maintenance of solidarity. Not only are fundamental state secrets protected in this manner, but so is the anonymity of Ministers who took opposing views during the debates leading to a final decision." Andrew Heard, Canadian Constitutional Conventions: The Marriage of Law and Politics (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1991), 65.

the researcher their version of events. Such a limitation does not mean, however, that one cannot or should not make an attempt at plausible conclusions based on historical context, policy decisions previously made, interview testimony from key actors inside and close to Cabinet, or from documentation available within the public realm. What it does mean, though, is that "as an attempt to explain the occurrence of an event by reference to some of those antecedents which rendered its occurrence probable,"[91] the power of causal explanation is diminished.

The evidence produced in this dissertation is, therefore, constructed largely from interviews of participants in the policy-making process and from a review of relevant primary and secondary sources and, as such, "must bear the weight of any interpretation."[92] Its worth will be determined, one expects, by the extent to which it lends itself to accurate description, enhances an understanding of this significant event in Manitoba's educational history, and assists in the testing of theory that informs the inquiry and upon which others may build.

The study is restricted to an examination of school division amalgamation as an issue which worked its way through the stages of identification, policy formulation, policy development, and policy implementation within government. It is an examination of *public* policy-making. Although it is certainly worthy of consideration in its own right, this research does not examine the extensive work and decision-making processes carried out at the local school division level by

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[91] David Hackett Fischer, Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970), 183.
[92] Robert C. Bogdan and Sara Knopp Biklen, Qualitative Research in Education, 3rd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 34.

trustees and senior administrators, in those divisions affected by amalgamation, once the Minister's policy announcement had been made.

Finally, in any qualitative research effort, researcher bias must be acknowledged. This researcher served as Assistant Director of the Education Administration Services (EAS) Branch of Manitoba Education, Training and Youth at the time of amalgamation. Along with the Schools' Finance Branch, EAS was one of the lead Branches which supported the amalgamation initiative. In some respects, the researcher was able to serve as a "stage hand" in the historical drama of amalgamation as it was played out. Given this, it is important to admit that no matter how one tries, one cannot entirely divorce one's perspective of events from one's own lived experience. This is to be expected. As Vidich notes, "data collection does not take place in a vacuum. Perspectives and perceptions of social reality are shaped by the social position and interests of both the observed and the observer as they live through a passing present."[93] One's *rapport* with individuals, the interplay of personalities and issues and where one is situated between and impacted by them, invariably creates a particular lens of interpretation or set of assumptions through and upon which one views an episode, incident or circumstance. It influences the kind and weighting of evidence considered and used in the analysis, if not the framework of the analysis itself. As Young has put it, ". . . the very existence of criteria of selection, conceptual frameworks, and systems of classification inevitably exerts

[93] Arthur J. Vidich, "Participant Observation and the Collection and Interpretation of Data." George J. McCall and J.L. Simmons, eds., Issues in Participant Observation (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1969), 86.

an influence toward prejudging and shaping the outcomes of analysis."[94] Nonetheless, the conduct of inquiry, says Kaplan, depends upon the manner in which one reaches one's conclusions in assessing that evidence. Facts must be given a hearing, with conclusions supported by those facts, not arrived at prior to and maintained independently of them. In short, freedom from bias means "having an open mind, not an empty one."[95]

ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 outlines the purpose and nature of the study, giving particular attention to its theoretical framework including the key concepts of public policy, politics, and policy-making, and the way in which the work of John Kingdon, especially, constitutes the essential analytical and interpretive perspective of the study.

Chapter 2 provides the historical background of the study. In more particular terms, the chapter examines the historical development and institutionalization of school divisions and the place of school boards in the governance of elementary and secondary education at the local level. The chapter discusses the events over time which led political actors to conclude that,

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[94] Oran R. Young, Systems of Political Science (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), 11.

[95] Abraham Kaplan, The Conduct of Inquiry: Methodology for Behavioural Science (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1963), 375.

An advantage in having a "view from the inside", one might reasonably argue, is that it not only enhances the ability of the researcher to be engaged more effectively in the conversational aspect of semi-structured interviewing, but also affords the researcher independent and relevant knowledge to make some sense of the data, particularly that generated by interviews. Without that, it can lead to a situation where "...more often than not, the interviewer-student does not have enough background, enough knowledge, and enough sensitized imagination to catch the subtleties and complexities of what the interviewee is saying."
Dexter, *supra*, 19.

both fiscally and educationally, the *status quo* as developed from the late 1950s was not sustainable in Manitoba by 2001. This context is essential in order to support Kingdon's hypothesis that problem identification, problem understanding, and consideration of the problem as defined are critical requirements within the policy formulation and decision-making process.

Based on primary sources and interview data, Chapters 3 and 4 provide an analysis and interpretation of the policy decisions taken by the Filmon and Doer Governments, especially why they took the decisions they did at the point in time when they made them. Based on interviews with key political and bureaucratic actors, the two chapters more fully elaborate upon Kingdon's hypothesis by considering the amalgamation initiative within his conceptual framework of three key elements: problem, policy (solutions), and politics. What were the problems identified by these individuals which suggested that, in their estimation, the existing governance arrangements for elementary and secondary education could not be sustained? Second, why was amalgamation settled upon as the policy mechanism which would address, or at least might be seen to address, the deficiencies represented by the *status quo*? Did a number of external determinants presage an amalgamation outcome? A brief review of school division amalgamation from a pan-Canadian and international perspective suggests that it was the "in vogue" solution, with its implementation a likely but not inevitable occurrence in Manitoba. Third, the chapters will consider the interplay of politics and policy in the different decisions each government made with respect to amalgamation. Were there some political calculations taken by

both governments in determining whether or not to proceed with amalgamation? What were those considerations, and how had the landscape changed between 2001 and only a few years prior when the previous Progressive Conservative administration had contemplated amalgamation following release of the report of the Boundaries Review Commission? Why were the recommendations of that report, particularly in sharply reducing the number of divisions and redrawing their boundaries, not followed by either the Filmon Government or the Doer Government? What favoured mandatory but selective consolidation by the NDP government? Under both governmental regimes, what was the disposition and role of key political actors in advancing their ideas onto the government agenda?

In Chapter 5, a summary of the findings of the study and any warranted conclusions are provided along with a discussion of the major implications of the study for research, theory, and the practical world of public policy-making and administration.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

> "There are two basic rules that all governments should follow in trying to resolve the issues of the day: First, make sure there actually is a problem that needs fixing; second, don't come up with a solution that is worse than the original problem."
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> "Sensible solution"
> Winnipeg Free Press
> June 25, 1996

It was with this fundamental premise in mind that the editorial board of the *Winnipeg Free Press* applauded the Filmon Government's decision not to act upon the recommendations of the Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission to reduce the number of school divisions in the province. The "real" problems in education, suggested this media outlet, did not rest with the configuration of division boundaries in Winnipeg and across Manitoba. Nor would the modest financial savings from the amalgamation "solution" compensate for the significant disruption which would undoubtedly result from an alteration in the arrangements for educational governance and administration. As the *Free Press* had opined a few years previously, "among Manitoba's 100 gravest education problems, the Winnipeg school division boundaries must be 101st."[96]

Yet, for all of the scepticism as voiced in the opinion pieces of a leading Manitoba newspaper, the issue of school division boundaries was indeed

[96] "A non-problem," Winnipeg Free Press, January 23, 1992, A6.

deemed a “problem” by successive provincial governments. It had been a subject of debate in the 1990 provincial election, warranting the expenditure of several hundred thousand taxpayer dollars in the creation of a Commission in the mid-1990s to examine it and leading, ultimately, by legislative fiat in 2002, to a reduction in the number of school divisions from 54 to 37.

Recognition of a “problem” is, as Kingdon suggests, one of three major elements of government agenda setting. There must be a perception on the part of key political figures that a particular policy issue requires government attention. What occurred, over time, which eventually convinced political leaders that the administrative structure in place since the late 1950s for elementary and secondary education in Manitoba was not sustainable in its current form? What were the major factors that precipitated a two-stage development which ultimately altered that administrative structure, those stages being the establishment by the Filmon Government of the Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission in 1993 and the amalgamation announcement of the Doer Government in 2001?

This chapter provides a brief historical overview of the governance system for public education in Manitoba from the establishment of one-room school districts through to the institutionalization of the modern school division/district in the 1960s. It reflects Kingdon’s argument that a necessary precondition for something to be placed on the government agenda for decision and action is problem identification. Finally, this chapter examines the factors at play in public education through the 1990s and early years of the new millennium which

combined to focus the attention of decision makers such that it was agreed that a "problem" existed which had to be addressed.

SCHOOL DISTRICT CONSOLIDATION: 1890-1967

From the time of dissolution of Manitoba's dual system of education (Protestant and Catholic) in 1890, to the creation of unitary school divisions in 1967, the provision of education had been organized on the basis of small school districts. Those districts were, as Bergen has written, "essentially an expedient unit of school administration making possible an educational service to pioneer communities."[97] The province had constitutional responsibility for education, and set broad educational policy, while management of schools rested with local authorities. Manzer writes that the model of educational governance developed in western Canada contained four elements: small school districts, comprising the attendance area of an elementary school, with three residents elected as local trustees; financing primarily derived from local property taxation; provincial regulation of curriculum, licensing of teachers, and inspection of schools; and small provincial grants to assist in the development of local schools.[98] There were, by the 1950s, approximately 1,700 small school districts operating in Manitoba, usually served by single schools and most covering a geographic territory of roughly twenty-five square miles. These districts had, consonant with the philosophy of local autonomy in the provision of education, authority over

[97] John Jacob Bergen, "School District Reorganization in Rural Manitoba" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alberta, 1967), 99.
[98] Manzer, *supra*, 87.

their governance, financing, school construction and maintenance, and recruitment and retention of school personnel.

Thomas Fleming has argued that embedded within this model of shared functions between central and local authorities was a progressivist notion that a state of social equilibrium could be ensured by fostering a strong central (provincial) role in education. Social disorganization, criminality, illiteracy and moral decay could be prevented, or at least minimized, if the state played a coordinating role in ensuring that all classes of children received an adequate education.

> Public confidence in the importance of state control, which became a hallmark of the nineteenth century, was expressed in the kinds of educational policies developed at the provincial level. With few exceptions, state authorities prescribed a common, provincially-controlled curriculum, and developed systems in which textbooks were selected and purchased centrally. Provincial authorities, likewise, assumed responsibility for drawing school district boundaries, limiting tax levies, determining criteria to open and close schools, and making provincial grants conditional on the favourable reports of provincial inspectors who patrolled both city and rural schools on behalf of education departments. Under such policies, schooling, which for centuries had been viewed as a parental right and responsibility, became a matter of state interest in less than a generation. Opposition to such control, and to the monopolization of education by the state, was viewed by early school advocates as resistance to social and educational reform and, indeed, to the very notion of national development itself.[99]

While structured to reflect the sanctity of local autonomy in education, the quality of schooling provided by these school districts varied considerably around the province, and particularly in rural areas. Attendance was often very low,

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[99] Thomas Fleming, "Provincial Initiatives to Restructure Canadian School Governance in the 1990s" (1997), 11, Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, 3. See also Manzer, Public Policies and Political Development in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 120-122.

transportation arrangements for conveying children to school haphazard or non-existent, and the state of physical facilities dependent upon the generosity (or parsimony) of district ratepayers. Local property taxation provided between 80-90% of the revenue base available to school districts for their operation, and the quality of buildings and accessibility to books, resource materials and equipment was contingent upon the level of financial support of ratepayers.

As Shepherd notes, even as early as 1911 some rural trustees were complaining of "short-sighted, tight-fisted ratepayers unwilling to pay the average 25% increase in school taxes from $20 to $25 per quarter section [of land]."[100] An Education Commission struck in 1924 stated that it was apparent that "the most urgent educational problem in Manitoba was that of the rural district."[101] While Department of Education Annual Reports make mention of several school districts which were doing an admirable job of building and maintaining schools, the quality of education being offered was always a chronic concern due to poor enrolment, meagre teacher wages and low retention rates of staff. The frustration of one Department Inspector was evident when he wrote, in 1927, of questionable judgment exercised locally regarding the allocation of resources:

> The mention of equipment suggests the necessity of setting some minimum standard equipment for the rural school. It is a common experience to find rural schools where the trustees could scarcely be induced to buy crayons and supply sufficient balckboard [*sic*] space; where, under the persuasion of traveling salesmen, the trustees have signed orders of from $100 to $200 or more to be invested in superfluous quantities of charts and maps. Enough money has been misspent for this purpose in this division to rectify the lighting and ventilation of all the improperly built schools in the territory.[102]

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[100] Heather Shepherd, "School Consolidation in Manitoba" (1988), 15, 2, MAST, 27.
[101] Bergen, *supra*, 136.
[102] Manitoba, Department of Education, Annual Report 1927-28, 75.

Even into the 1950s, Department Inspectors were writing of poor heating in rural schools, a paucity of library facilities, lack of equipment for science labs and playgrounds, and the high number of “permit” (as opposed to fully certified) teachers employed in most rural districts.

Consolidation of school districts, as a means of enlarging the local tax base and thus enhancing the ability of trustees to provide better physical facilities and equipment, thereby improving teacher wages (and thus, presumably, their quality), reducing student drop-out rates and increasing overall attendance, was seen by the provincial government as a desirable option very early on. In 1902, *The Public Schools Act* was amended to allow for the merging of two or more school districts under one board of trustees. As an incentive to do so, an establishment grant of up to $500 was made available from the province to districts which chose to join together. By 1916, 72 consolidated school districts were in existence, each double the geographic size of the districts upon their original creation.[103]

In 1945, *The Public Schools Act* was again amended to allow for the establishment of “large area” educational units (lands contained in one or more municipalities). The legislation followed upon recommendations from the Special Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly on Education, created in 1944. In its consideration of the administration and financing of the public school system, and of the steps necessary to improve equalization of educational opportunity throughout Manitoba, the Committee suggested that the creation of larger school administration units with a broader tax base would improve quality of and access

[103] Bergen, *supra*, 102-103; Shepherd, *supra*, 27.

to education (particularly at the secondary level). In 1947, the Dauphin-Ochre School Area No. 1 was established. No other rural areas acted upon the recommendation, presumably due to fears over loss of local autonomy and local school control, reduced home and school interaction, and high implementation costs.[104]

Wilson has characterized the period between 1916 and 1959 as one of educational stagnation in Manitoba. He ascribes this to several factors, most notably on the era of coalition or non-partisan government which dominated the politics of the province during that time. That form of government, he contends, was fixated on fiscal management and loathe to take direct action in matters educational which might be regarded as politically disputatious. As he writes:

> The basic reasons for the government's failure to provide leadership were essentially political and social. . . . [T]he governments after 1922 were overly devoted to economy; their thinking was dominated by the attitudes of a rural society which had suffered a long depression. When economic conditions improved, the government's mode of thought was incapable of change. With limited views of democracy and a passive role of government, and, above all, a legislature whose membership was heavily weighted in favour of the rural areas of the province, it is not surprising that the government provided no educational leadership. Through its failure to do so, the state of education in the province increasingly became a matter of political contention. . . .[105]

By the late 1950s, however, a climate of change in expectations had come to Manitoba. Henley and Young write that "Manitobans, like most other Canadians, were swept into the rising tide of public opinion which ultimately

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[104] Manitoba, Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission Report (November 1994), 15. For a very good, detailed examination of the gradual movement toward consolidation of school districts in Manitoba from 1871 to 1967, see Bergen, *supra*, particularly chapters 4 and 5.

[105] Keith Wilson, "The Development of Education in Manitoba" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1967), 388.

determined that a completed secondary education was essential to success in life. This new universal expectation brought with it a demand that public education be provided fairly to all children."[106] Although Manitoba's population had grown considerably in more than fifty years, the province had gone through two bloody world wars, and technology and infrastructure had improved over time, the governance arrangements for public education were still rooted in the model from the 1890s. Several hundred small school districts continued to operate, providing a quality of education which varied considerably across the province, and offering uneven access to secondary education.[107] Shepherd suggests that:

> . . . the reason for this near-stagnation is simple: although the government firmly believed in the benefits of larger administrative units, many rural trustees opposed moves towards consolidation. No government that had to depend on a legislature dominated by rural members could ignore this fact. Many reasons for this opposition have been suggested – fear of increasing school costs, fear of loss of local school control, and a belief in the virtue of the small school chief among them. Clearly, a change in perception would have to precede a change in structure.[108]

The provincial government of Douglas Campbell, "provoked by a public revelation of the shockingly bad examination results of most rural high schools in

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[106] Dick Henley and Jon Young, "An Argument for the Progressive Possibilities for Public Education: School Reform in Manitoba" in John P. Portelli and R. Patrick Solomon, eds., The Erosion of Democracy in Education (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, Ltd., 2001), 305.

[107] "During this period [1916-1959], the fundamental dichotomy between the urban and rural school systems became more pronounced. The practical solution to the problems of the rural schools would have been the formation of larger administrative units such as already existed in the urban centres; and the failure to establish these units inevitably precluded the solution of other educational problems such as the lack of alternative curricula and the inability to attract and retain qualified teachers in the rural schools."
Gregor and Wilson, *supra*, 134.

[108] Shepherd, *supra*, 28. See also Gregor and Wilson, *supra*, 84.

the annual provincial examinations,"[109] appointed a Royal Commission on Education in July, 1957. Its terms of reference were broad: to study and report on all aspects of education in Manitoba, up to the university level. A five-member panel was named, to be led by a former deputy minister of Education, Dr. R.O. MacFarlane.

The Commission issued an interim report in 1958 and a final report in 1959. It concluded that while the system of small school districts was well adapted to the needs of a pioneer community in which autonomy was the natural result of a limited capacity for communications and interaction, the idea of "community" had now extended beyond its initial meaning. "It is more apparent than ever", suggested the Commission in its final report, "that some substantial changes in the organization of our school districts must be made if the children of the Province are to be provided with anything approaching equality of educational opportunity."[110]

The Commission noted the main arguments for and against the establishment of larger administrative units. The concerns over possible increased costs, loss of local autonomy, and closure of small schools, were all described. The Commission concluded that while there was likely a degree of validity to each of the arguments, for and against consolidation, in its estimation the *status quo* could not prevail:

> A review of the evidence, however, has led the Commission to conclude that some form of larger administrative unit is essential to provide the necessary educational services, and to assure an equitable incidence of taxation to support these services. The

[109] W.L. Morton, Manitoba: A History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), 481.
[110] Manitoba, Report of the Royal Commission on Education (1959), 22.

> desirability of a division large enough to provide a satisfactory attendance unit for the secondary grades is particularly apparent. The necessity of making provision for secondary education for all is evident. This can only be done by altering the present system in which the local districts have neither the pupils nor the financial resources within their own boundaries to provide adequate, or in most cases even any, secondary facilities.[111]

The Commission, both in its interim report (1958) and final report (1959), recommended the establishment of an administrative system which placed responsibility for secondary education under the auspices of larger school division boards, but left elementary education to individual school district boards. To establish those school divisions, the Commission suggested 50-60 such entities, with their boundaries established following the recommendations of a provincial boundaries commission. Once that had occurred, a vote should be held within each of the proposed new jurisdictions to determine if resident electors were in favour of its formation. If yes, an establishment order would be made by the Minister formally bringing the new divisional entity into existence.

The election of June 1958 brought to power a party which regarded education reform as a prime objective. The new Progressive Conservative premier, Duff Roblin, had surveyed the state of public education in the province and, as he subsequently described it, “the best that could be said is that it might have met the educational needs of Manitoba students of the 1930s. . . . Rural high schools in those days were too small to offer an adequate variety of instruction for the children they served and, understandably, attendance was low. The contrast with urban high schools was stark. Equality of educational

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[111] *Ibid*., 23.

opportunity in the province was an illusion."[112] In the fall of 1958, the Roblin Government acted upon the Commission's recommendations and passed legislation creating an independent School Divisions Boundaries Commission; calling a date for local elections on the proposed boundaries; giving the Minister authority to establish school divisions upon return of a favourable vote; for matters related to financing, and the division of powers and duties between division and district boards; and determination of matters related to assignment of assets and liabilities.

A boundaries review commission, headed by Mr. Justice Alfred Monnin, was immediately established, held 92 public hearings to discuss issues such as size, assessment, wards, student population, and local social customs, and recommended to the government that forty-six divisions be created. Its report of January 13, 1959, provided a name for each proposed division, its boundaries, ward boundaries, balanced assessment, and the number of trustees.

In writing on that period the historian Morton was critical of the government's decision not to make school divisions responsible for both elementary and secondary education, and to proceed via local plebiscite rather than imposition of legislation through the Legislative Assembly. The government, he contended, was content "to do its leading from the rear", the result of which "was the expression of every kind of local and personal obstruction, including that of school trustees who were afraid of losing their petty authority, great financial

[112] Duff Roblin, Speaking for Myself: Politics and Other Pursuits (Winnipeg: Great Plains Publications, 1999), 113-114.

waste, and the loss of much of the good actually attempted."[113] Morton's criticisms seem unwarranted for at least two reasons. His dismissal of the plebiscite as a means of gaining public support for the consolidation initiative flew in the face of the engrained tradition of local autonomy in education which had flourished in Manitoba since its entry into Confederation.[114] It is doubtful that any government, regardless of political stripe or legislative strength, would have been willing to endure the negative reaction which would surely have resulted had the Legislature imposed a divisional structure on education after several decades of small-scale local control.

Secondly, given that in 1959 rural constituencies claimed thirty-seven of the fifty-seven seats in the Legislature, it is hard to contemplate how the Roblin Government could have, even had it wanted to, imposed an education governance structure upon the province, the implications of which would have been most profoundly felt outside of Winnipeg. Given the emotional nature of the issue and the political realities of the day, the proposed split in responsibilities between divisions and districts, and use of the plebiscite to determine public acceptance of divisional boundaries and governance, must have seemed the most democratic, and pragmatic, way to proceed.

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[113] Morton, *supra*, 486, 499. Christopher Dunn disagrees with Morton's assessment. In writing about the Cabinet decision-making process in Manitoba during the Roblin era, he argues that Premier Roblin proceeded with consolidation of "the archaic system of small school divisions, even at considerable political cost to himself and his Conservative party."
Dunn, *supra*, 110.

[114] As Roblin himself has written, "This process [plebiscite] was an exercise in direct democracy, but I would recommend it be reserved for special occasions such as this where local concerns were deeply involved. There is a place in our system for votes of this kind. This is particularly true when the issue is one of high local sensitivity where broad policies may conflict with legitimate local concerns."
Roblin, *supra*, 115.

Inspectors with the Department of Education played a key role in both the work of the Boundaries Review Commission and in the subsequent local votes. They conducted an "aggressive and tireless campaign,"[115] assisting the Commission in the organization of local hearings and arranging for speakers to attend meetings in many school districts to promote the advantages of consolidation. As the Chief Inspector, R.W. Lightly, wrote in the Department's Annual Report of 1959, "it is difficult to imagine how this great educational change could have been brought about in such a short time unless the experience and ability of the inspection staff had not been utilized to the full extent."[116]

The vote on February 27, 1959 occurred in 36 of the proposed 46 school divisions. 47.5% of eligible voters in those areas cast ballots, with 69% of the ballots overall favouring the proposed divisional structure. Translated at the individual divisional level, the consolidation initiative carried in 32 of the 36 divisions. Establishment orders were passed in those 32 divisions, as well as in Winnipeg, St. Boniface, Norwood, St. James, and Flin Flon. Votes were deferred in Fort Garry, Kelsey, St. Vital, River West and Dauphin-Ochre. By June 30, 1959, forty school divisions were in full operation, each with responsibility for secondary-level education.[117]

In 1963, a Royal Commission on Local Government Organization and Finance was created, headed by Roland Michener. The role of the Commission

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[115] Bergen, *supra*, 141. Bergen indicates that Inspectorate staff and other Department of Education officials attended 714 local meetings across the province prior to the 1959 vote. *Ibid*., 186.
[116] Manitoba, Department of Education, Annual Report 1959, 53.
[117] *Ibid*., 21.

was to consider, and report to the Roblin Government, on the powers, functions and responsibilities of various classes of local government; their financial structure in light of current and developing responsibilities; the burden of local government on taxpayers; and the division of responsibilities between local governments and the province.

In its report of 1964, the Commission stated that in spite of the effort to consolidate responsibility for secondary schools under school divisions, elementary schools were "largely unchanged from the horse and buggy days in which they had been built." There were still more than 1,500 district school boards, of which 978 were responsible for a school of one room, one teacher, and few pupils distributed over eight grades.[118] The Commission concluded that for reasons of improving educational quality and to simplify the financial arrangements for both the Department of Education and municipalities, school divisions should assume financial and general administrative responsibility for elementary as well as secondary education.

The groundwork for further centralization of responsibility within the divisional administrative structure was being laid. In 1966, legislation was passed allowing division boards, upon favourable vote, to assume responsibility for elementary education. The most notable aspect of the legislation was the authority granted to the Minister of Education to call a referendum in a local jurisdiction if fifty percent of elementary boards in a division had voluntarily handed over that responsibility, or if twenty percent of resident electors in a

[118] Manitoba, Report of the Manitoba Royal Commission on Local Government Organization and Finance (1964), 63.

division petitioned for a referendum, or the Minister, in his discretion, concluded that a referendum should be held.[119]

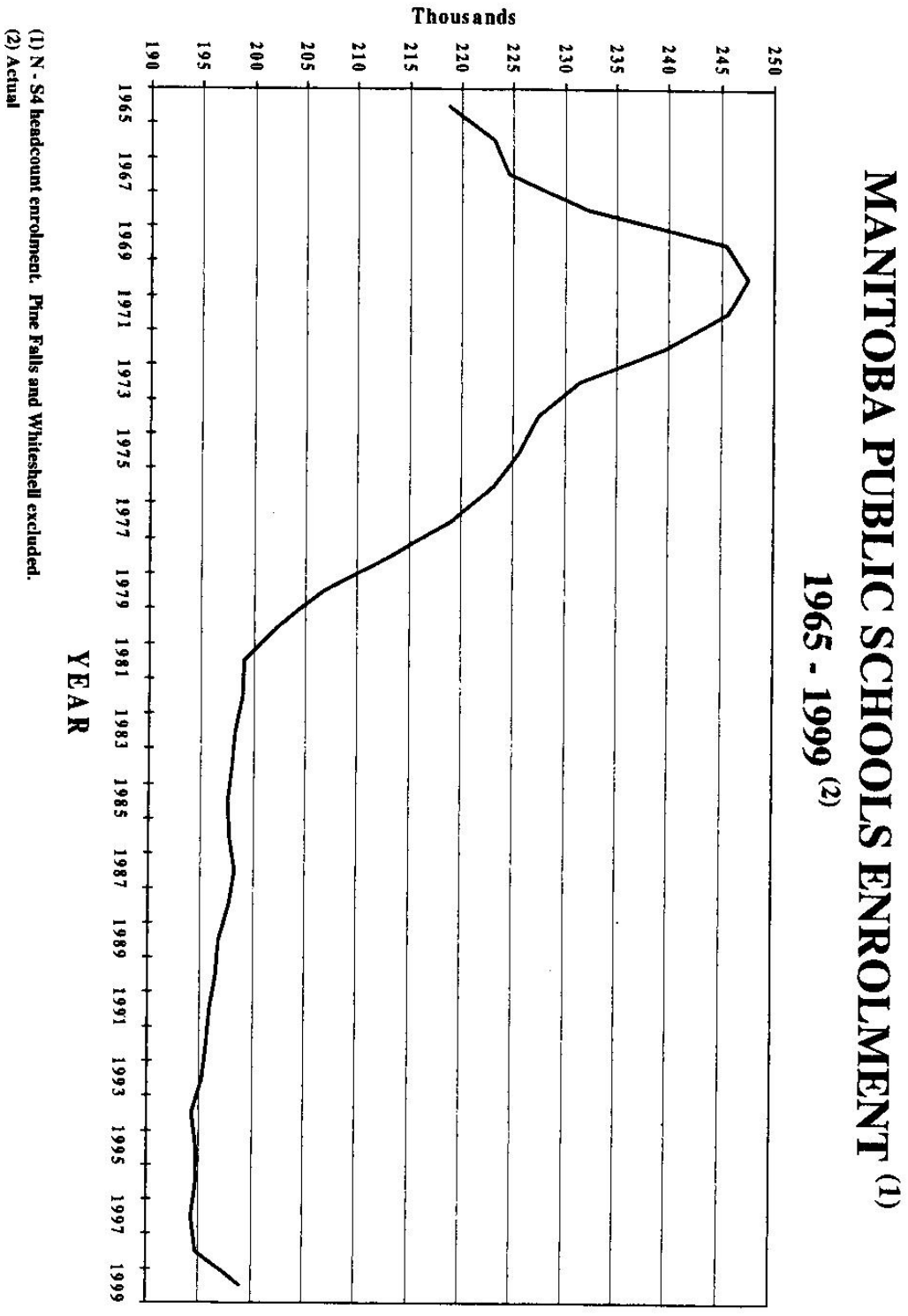
The Minister of Education, Honourable George Johnson, ordered referenda to be held throughout the province in March, 1967. The results were, from government's perspective, less than completely satisfactory: a favourable vote was achieved in only 14 of 33 divisions. However, as a result of petitions from resident electors in twelve of the divisions where the consolidation proposal had failed, a second vote was held in December of that same year. It won majority support in eleven of the twelve. By the end of the 1960s, then, more than 90% of Manitoba's student population was housed within unitary school divisions responsible for elementary and secondary education. The transformation from more than two thousand small school districts to fewer than sixty school divisions/districts was complete. For the next forty years, with very modest adjustments, the administrative terrain of public education in Manitoba would remain largely unchanged.

THE ROOTS OF AMALGAMATION: 1970-1999

By 1970, student enrolment (Grades 1-12) in public schools had peaked in Manitoba, reaching 247,452. Thereafter, and continuing through to 1999 (and to present day), enrolment levels began to decline steadily (see Figure 3, next page). Some school divisions saw local enrolment hold steady or increase modestly, but the majority of divisions/districts experienced gradual erosion in student count and some saw a rather precipitous decline. By the time the

[119] Shepherd, *supra*, 30.

FIGURE 3



Source: FRAME Report 1999/2000 Actual, Manitoba Education, Training and Youth

Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission was established in 1993, provincial enrolment had decreased from 247,452 in 1970 to 196,195, a drop of 21%. By 1999, toward the end of the Filmon administration, provincial enrolment levels were at 199,419 (see Table 1, below).[120]

TABLE 1

ENROLMENT COMPARISONS
1970 – 1999

	Enrollment		
School Division/ District	**1970**	**1999**	**Change**
Winnipeg No. 1	47,907	33,658	-30%
St. James-Assiniboia No. 2	20,425	9,594	-53%
Assiniboine South No. 3	4,010	6,899	+72%
St. Boniface No. 4	8,958	6,051	-32%
Fort Garry No. 5	6,291	7,434	+18%
St. Vital No. 6	7,588	9,320	+23%
Norwood No. 8 (1)	3,110	-	-
River East No. 9	12,730	13,521	+6%
Seven Oaks No. 10	6,731	9,036	+34%
Lord Selkirk No. 11	5,189	4,922	-5%
Transcona-Springfield No. 12	8,569	8,683	+1%
Agassiz No. 13	4,400	3,618	-18%
Seine River No. 14	4,223	3,750	-11%
Hanover No. 15	4,531	5,934	+31%
Boundary No. 16	1,632	793	-51%
Red River No. 17	2,140	548	-74%
Rhineland No. 18	1,910	1,763	-8%
Morris-Macdonald No. 19	2,026	5,773	+285%
White Horse Plain No. 20	1,854	1,023	-45%
Interlake No. 21	3,246	3,634	+12%
Evergreen No. 22	3,466	1,831	-47%
Lakeshore No. 23	2,747	1,479	-46%
Portage la Prairie No. 24	5,520	3,884	-30%
Midland No. 25	2,357	1,714	-27%
Garden Valley No. 26	2,130	2,866	+34%
Pembina Valley No. 27 (2)	1,479	-	-
Mountain No. 28	2,070	1,000	-52%
Tiger Hills No. 29 (2)	2,052	-	-

[120] This "spike" was primarily from students taking secondary-level programming through Adult Learning Centres (ALCs) being included in the enrolment count. This was particularly evident in the enrolment numbers in The Morris-Macdonald School Division No. 19 (see Table 1). As at September 2000, when enrolment in ALCs was separated out of the provincial summary, there were 192,299 students enroled in public schools.

	Enrollment		
School Division/ District	**1970**	**1999**	**Change**
Pine Creek No. 30	2,398	1,426	-41%
Beautiful Plains No. 31	2,461	1,767	-28%
Turtle River No. 32	2,248	903	-60%
Dauphin-Ochre No. 33	3,571	1,958	-45%
Duck Mountain No. 34	2,058	776	-62%
Swan Valley No. 35	3,425	2,075	-39%
Intermountain No. 36	2,950	1,166	-61%
Pelly Trail No. 37	2,592	1,046	-60%
Birdtail River No. 38	2,873	1,329	-54%
Rolling River No. 39	4,016	2,346	-42%
Brandon No. 40	8,605	7,873	-9%
Fort la Bosse No. 41	3,165	1,788	-44%
Souris Valley No. 42	1,700	1,214	-29%
Antler River No. 43	1,870	893	-52%
Turtle Mountain No. 44	2,609	1,466	-44%
Kelsey No. 45	2,643	1,936	-27%
Flin Flon No. 46	2,686	1,645	-39%
Western No. 47	1,321	1,572	+19%
Frontier No. 48	5,969	5,818	-3%
Division scolaire franco-manitobaine No. 49	-	4,524	-
Prairie Spirit No. 50	-	1,976	-
SUB-TOTAL	**238,399**	**194,240**	**-19%**
Remote School Districts			
Churchill No. 2264	917	214	-77%
Snow Lake No. 2309	508	271	-47%
Lynn Lake No. 2312	792	234	-71%
Mystery Lake No. 2355	4,156	3,551	-15%
Sprague No. 2439	319	153	-52%
Leaf Rapids No. 2460	-	327	-
SUB-TOTAL	**6,692**	**4,750**	**-29%**
Special Revenue Schools			
Pointe du Bois No. 1696 [3]	34	-	-
Pine Falls No. 2155	384	153	-60%
Camp Shilo No. 2316 [4]	1,292	-	-
Whiteshell No. 2408	651	276	-58%
SUB-TOTAL	**2,361**	**429**	**-82%**
GRAND TOTAL	247,452	199,419	-19%

Sources: Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission Report (November 1994), 50-51; Manitoba Education and Training, Enrolment and Transported Pupils Report (September 30, 1999), 7-8.

[1]The Norwood School Division No. 8 was dissolved and amalgamated with The St. Boniface School Division No. 4 in 1998.

[2]The Pembina Valley School Division No. 27 and The Tiger Hills School Division No. 29 amalgamated in 1998 to form The Prairie Spirit School Division No. 50.

[3]The School District of Pointe du Bois No. 1696 no longer operational.

[4]The School District of Camp Shilo No. 2316 was dissolved and amalgamated with The Brandon School Division No. 40 in 1994.

Table 1 provides an enrolment comparison, by division/district, between 1970 and 1999. Divisions which experienced growth were primarily urban (Winnipeg) and surrounding environs, while rural and northern divisions/districts saw steep declines (most notably the remote and special revenue school districts, and divisions such as Red River, Intermountain, Turtle River, Pelly Trail, Birdtail River, and Antler River – see Appendix 11 for map reference). This pattern of growth in some areas of the province, and depopulation in others, was seen to be consistent with a longer-term trend which predicted, through to 2016, growth in Winnipeg, South Interlake, Southeast and South Central Manitoba, but declines in the Southwest, Parklands, North Central and Northern regions.[121]

Declining enrolments in rural divisions were proving increasingly difficult for local school boards to manage on a couple of related fronts. First, as provincial funding to divisions is driven by enrolment, a lower student count meant reductions in base provincial support. Fewer students and less funding would, eventually, lead to smaller staffing levels, which in turn made it problematic for boards to continue to provide a broad range of educational programming. A reduction in a school's teaching complement had implications, particularly at the high school level, for the availability of subject specialty areas beyond the minimum core, compulsory course offerings. Concerns over equitable access to programming across Manitoba were expressed by parents and some education stakeholder groups, particularly the Manitoba Teachers'

[121] Manitoba, Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission Report (November 1994), 41.

Society (MTS). In its brief to the Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission, MTS wrote:

> Scale greatly influences scope of education program and service delivery by Manitoba public school divisions and districts. Today, divisions which benefit from economies of scale can provide more enriched learning conditions for students, and offer more stable and enabling teaching environments for their teachers. Divisions which have lost economies of scale are unable to provide more enriched learning conditions for their students, and offer a less stable, more difficult teaching environment for teachers.
>
> The diseconomies of scale present in most Manitoba school divisions/districts in the opening years of the 1990s have raised barriers to uniform student access to education programs and services throughout the province, and a burden on teachers striving to maintain the equality of education.[122]

The challenge of providing reasonable programming levels and effective educational leadership was not lost on school boards, or on their administrators. The Commission had observed that in most small school divisions, superintendents were struggling to be "all things to all people."[123] That view was reinforced by one superintendent, whose rural division was amalgamated with a neighbour in 2002:

> I took great pains over the years to explain to the board that I had to be a generalist. There were only three administrators in the office: a coordinator of student services, a secretary-treasurer, and a superintendent. Thus everything fell to those three. I, for example, did all the curriculum, the human resources, and all of the administration. And, quite frankly, I felt I did a shoddy job because I didn't have the time to do a good job. As I explained to the board over the years, the best they were going to get was a cursory look at some of the issues, because we don't have that much support in the office. I think they saw that if the number of students was doubled, the tax base doubled, they could effectively see greater specialization.[124]

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[122] *Ibid*., 57. According to Bergen, the MTS had been a consistent advocate of consolidation of school areas to form larger educational/administrative units as far back as 1919. See Bergen, *supra*, 150-153.
[123] *Ibid*., 113.
[124] Interview by author, tape recording, Winnipeg, Manitoba, November 4, 2002.

The second area of concern for school boards, and acutely related to shrinking enrollment and general depopulation, was a diminished tax base to support education. As provincial funding covers only a part of the overall cost of education, the remainder is largely derived through the Special Levy (SL). The special levy is determined by each school board after considering its revenue compared to its budgetary expenditure. School boards, under *The Public Schools Act*, have the authority to levy taxes, and the special levy is assessed on all taxable property, collected on their behalf by each local municipality, and remitted to the school division/district. An aging, and shrinking, population represents fewer ratepayers to collectively shoulder the financial costs of providing local education. As the Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission noted in its report, in 1994 at least twelve school divisions/districts had property assessments of less than $100 million and pupil counts (eight with fewer than 1,000) which made it difficult to provide a full range of education services without a "disproportionate infusion of provincial funds or a very high special levy."[125] By 1999, the special levy mill rate (without including remote school districts) varied across the province from a low of 13.2 to a high of 26.4.[126] For government, too, after 1970 when enrolment peaked, the steady decline in enrolment and corresponding increase in education costs became pressing concerns. While the collectivist bent of the Schreyer and Pawley administrations, and moderate approach of the Filmon Government (relative to

[125] Manitoba, Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission Report (November 1994), 74.
[126] Manitoba, Department of Education, Training and Youth, FRAME Report 1999/2000 Actual, 53.

other provincial Conservative governments) to reducing the role of the state, made Manitoba somewhat different from other provinces in its commitment to maintaining and enhancing social programs,[127] the provincial treasury was nonetheless coming under increased pressure in the 1980s and 1990s to deal with the cost of elementary and secondary education. Previously buoyant economic growth which had allowed the state to expand its activity in and support for education, health care, roads and infrastructure, and other public services, became stagnant.[128] Pressure to contain costs, and a reluctance to increase taxes, forced governments to question the fundamental role of the state and to refocus their priorities:

> In the 1970s, however, the atmosphere began to change. All of the drivers of the expansion of education, and of the public sector generally, altered. As the Baby Boomers moved through the school system, not only did enrollments shrink but the proportion of the population with children in school began to shrink, and other social policy concerns, particularly health care, grew in importance. . . . At the same time, governments began to face serious fiscal problems. The public share of GNP had risen steadily in most countries, and governments became less and less able or willing to tax at the levels required to sustain their operations. Deficits grew larger and larger. The 1970s witnessed periods of high inflation, and when a major recession hit many countries in the early 1980s, government spending and debt became very important political issues. Maintaining existing programs became problematic, and continued expansion vanished from the agenda.[129]

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[127] Henley and Young, *supra*; Levin, Governing Education.

In contrast, Alex Netherton writes that while the early years of the Filmon administration were marked by "moderate, pragmatic incrementalism", owing largely to his party's tenuous grip on power due to the competitive three-party system then existent in Manitoba, by the mid-1990s this had been replaced by a new "neo-Conservative policy paradigm" which drew lessons from the Klein and Harris governments in Alberta and Ontario.
Alex Netherton, "Paradigm and Shift: A Sketch of Manitoba Politics." Keith Brownsey and Michael Howlett, eds., The Provincial State in Canada (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001), 226-230.

[128] For an interesting discussion of parallel problems in education financing and policy-making in other provincial jurisdictions during this period, see R.D. Gidney, From Hope to Harris: The Reshaping of Ontario's Schools (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 165-198, and Alison Taylor, The Politics of Educational Reform in Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 15-33.

[129] Levin, Reforming Education: from origins to outcomes, 8-9.

Manitoba was not immune to these pressures, and by the early 1990s, faced with its own debt, deficit, and expenditure reduction concerns, as well as a commitment to producing balanced provincial budgets, the Filmon Government began to scale back its share of funding support to school divisions. Annual funding announcements provided increases which were less than the rate of inflation, or which represented actual reductions (-2% in the 1993-94 school year, -2.6% in 1994-95, -2% in 1996-97) and a freeze in support in each of the 1995-96 and 1997-98 school years.

While provincial government funding during this period was frozen or reduced, system-wide expenditure levels continued to increase. As salaries and benefits for personnel comprise approximately 80% of divisional budgets, the overall cost of education continued to grow annually, in spite of declining enrolments. To backfill for the reduction in provincial support, local school boards resorted to reductions in staffing levels and increases to their special levy. Table 2 (next page) shows, for the ten-year period leading up to the conclusion of the Progressive Conservative government's tenure in office, the year-over-year increase in total expenditures for education in the K-12 sector.

TABLE 2

Manitoba Educational Funding 1990-91 to 1999-2000 (Operating Budget)

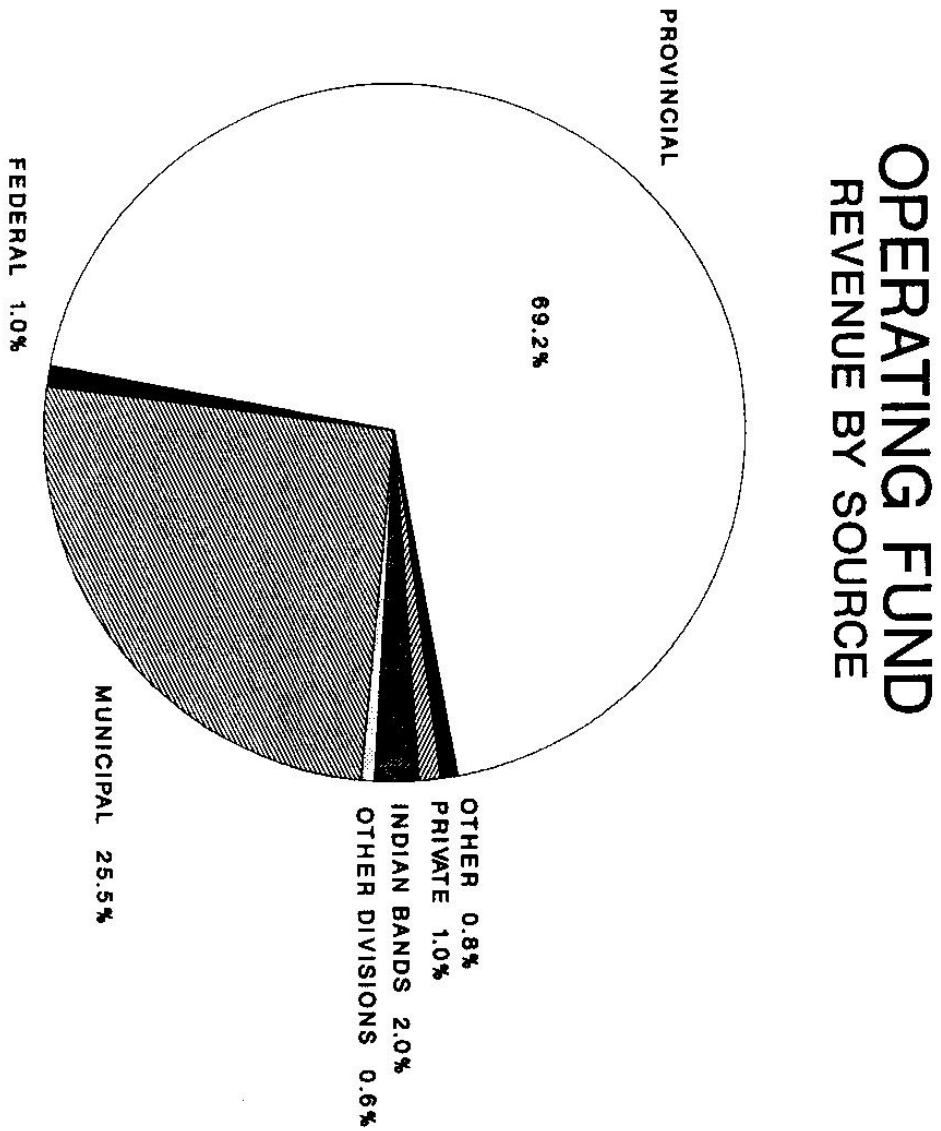
Year	Total Expenditures	Revenue Source	
		Province	Municipal
1999/00	$1,206,460,272	60.9	33.6
1998/99	$1,162,219,630	61.3	33.3
1997/98	$1,126,197,460	62.0	32.5
1996/97	$1,099,345,968	62.9	31.8
1995/96	$1,092,091,491	63.9	30.8
1994/95	$1,090,944,481	65.2	29.4
1993/94	$1,079,367,565	66.4	28.4
1992/03	$1,063,962,693	67.3	27.4
1991/92	$1,024,982,228	67.8	26.7
1990/91	$1,010,550,851	69.2	25.5

Source: Manitoba Education and Training, FRAME Reports (Actual)

The increasing reliance on local property taxation to fund these expenditure levels can be seen from the changing percentage in the revenue source coming from local ratepayers. The shifting share of costs is also demonstrated in Figures 4 and 5 (next pages), which contrast operating revenues by source between 1990/91 and 1999/2000. During that interval, the provincial contribution to the funding of elementary and secondary education declined from 69.2% to 60.9%, with the local (municipal) share rising from 25.5% to 33.6%.

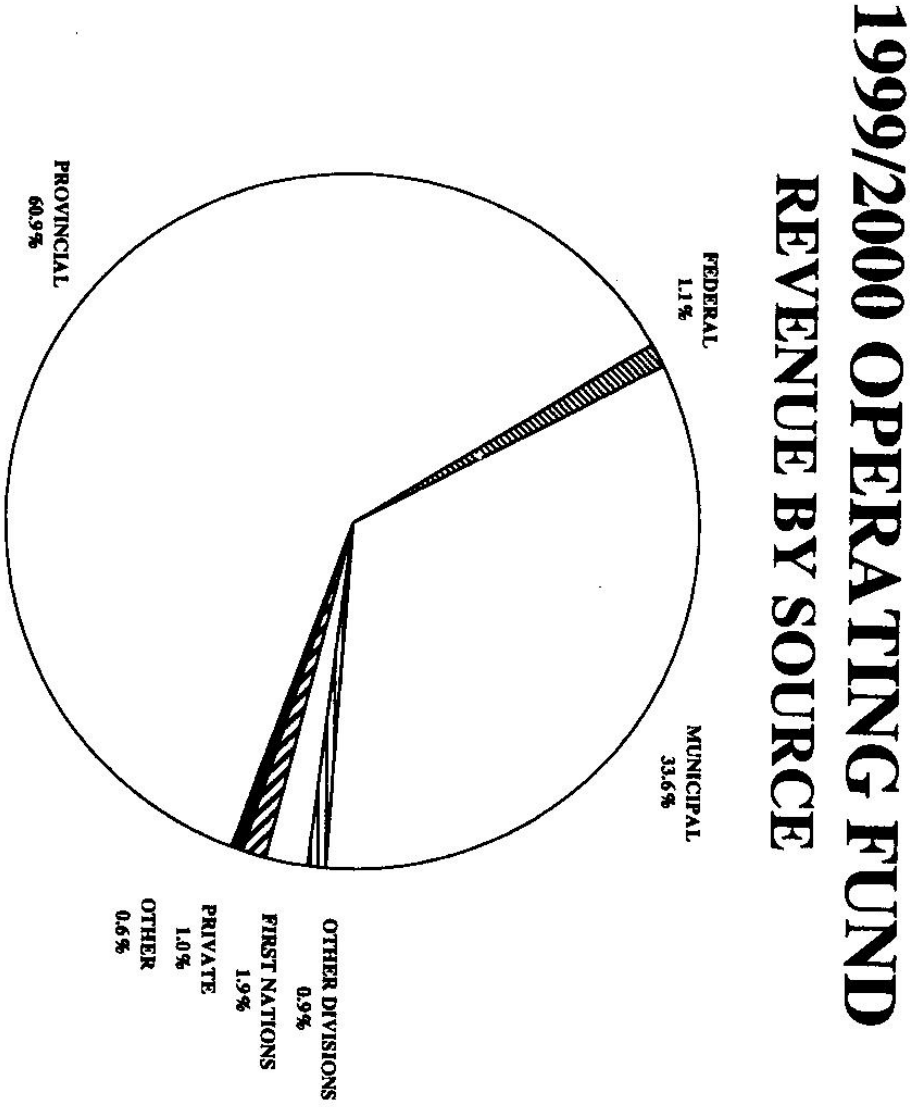
With expenditures rising, and the increasing weight of the fiscal burden being borne by local property taxpayers, consideration of school division amalgamation as a means of reducing or controlling costs began to emerge on the political radar. In the 1990 provincial election campaign a review of division boundaries, with an eye to shrinking the number of divisions, was pressed by the Liberal party. The Liberals were enjoying a brief resurgence after an extended

FIGURE 4



Source: FRAME Report 1990/91 Financials, Manitoba Education and Training

FIGURE 5



Source: FRAME Report 1999/2000 Actual, Manitoba Education, Training and Youth

period of electoral decline since the 1960s and had, leading up to the election, formed the Official Opposition. The party's Education critic announced that, since boundaries had not been examined since 1959, a review was now necessary to "help determine whether taxpayers are getting the most efficient use of their education tax dollars. And at a time when taxpayers are in a state of revolt, a review of boundaries aimed at maximizing efficiency would be welcomed by the public."[130] Party leader Sharon Carstairs similarly declared that, if elected, the Liberals would embark upon a review of school division boundaries. She contended that having eleven school divisions in Winnipeg was unnecessary, particularly when other cities of similar size had far fewer.[131] In response to this Liberal policy plank, Progressive Conservative Education Minister Len Derkach was non-committal, saying that a review might occur but for any reorganization of division boundaries to happen support from teachers, trustees, and superintendent groups would be essential.[132] The Education critic for the New Democratic Party, Jerry Storie (himself a former Minister of Education), was cited in the media for his view that larger divisions would mean a diminution in accountability to parents and would save little money.[133]

Although the editorial staff of the *Winnipeg Free Press* was dismissive of the need for a boundaries review, variously describing it as a "non-issue", "an irrelevancy", and "a major problem only for those people who spend too much of

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[130] Glen MacKenzie, "Fewer school divisions urged by Liberal critic," Winnipeg Free Press, June 27, 1990, 9.
[131] Rene Pollett, "Back to school for Sharon," The Winnipeg Sun, September 5, 1990, 8.
[132] MacKenzie, *supra*.
[133] Glen MacKenzie, "Division consolidation for tax savings touted," Winnipeg Free Press, August 17, 1990.

their time looking at maps,"[134] it was clear that the idea had captured some public interest and the attention of government.

Early the following year, after its re-election in 1990 and having attained majority status in the Legislature, the Filmon Government formally expressed its intention to launch a systematic review of school division boundaries. In the 1991 Speech from the Throne, the government announced that, as part of a package of initiatives to renew the education system, "school boundaries will be reviewed to ensure they reflect today's needs for the effective delivery and the provision of the best possible educational opportunities."[135] A review of boundaries was also included in the Strategic Plan of the Department of Education and Training of that same year.

In a speech to the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities in October, 1991, Minister Derkach outlined the government's intention to "reorganize education" in Manitoba. A review of school division boundaries was a component of that reorganizational process. The need for a review, according to the Minister, was clear: Manitoba had changed considerably since the current configuration of school divisions had been established in the late 1950s. School enrolment patterns in divisions had altered, as had the distribution of those enrolments. Many school divisions, particularly in rural Manitoba, were struggling with a declining enrolment and population base, with nearly half of all divisions operating with fewer than 1,500 students. Municipal boundaries had changed,

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[134] "Skirting the school issues," Winnipeg Free Press, August 23, 1990, 6; "The school boundary issue," Winnipeg Free Press, August 24, 1990, 6.
[135] Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, Debates and Proceedings (Hansard), 2nd Session, 35th Legislature, March 7, 1991.

and many local and provincial services were now being offered along regional (as opposed to municipal) lines. In short, claimed Mr. Derkach, there was a "need to examine how our current system of school divisions and their boundaries affect the ability of our education system to offer and deliver the education Manitobans need to take their place in a highly competitive society."[136]

Despite the Minister's ruminations on the subject, and the Throne Speech announcement, the government's commitment to proceed with a review of boundaries appeared to waver in 1992 as considerable internal discussion became focused on the mandate, scope and implications of a possible review. Should a review be province-wide or confined only to divisions within metropolitan Winnipeg? Through what vehicle should such an examination occur? How would a review be conducted, and possible findings integrated, within other initiatives the Department was undertaking, including a study of education financing, implementation of new high school program requirements (*Answering the Challenge*), and a review of the governance of francophone schools? How would costs associated with a review of boundaries be managed? There was even media speculation that the October 1992 school board elections in Winnipeg might be postponed for a year, pending decisions on the timing, scope and mandate of a review.[137]

Finally, in mid-March, 1992, newly appointed Education Minister Rosemary Vodrey announced that the government would "defer indefinitely, for

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[136] Honourable Len Derkach, speech to the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities (area meetings), October 1991.
[137] Riva Harrison, "School divisions slashed?", The Winnipeg Sun, January 21, 1992, 3.

several years, a school division boundary review."[138] She had, the Minister explained, consulted with many stakeholders who would, appropriately, be involved in a review, gained an understanding of their concerns, and concluded that the education community should not take on any more new challenges at the present time. The Minister's decision was condemned by the provincial Liberals, with party leader Sharon Carstairs asking the government to "explain having 73 trustees in the City of Winnipeg."[139] Both the Manitoba Teachers' Society and Manitoba Association of School Superintendents expressed disappointment, arguing the boundaries needed to be reviewed since several decades had passed since their initial establishment.[140] Only the Opposition New Democratic Party expressed approval of the decision, with Education critic Dave Chomiak quoted as saying "Clearly they have sniffed the wind and realized that the public and school divisions will not tolerate a change at this time."[141]

The indicators which had focused government's attention in 1990 and 1991 on the need for a review of boundaries were, however, still visible. Enrolments continued to shrink, program equity concerns were still being expressed, and expenditure levels were increasing. It was only one year later that the "indefinite deferral" of a review of division boundaries had morphed into a decision to act. On July 20, 1993, Minister Vodrey announced the establishment

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[138] Arlene Bilinkoff, "Tories postpone school division boundaries review," Winnipeg Free Press, March 24, 1992, A7.
[139] Aldo Santin, "School map review gets axe," Winnipeg Free Press, March 18, 1992, A1. The political "sting" of the Liberal leader's criticism was no doubt minimized, however, by the fact that the Conservative government had been returned to power with a majority following the 1990 provincial election, with the NDP assuming the role of Official Opposition and the Liberals once again reduced to third-party status in the Legislature.
[140] *Ibid*.
[141] Bilinkoff, *supra*.

of a five-person commission to hold public hearings throughout the province to consider the configuration of boundaries in view of the technological, demographic and economic changes that had taken place in Manitoba since 1959. "These changes," said the Minister, "have led us to believe that the present system is outdated and that boundaries need to be reviewed so that schools can operate in the most beneficial environment possible."[142] The reason for the apparent *volte-face*, suggested the Minister, was that with sufficient progress having been achieved on a number of other education issues the timing of a boundaries review was now propitious.

For Minister Vodrey, new to a portfolio which had responsibility not only for elementary and secondary education, but for colleges, universities and workforce training as well, amalgamation was but one issue in "a large constellation of issues."[143] As someone heading up the Department with a background working in schools as a clinician, she acknowledged that her focus had been more on the immediate day-to-day issues confronting educators as opposed to the larger public policy issue which amalgamation represented. In order to inform herself on the issue properly, she concluded that a commission to examine amalgamation was necessary:

> I had concerns about proceeding without a full understanding [of amalgamation] and without feeling that I had really put my position forward to him [Premier Filmon]. I needed to know more about the issue and in learning about the issue I had to decide how to proceed with this. As I was looking at the concerns and issues, and the reasons for and against amalgamation, it seemed to me that as Minister of Education I had a responsibility for the whole province. And I had to understand how stakeholders in all areas, including

[142] Stevens Wild, "School mergers expected," Winnipeg Free Press, July 21, 1993, A1.
[143] Interview by author, tape recording, Winnipeg, Manitoba, January 10, 2007.

> how parents and students felt and how they saw the issue. The only way that I felt it could reasonably be accomplished was to set up a commission with the leadership of someone who was very familiar with public policy, knew how to deal with issues of public policy around the province, and so it was determined at that point that we would set up a commission to examine the issue.[144]

The Minister's interest in examining the matter in greater detail meshed, it appears, with the feeling held by the Premier and his inner circle that a review of the number of divisions, and of their boundaries, was necessary. Clayton Manness, who was Minister of Finance at the time, suggests that the impetus for a review of boundaries came from the highest levels within the Progressive Conservative party:

> This [boundaries review] was not a high agenda item of the Caucus, *per se*, or indeed policy of the party. This, from memory, took its driving forces from the Premier and some of the senior people around him. They were convinced in looking at other jurisdictions, and particularly Edmonton and Toronto where there were significant large amalgamations, and we really sensed that our school divisions were top heavy in bureaucratic staff and that there certainly could be savings that were realizable. We also knew that there was an awful lot of protection going on between school divisions. Certainly the first thrust, I think, came more in the mind of the Premier and others than it did within general policy of the party.[145]

Mr. Manness' claim is affirmed by Don Leitch, who served as Clerk of the Executive Council between 1988 and 1999. Provincial governments were wrestling with reductions in federal transfer payments and their own legislated imperatives to operate with balanced budgets. As a consequence, there was a concentrated effort to curtail the rise in expenditures in health care and in education (both at the post-secondary and K-12 levels). Coupled with this was

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[144] *Ibid*.
[145] Interview by author, tape recording, Domain, Manitoba, December 1, 2006.

the recognition by government of the problems being faced by school divisions, particularly in rural areas, due to depopulation. Were the administrative structures put in place in the late 1950s to manage the affairs of school divisions appropriate, relevant and effective for the challenges of the 1990s? As Mr. Leitch described it

> . . . there was a general feeling that every level of government had to participate in this [attempt to curb rising expenditures and to manage spending effectively]. It was an attempt to say "is there some way that expenditures can be controlled at the local level?" And one of them was to look at school division boundaries that go back a long, long time. So the thinking was we've got to be able to examine this, this will help to contribute to the cost of operating school divisions because we can't just keep squeezing schools, teachers, and students. We've got to be taking a look at the administrative side as well, and that included boundaries, the number and size of divisions, the overhead administrative costs of those school divisions. It was all wrapped up into that general feeling that governments had to be more effective in their expenditures.[146]

John Carlyle, who served as Deputy Minister of Education from 1989 to 1999, recalls that, although he would frequently initiate formal discussion about education matters, the amalgamation file was not one of them. Nonetheless, it was an issue that was generating discussion at the political level and did arise during an informal dialogue between the Deputy and the Minister:

> My first recollection of it probably would have been the Minister and I sitting down, talking and saying "you know, we're getting a fair bit of heat to do something about this. We've got 57 divisions in the province, some of them are really small, there are some where the enrollment is less than a thousand, we've got schools in Winnipeg School Division bigger than an entire school division, the tax bases are dwindling, and we just don't think this is sustainable so we are probably going to look into it."[147]

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[146] Leitch interview.
[147] Interview by author, tape recording, Winnipeg, Manitoba, September 21, 2006.

Concerns over the possible political consequences of proceeding with amalgamation, criticism over a lack of public input into such a significant policy decision, or indeed of having a sound public policy rationale upon which to opt toward amalgamation in the first instance, all factored heavily into the government's decision to create a commission. Minister Manness noted that, politically, it was important to develop a process which would be seen as objective:

> I sensed that he [Premier Filmon] felt that there would be an awful lot of potential fallout and that we had to bring forward people of the highest ranking from the community who could not, in their own right, be tarnished therefore tarnishing the whole idea. That, then, was the thinking around it. It was just trying to reduce the political outfall that can come from these decisions.[148]

Mr. Leitch concurred, suggesting that with an issue which was likely to be politically sensitive, a process had to be devised which was seen as objective and not driven by provincial politicians or civil servants who might be suspected of having a political or systemic interest in the outcome. It was also important to put in place a process which might educate the general population around the issues making such a review necessary. A commission, as opposed to direct, immediate government action, was therefore deemed the appropriate vehicle for doing so. As he explained it

> . . . the population at large wasn't quite ready [for amalgamation], they probably needed a little bit of inoculation to get them ready, and so governments do various things when they want to do this. They'll issue a discussion paper or people will make speeches; they'll have information sessions or seminars. When you're getting ready, and it's highly politically sensitive, governments will often times use a task force or a commission, and in this case they decided to go the commission route to go around and have a solid

[148] Manness interview.

> look at it. And it was also driven, in part, to try and say "look, we'll have a commission by someone who is respected, and non-partisan in the sense of not having a stake in education."[149]

Minister Vodrey was of the view that the strength in having a commission was in the time that body could take to research an issue, and to canvass public opinion through the holding of hearings. In this way it would also blunt, to some degree, the influence of interest groups within the education sector:

> Stakeholders have a way of bringing individual pressures to individual Ministers, but when you put a commission in charge of that, a commission to speak to everyone, it is far more objective in my opinion.[150]

For Deputy Minister Carlyle, given the scope of the issue, the establishment of a commission was prudent and reasonable:

> I think when you consider the magnitude of what they [government] were examining, good public policy dictates that it be done through a process that is viewed objectively. So not only must it be objective, it needs to be seen as objective, because to do otherwise looks like a government that is simply trying to do something for political gain and with a lack of consultation. I think, secondly, there was nothing pressing occurring that would have required a government at that time, from a good public policy perspective, to take precipitous action. This was not a crisis. This was not like the [1997] "Flood of the Century". They had time on their side to examine it in all its facets and, Lord knows, it's a complicated issue. It's a very complicated issue all the way from tax bases to locations of schools, to transportation, human resource policies, board policies, hiring practices, teachers' salaries. It's a massive issue. And it required, therefore, in the view of the government, an independent and what I would call a research based consultative process, to uncover all of the issues and the public opinion. And to do that properly required a commission. So they used the legislation [*The Public Schools Act*] that existed to create a commission, gave it [the Commission] the authority to do it, which gave it some majesty, and did it thoughtfully and appropriately, with research and with consultation so that the public could be heard.[151]

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[149] Leitch interview.
[150] Vodrey interview.
[151] Carlyle interview.

The government's decision to establish a commission appeared to garner a favourable response. The *Winnipeg Free Press*, which had consistently expressed its disdain for a review of boundaries, offered qualified approval for the initiative suggesting that, with the impending establishment of the Franco-Manitobaine School Division in early 1994, some of the boundary lines drawn in 1959 to accommodate the location of French-speaking communities could now be changed. The newspaper also offered some advice to the Commission in terms of the basis upon which any of its recommendations should be formed:

> The school divisions have to be large enough to be efficient and small enough to be politically accountable. They have to have taxable property related to the costs arising from their people's education needs. They should group together people and communities who will find some basis for agreeing on the purposes of education.[152]

The decision to proceed with a review also generated a positive response from the Manitoba Teachers' Society. From the Society's perspective, an examination of boundaries, "if properly executed", had the potential to demonstrate how amalgamation of smaller units could lead to stronger educational programs, a broader range of programs and services, better teaching conditions, greater opportunity for teacher mobility and lessened isolation, and the creation of divisions which were more economically and educationally viable.[153]

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[152] "Drawing the lines," Winnipeg Free Press, July 22, 1993, A6.
[153] "Boundary review holds promise," The Manitoba Teacher, September 1993, 1.

THE BOUNDARIES REVIEW COMMISSION: 1993-1995

The Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission was announced on July 20, 1993, and formally established by regulation (M.R. 169/93) on September 7, 1993. The Commission was to be led by the former mayor of the City of Winnipeg, William Norrie. Other members of the Commission were Ian Restall and Brenda Leslie of Winnipeg, Manson Moir of Tilston, and Joan Wright from Thompson. The Executive Director for the Commission was Earl Backman of Brandon.

Mr. Norrie was chosen as chair, said Minister Vodrey, because of his knowledge of the public policy process and because he was a "strong leader", which would allow the Commission to maintain its objectivity.[154] When asked why he came to be selected to the Commission, and as its chair, Mr. Norrie expressed some bemusement:

> I'd had some experience, of course, as chairman of the Winnipeg School Division board for a number of years. And it was time, after I left City Hall, and they were probably looking for someone who didn't have anything to do. But it was a surprise request to me when it came.[155]

Manitoba Regulation 163/93 under *The Public Schools Act* (see Appendix 3) spelled out in detail the Commission's terms of reference, its rules of procedure, term of office, rules for quorum, and the requirement to file interim reports of its proceedings with the Minister of Education and Training. Its mandate was to "study, consult and make recommendations to the Minister of Education and Training on any adjustments in school division/district boundaries

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[154] Vodrey interview.
[155] Interview by author, tape recording, Winnipeg, Manitoba, December 5, 2006.

for the Province of Manitoba". The scope of the Commission's review was as follows:

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.[156]

[156] Manitoba, Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission Report , 2.

The establishment and use of commissions by governments in Canada as a means of receiving, transmitting, and absorbing information and knowledge has a long and venerable history at both the federal and provincial levels. As Wilson has suggested, commissions have performed a number of functions in undertaking their assigned tasks, including: to secure information as a basis for policy decisions; to educate the public in order to create pressure for possible legislation; to permit the airing of conflicting values and to sample public opinion before decisions are actually made; and allow the government to postpone decision-making on issues which could be potentially embarrassing to it.[157]

As a former trustee and municipal politician, Mr. Norrie understood that political considerations were embedded within the government's decision to establish a commission to review the amalgamation question, rather than taking direct action itself. As he explained it:

> The whole topic [amalgamation] had been under discussion for quite a while and governments, when they have a "hot potato", want to try to pass it off to another body and then they can deal with it, in their view, more systematically. . . . The reason we were doing this basically, it seemed to me, it was never defined in words or a mandate or anything, but when a government sets up a commission to do something it's probably because they don't want to make a decision on the issue at that particular point in time. And so we were conscious of that. We felt that our job was to listen to the public, bring out arguments for and against, and then try to come to a consensus amongst us and prepare the best report we could. And it was up to the government to take it or drop it in the wastebasket.[158]

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[157] V. Seymour Wilson, Canadian Public Policy and Administration: Theory and Environment (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1981), 398. For a more recent commentary on the role of royal commissions of economic inquiry in contributing to the development of social learning, and for providing leadership in policy innovation, see Neil Bradford, Commissioning Ideas: Canadian National Policy Innovation in Comparative Perspective (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[158] Norrie interview. One is reminded of the sage advice offered to politicians many years ago regarding the value of having a commission study any vexing issue:

The Commission had an ambitious work plan and traveled extensively throughout the province. It held 58 public hearings and received 318 presentations. An additional 150 written presentations were submitted. A number of studies were commissioned by it, as well, as supporting information.[159] In November 1994, approximately 15 months after it had been established, the Commission issued its report. In it, the Commission reviewed concerns expressed by the public on a number of issues and came forward with forty-three recommendations. Among these were recommendations in the areas of structure of education governance, permeability of boundaries, tuition fees for non-resident students, administration matters, taxation and assessment, and school closures. The Commission expressed concerns about equitable access to basic education programming, particularly in rural Manitoba. It acknowledged that boundary lines often seemed "impenetrable", and could sometimes be impervious to the movement of students back and forth. This created very long bus ride times for students in rural areas, and was a leading cause of student and parental frustration with "the system". The Commission validated the continued existence of locally elected boards of trustees with the authority to tax property (should that remain a source of education funding). It also confirmed

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"If you're pestered by critics and hounded by faction
To take some precipitate, positive action,
The proper procedure, to take my advice, is
Appoint a commission and stave off the crisis."
Punch magazine, August 24, 1955.

[159] The Commission attempted to craft a report which, it felt, fairly reflected opinions heard through the hearings process but which also gave due weight to evidence-based research. To that end, several studies were reviewed, with a number of researchers commissioned to assist in the inquiry. Manitoba, Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission Report, 6-7.

the decline in student enrolment at the provincial level, and the fiscal difficulties of small divisions with low assessment bases.

These observations, although significant in their own right, became ancillary to the main recommendation advanced by the Commission: reconfiguration of school division boundaries and a dramatic reduction in the number of divisions/districts. The Commission suggested to government that, over a three-year period, the number of school divisions be reduced from 57 to 21.[160] That process should be directed, not voluntary, said the Commission, since the opportunity for change to occur on its own had passed:

> While this type of process is more democratic and participatory, it is even more evident that voluntary change very seldom happens. There are no major impediments at the present time preventing divisions from rationalizing on their own. However, stationary inertia and turf protection has preempted any logical rationalizations. This experience is evident across Canada and indeed across North America.[161]

The reduction to 21 divisions, and their particular configuration, would be achieved as follows:

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[160] In a follow-up review conducted in 1995, the Commission revised its recommendation to 22 school divisions by adding another school division in south central/south east Manitoba. Manitoba, Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission, Supplementary Review and Recommendations (November 1995).

[161] Manitoba, Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission Report (November 1994), 158.

In reaching their conclusion to recommend a reduction in the number of school divisions, Mr. Norrie felt that Commission members had heard the "historical echoes" of the earlier MacFarlane Commission of the late 1950s, particularly in the divergence of opinion between urban and rural Manitobans on the issue:

"As I've said, many people were in favour of it [amalgamation]. They thought there were too many boards, they were redundant, and it was expensive. All the classical arguments. And then there were people, more or less in the rural areas, who were really quite anxious about losing their direct control over the school boards. I guess, in many respects, the rural communities saw themselves as being much more hands on in that sense than the urban people. That was not all encompassing but it did come out, the classic view, that in the rural communities they're closer together, they're more involved, they know each other, they know the issues, they know their students, and so forth."

Norrie interview.

- the 10 Winnipeg area school divisions be reduced to 4 using primarily the Red and Assiniboine Rivers as natural boundaries, and integrating St. Norbert, St. Adolphe, Ile-des-Chênes and Lorette areas within the 4 new divisions;
- the 34 divisions and districts beyond Winnipeg (excluding the Franco-Manitobaine, Frontier and Northern divisions) be reduced to 13, these new divisions to follow as closely as possible groupings of municipal boundaries and to incorporate whole existing divisions wherever practical;
- the 7 northern and remote divisions and districts be integrated to form 2 new divisions, with separate financial arrangements and special levy rates in each community, recognizing special contracts that exist with major employers in some centres;
- that Frontier School Division remain essentially unchanged with the exception that Falcon Beach School be transferred to the new South-East School Division;
- the Special Revenue Districts of Pine Falls, Pointe du Bois and Whiteshell be integrated into the new Agassiz-Lord Selkirk School Division with recognition of the special financial arrangements existing at each location;
- the remote school district of Sprague be integrated into the new South-East School Division;
- the Franco-Manitobaine School Division to continue in its existing format.[162]

In urban Winnipeg, the Commission concluded that reducing the number of divisions from ten to four, would achieve significant savings and produce a net educational gain. It would provide a greater opportunity for students to attend schools of choice (by removing the non-resident fee impediment), promote rationalization of specialty programming, provide greater availability of and access to curriculum consultants, drive uniformity of special levy rates, and reduce administrative, trustee, and central board facility costs.

In rural Manitoba, the financial savings to be obtained would be minimal and could, the Commission acknowledged, potentially cost more with harmonization of collective agreements. The socio-economic consequences in smaller communities might also be significant as board offices closed, jobs were

[162] *Ibid*., 132-133.

lost, and families relocated to other towns. The benefits, however, would be primarily educational with the potential for greater rationalization and access to programming, specialization of staff in curriculum and student services, and greater access to clinical services. Financial savings would be achieved through reductions in administrative functions and trustee costs, as the number of positions in both areas would be cut back significantly. The Commission admitted that a reconfiguration of boundaries, particularly in rural areas, would create a high degree of anxiety and fear that naturally comes with change. It was also, however, categorical that change was necessary nonetheless:

> We cannot, however, allow that fear to prevent us from making improvements to our system. We must be bold enough to display strong leadership at a time when ambivalence and stationary inertia are preventing progress.[163]

The luxury of the *status quo* in rural Manitoba was no longer an option, according to the Commission. "Expeditious and clear leadership" on the part of the government was necessary:

> If all existing school boards and school administrations are maintained and student numbers continue to drop as they are presently doing in most rural areas, then the resulting funding will eventually force further cuts at the classroom level. This would have tragic repercussions. In these instances, the consequences of *status quo* would likely be more negative than the consequence of change.[164]

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[163] *Ibid*., 160. Although it believed some financial savings were possible through amalgamation, approximately $4.5 million, Mr. Norrie indicated that this was not the primary focus of the Commission's study: "We made clear that our mandate was not necessarily to save money. Our main concern was to enhance the educational abilities for students." Paul Samyn, "Co-operation may save boards: McIntosh," Winnipeg Free Press, March 28, 1996.

[164] *Ibid*., 121. As Mr. Norrie described it, the Commission believed directed amalgamation was necessary because "if it was left to a voluntary process, first of all, it probably wouldn't happen because the feelings were very strong in many areas that, you know, 'thank you for coming, we're doing okay, and goodbye.' And so the likelihood of it happening in a meaningful way across the province, if it was voluntary, was that it would either take a very, very long time or it wouldn't happen at all." Norrie interview.

SUMMARY AND POSTCRIPT

Kingdon has suggested that for a condition to be defined as a problem, "people must be convinced that something should be done to change it."[165] A problem becomes recognized as such when the following elements are in play: pervasive and powerful indicators; budgetary woes and financial constraints; feedback, especially complaints and advocacy by affected and interested parties; and political pressure. Each of these was evident by the early 1990s when the Filmon Government, after some initial hesitation, opted to establish a Boundaries Review Commission led by Bill Norrie. Quantifiable indicators related to declining enrolment pointed to the ever growing concern over the continuing viability and sustainability of some school divisions, and particularly many in rural Manitoba.[166] Mounting pressures on the provincial treasury enticed policy-makers to cast about for ways of reducing costs, or of at least redirecting resources away from school administration and into classroom supports. Feedback from parents expressing concerns over inadequate program offerings in some divisions, coupled with the advocacy of organizational interests such as the Manitoba Teachers' Society and the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents for what they saw as a long overdue review of division boundaries, resonated with government. Finally, in the 1990 provincial election, the Liberal party had made the review of divisional boundaries a plank in its

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[165] Kingdon, *supra*, 114.

[166] "The countable problem sometimes acquires a power of its own that is unmatched by problems that are less countable."
Kingdon, *ibid*., 93.

campaign platform, compelling both the Progressive Conservative and New Democratic parties to stake out positions in response.

In response to those realities, representations and pressures, the government concluded, by the summer of 1993, that a review of school divisions, their boundaries and their numbers, was necessary. As a result, it struck a commission to undertake the most extensive examination of the elementary and secondary education system in Manitoba since the late 1950s. In surveying the educational landscape, the Commission determined that the *status quo* could no longer prevail, that dramatic action was needed, and that over the course of three years the number of school divisions should be significantly reduced and new boundaries aligned, essentially with existing municipal boundaries.

Already dubious that the existing configuration of school divisions was either efficient from an expenditure perspective or effective in delivering the quality of education needed to prepare Manitobans for the competitive economy of the future, the government received a contentious report which recommended substantial change in the jurisdictional landscape of educational governance. In so doing, did the Commission put the Filmon Government fundamentally at odds with the constituency of voters which formed its largest base of political support? Over the next several months, the government attempted to decide the policy response it would make to the Commission's report; after all, it had received a clear set of recommendations for governmental action. This attempt proved to be prolonged rather than quick and decisive. What and how it did eventually decide is the subject of Chapter 3. However, we shall see that the government's

response to the Commission's report had much to do with the political dynamics within the Progressive Conservative caucus, the personality and style of the Minister of the day, and, ultimately, the selection of a policy approach which could be characterized and presented, even "sold" politically, as a "reasonable" compromise between the "radical" solution offered by the Boundaries Review Commission and choosing to take no action at all, a strategy with its own risks and unfavourable consequences.

CHAPTER 3

DIRECTED AMALGAMATION DECLINED: 1996 – 1999

> "In any moment of decision the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing."[167]
>
> Theodore Roosevelt

The proposal to reduce the number of school divisions across the province by the magnitude suggested by the School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission immediately sparked a significant controversy with the public and within the education community. A sampling of newspaper headlines following release of the report in early February 1995 are illustrative: "Huge city school divisions draw mixed reactions," "Educators leery of boundary plan," "A fruitless exercise" (Winnipeg Free Press, February 4, 1995); "Boundary proposals assailed," " Norrie report hurts democracy" (Winnipeg Free Press, September 1, 1995).

Having spent almost $700,000 to establish and operate a commission,[168] ostensibly because such a vehicle could examine the amalgamation question through an objective, research based method of inquiry, the Filmon Government now had in its hands a report which recommended the dismantling and

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[167] Theodore Roosevelt, as quoted in Raymond L. Manganelli and Brian W. Hagen, Solving the Corporate Value Enigma (New York: AMACOM, 2003), 11.

[168] In response to a question in the Legislature from MaryAnn Mihychuk, NDP MLA for St. James, Minister McIntosh indicated that the cost of the Commission was $660,000. Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, Debates and Proceedings (Hansard, Volume 12A), Committee of Supply, 1st Session, 36th Legislature.

rearrangement of the governance structure of school boards over a period of three years. It had, since the report was handed down in early 1995, studiously declined to tip its hand as to how it might proceed. Having successfully fought an election later that same year, and been returned to office with another majority, the Progressive Conservative government may have felt that with a renewed mandate it was now able to face the question directly and come to a decision as to how it wished to proceed. In June 1996, following several months of deliberation, newly appointed Education and Training Minister Linda McIntosh announced that the government would not accept the recommendation that the number of school divisions/districts be reduced through directed amalgamation. Rather, government preferred to use a "carrot rather than the stick approach" by providing financial incentives to divisions to voluntarily consider amalgamation, while encouraging reductions in board administration and operating costs.[169]

Why did the Progressive Conservative government choose such an approach? What did it see as problematic in the Commission's report, in regards to the recommendations around amalgamation, which led it to conclude that it could not endorse such a step? Were specific political factors at play? Considering Kingdon's theory that a timely convergence of problems, solutions, and politics originates and permits a certain policy choice, it would seem clear that the Commission's report had achieved two things: it had laid bare the problems, exacerbated over time, which existed in the K-12 education system since the 1970s; and, secondly, for those promoting division/district

[169] Alice Krueger, "Manitoba won't reduce school divisions," Winnipeg Free Press, June 25, 1996, A1.

amalgamation as a possible solution to those problems, the report appeared to open a policy window through which the government and other political actors could at least peer. The intriguing question is why did the Progressive Conservative government choose not to act as the Commission advised? Kingdon has observed that "if decision makers become convinced a problem is pressing they reach into the policy stream for an alternative that can reasonably be seen as a solution."[170] Was the problem not seen to be a pressing one by the government? Was directed amalgamation deemed to be an unattractive policy solution? Did the calculation of partisan political interests lead the government to that conclusion?

POLICY

Policy proposals are, as Levin suggests, "ideas about what should be done."[171] The sources of ideas come from a broad spectrum of players: central policy management, line staff, political parties, think tanks and policy institutions, labour and business organizations, interest groups, the media, and the public at large. Policy proposals evolve from nascent idea to something more concrete which can be attached as a solution to a problem when political actors believe that idea can address an issue which has been deemed a priority for action on government's agenda. Kingdon suggests that policy communities, which are comprised of specialists in any given policy area, are likely to be small and the people who work within them known to each other. In a small provincial jurisdiction like Manitoba, that was certainly the case, with policy "entrepreneurs"

[170] Kingdon, *supra*, 174.
[171] Levin, Reforming Education, 74.

in the Policy Management Secretariat, the Department of Education, Training and Youth, and education stakeholder organizations familiar to each other. When Minister Vodrey, one year after assuming the Education portfolio, announced her interest in examining amalgamation through the creation of a Boundaries Review Commission, the wheels were set in motion for amalgamation as a policy idea to assume prominence. It indicated that, within the general "climate of ideas" there was a public sense of unhappiness with the current configuration of school divisions and of their ability to deliver a reasonable variety of quality programming at tolerable levels of cost to taxpayers. As Levin has stated, "action by government is much more likely if there is a perception of public dissatisfaction and political reforms are generally sold on the basis of promises of improvement."[172]

Given that amalgamation had taken place elsewhere in Canada, and at an earlier time in Manitoba, the policy, while a significant undertaking, did not represent a radical departure from the norm. Indeed, as Kingdon says in describing the incrementalist approach, it allows decision-makers to "take what they are currently doing as a given, and make small, incremental, marginal adjustments in their current behaviour."[173]

Manitoba had, by the 1990s settled comfortably into the configuration of divisions/districts and boundaries established in the late 1950s. In other Canadian and international jurisdictions, however, the process of downsizing the number of school divisions and districts had been occurring for several years. In

[172] *Ibid*., 78.
[173] Kingdon, *supra*, 79.

1998 Newfoundland moved from four denominational school systems (Integrated, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic, and Seventh Day Adventist) to eleven public, nondenominational, boards. New Brunswick had gone from 42 boards to 18 in the early 1990's and by 1996 had eliminated boards altogether, replacing them with two provincial boards and 18 district parent advisory councils. By 2001, however, the New Brunswick government moved away from the parent council model to create 14 district education councils. The 1990s was also a decade of restructuring in other provinces. In Nova Scotia, for instance, the number of school boards declined from 22 to 8, and in Prince Edward Island five school boards were reduced to three. In Quebec, in addition to abandoning the denominational system of schooling and adopting a system of non-dissentient boards based on language (English or French), the government consolidated several small boards, especially in urban areas. At present 72 boards are in existence. Ontario brought down the number of school boards there from 168 to 72. In the west, British Columbia moved to 60 school boards from 75, and in Alberta the number of boards went from 141 to 41. Only Manitoba and Saskatchewan had not taken similar steps in this area.[174] As Fleming has noted, the message consistent in all of these downsizing initiatives was the desire of provincial governments to address programming inequities for students, foster greater economic efficiency, and redirect savings from administration and

[174] Levin, Governing Education, 140; Fleming, *supra*, 4; Gidney, *supra*, 195-198, 245-246; Taylor, *supra*, 76-81; and Jon Young, Benjamin Levin and Dawn Wallin, Understanding Canadian Schools: An Introduction to Educational Administration, 4th ed. (Toronto: Thomson Canada Limited, 2007), 35-36, 43. Although it took place outside the timeline of this study, in late November 2004, the Government of Saskatchewan announced that the number of school divisions would be reduced from 81 to 34. With a voluntary reduction in the number of Catholic school boards, the total number of divisions as of January 1, 2006 was 28.

governance into classroom supports. Amalgamation was seen as the policy means by which to achieve these desired outcomes.

In the United States, consolidation of school districts has occurred on an accelerated pace. Rural school districts have been the primary target of restructuring, largely for reasons of improved program access to students and fiscal equity for taxpayers. Over the course of the 20th century, and particularly after the 1930s, the number of school districts declined from 117,108 to 15,367, an 87% reduction.[175] In more recent years, state governments have encouraged sharing initiatives among smaller boards, including joint appointment of senior administration, reciprocal access to regular and specialized programming ("cooperatives"), shared use of buildings, and local site-based governance and management.

The United Kingdom, too, had experienced significant consolidation and restructuring of its education governance arrangements in the 1990's. The desire of the central government to reduce education expenditures, and to minimize surplus school capacity, launched efforts at reducing the control of Local Education Authorities and encouraged parents, teachers and community members to take responsibility themselves for the operation of schools and to receive funding directly from government (grant maintained status).[176]

The fiscal challenges faced by the Filmon Government during the 1990s, coupled with a view held by many within the government and the Progressive Conservative party that the K-12 education system was failing Manitobans, lent

[175] Fleming, *ibid*., 4. See also Alan C. Ornstein, "School Consolidation vs. Decentralization: Trends, Issues and Questions" (1993), 25, 2, The Urban Review, 168-169.
[176] Wallace and Pocklington, *supra*, and Levin, Reforming Education, 35-42.

itself to favourable consideration of amalgamation initiatives going on elsewhere in the country and in other jurisdictions. As Saunders writes, policy-makers will frequently look to other jurisdictions for help in developing policy options to address what are seen as similar problems locally:

> Especially in times of grave economic uncertainty, governments will search for more serious changes in policies when past remedies are no longer seen as successful or viable, and appropriate identifiable aspects of another country's apparent policy "solutions". In so doing they will look to provinces or countries that are seen as natural leaders (for example, the United Kingdom, the United States, Alberta and Ontario) or with whom they share similar cultural backgrounds, political systems or geographic proximity. As a result, the trend of "policy borrowing" emerged in the late 1980s as countries began to borrow policies from other jurisdictions and apply them to their particular environment.[177]

Minister Vodrey acknowledged that, while amalgamation had not been a pressing public concern for her, she was aware that "it was something being considered as a part of a national discussion."[178] Minister Manness is more categorical in setting out why those within the Premier's inner circle initially felt that an examination of amalgamation, as was taking place elsewhere, was necessary in Manitoba:

> You know, we went through some very difficult times trying to find money to do anything. And we really strongly believed, as a party, that the quality of education was suffering. That was a general statement, and I'm talking on the literacy side particularly, that our students weren't being challenged enough. And one focus of that, one breakout, was of course the reform package [*New Directions*]. But another reform, another element of that, was the belief that if we're to continue to put all this large amount of scarce money into

[177] Kelly L. Saunders, "The Dynamics of Agenda-Setting: The Case of Post-Secondary Education in Manitoba" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Manitoba, 2007), 92. For a critique of "policy borrowing" in education, see David Halpin and Barry Troyna, "The Politics of Education Policy Borrowing" (1995), 31, 3, Comparative Education, 303-310; David Phillips, "Neither a Borrower nor a Lender Be? The Problems of Cross-National Attraction in Education" (1989), 25, 3, Special Number (12), Comparative Education, 267-274; and Mitchell, *supra*, 457.
[178] Vodrey interview.

> education that it would be better if we put it into the classroom than into bureaucracy. And so they kind of walked together, those two approaches.[179]

The Conservative government's intention to pursue a "reform" agenda in education was certainly made clear to senior bureaucrats within the Department of Education, particularly by 1990 when the Filmon Government was re-elected with a majority. Brian Hanson, whose tenure (1993-2003) as Director of the Education Administration Services Branch spanned both the Filmon and Doer regimes, indicated that fiscal control and reform of education were among the prime objectives of the Progressive Conservative government in the 1990s.

> You'll likely recall that the Manitoba economy was in dire straits, reportedly, during the 1980s. The PC's came to power with a mindset to control public sector expenditure, generally. Part of that public sector fiscal restraint focused on education and the school system. The Tories wanted to reform education in order to make it more cost effective and more accountable in a manner similar to what they, as government, had in mind for the health care system. In their estimation anyway, the Tories saw considerable over expenditure or wastage of money, if you will, in the public school system. How did the PC government come to this opinion? Well, people like Manness, McIntosh, Derkach and others within Cabinet, caucus, and the Progressive Conservative policy group were all former school trustees. So I think they came to power with an interest in and an agenda intended to reform education, partly, as I said, for fiscal control and accountability, but also for programmatic change reasons. The Tory government had, at least initially, a very ambitious interest in revamping the K-12 education system.[180]

As was noted by Minister Manness in Chapter 2, consideration of school division governance structures in other jurisdictions was also part of the government's rationale for moving forward on a review of school division boundaries in Manitoba. That a comparison with what was in place in other

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[179] Manness interview.
[180] Interview by author, tape recording, Winnipeg, Manitoba, July 21, 2006.

provinces was a consideration is confirmed by the Deputy Minister at the time, John Carlyle:

> People were saying "couldn't we save money in terms of administration? Why are we having 600,000 people [in Winnipeg] governed by 6 or 7 or 8 or 9 or 10 school boards? Surely we can do better." So there was a comparison occurring in peoples' minds between Winnipeg and Calgary and Edmonton that was being thrown in.[181]

Mr. Hanson also acknowledged that the government was heavily influenced by one of its western neighbours:

> The PCs, of course, were looking largely at Alberta for guidance in the whole area of education reform. In Alberta, for example, the entire city of Calgary, their public system can be run by one board. Same with Edmonton, that sort of thing. And I think the Tories were saying "why in the world do we need all of these school divisions for the City of Winnipeg? Gosh knows we're duplicating our costs many times over." So that was one large issue factoring into amalgamation.[182]

Additionally, the several "problems" in the Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system detailed in Chapter 2, and underscored by the Norrie Commission, had focused the government's attention on possible solutions for remedying those concerns. Declining enrolments in several school divisions led to worries that some jurisdictions were at, or close to, the point of non-viability: that local tax bases were inadequate to fund the divisional share of costs for education; that there was a duplication of costs across divisions, particularly at the administrative

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[181] Carlyle interview. Mr. Leitch echoed the same view saying "there was a look at what was the number of divisions in major urban centers across the country. Some of the reform that was taking place in other provinces contributed to the sense that we can't just sit back and not do anything. So you had a general movement on the fiscal situation, and you had the general thrust across the country with other jurisdictions looking at school reforms. There was a sense that you just can't sit still, you have to address these issues or otherwise you'd be burying your head in the sand."
Leitch interview.

[182] Hanson interview.

and trustee levels; and that the ever-increasing cost of providing elementary and secondary education during a time of retrenchment was creating serious financial difficulty. Linda McIntosh, who held the Education portfolio from 1995 to 1999, suggests that costs and programming concerns originally drove the decision to strike a commission to review school division boundaries:

> The review was already underway when I came into the portfolio, but my understanding was that a lot of people, the public, taxpayers, the people who used the system, were drawing to the government's attention their feeling that there were too many people and too many divisions, that it wasn't cost effective. The basic example that came up all the time was why would you have two superintendents, in two neighouring divisions, when one would do? In Winnipeg that was one example that came up a lot. In Winnipeg we had ten or eleven school divisions with ten or eleven separate school boards, all of them drawing administrative costs, and schools would sit half empty in one division while overcrowded in the next. We should just make one great big division, and it would be simpler. That was the message that came up. So basically the issue came from the people of Manitoba, educators, and indeed members of the government itself who had made the observation that perhaps this wasn't the most cost effective, or lent itself to the best educational opportunities.[183]

More broadly, too, there was a sense that politicians on the government benches considered amalgamation to be the "magic bullet" that would cure many of the ailments troubling the education system. Bureaucrats within the Department of Education certainly felt this to be the case:

> I think they [government] viewed amalgamation as solving a number of ills that they saw in the school setting; amalgamation, plus a revamping of what came to be called the K-S4 system through their Blue Book [*New Directions*] on education reform. So it was kind of a parcel of things. The PC's clearly had a number of thrusts within education when they came to power. One, they wanted to get control of collective bargaining because there was a lot of unhappiness about how the budgets of school divisions were increasing "alarmingly", at a greater rate than government was

[183] Interview by author, tape recording, Winnipeg, Manitoba, October 6, 2006.

> comfortable, with salaries being the largest expenditure for school boards' budgets. There came a sense from government that if they [school divisions] aren't going to do it [control costs] voluntarily, we're going to have to do it for them. And one of the ways of doing that is to tighten up on collective bargaining issues and process [Bill 72]. Another one is to look at the administrative and governance overhead and some of the multiple costs and repetitious costs of school divisions and you can, presumably, get at those by amalgamating, making cohesive, larger units which are more cost effective. And I think, thirdly, they viewed, particularly in the rural areas where you had declining population, they thought if you've got economies of scale through amalgamation you could offer some programming in larger units that a smaller division couldn't begin to provide.[184]

In February 1995, the Boundaries Review Commission submitted its report to Education Minister, Clayton Manness, who had assumed the portfolio in September 1993. As has already been noted, among the forty-three recommendations contained in that document the Commission concluded that a significant reduction in the number of school divisions was necessary. Directed amalgamation, over a three-year period, should take place, with the boundaries of divisions altered to be coterminous with existing municipal boundaries. The number of divisions should shrink from 57 to 22.

Given the government's view of an existing system top-heavy in bureaucracy, and its concerns about escalating system-wide costs, its reaction to the Commission's recommendations on amalgamation was, on its face, surprisingly lukewarm. Although acknowledging that at the time his attention was largely focused on the *New Directions* reform initiative, Minister Manness recalls being generally pleased, if not somewhat surprised, with the Commission's recommendations around reducing the number of school divisions, but

[184] Hanson interview.

disappointed in its approach to addressing how costs related to, for instance, contract harmonization following amalgamation, might be managed:

> I thought it was weak, as a Minister. I'm not saying the government thought it was weak but I thought it could have been a little stronger in its recommendations. The number he [Norrie] boiled down to was 22 and some would say, on the surface, that's fair. The number isn't what upset me, it was more the process of getting there. I thought, and as a matter of fact I was quite surprised that Bill would come down, knowing Bill like I do, to that number of 22. Pleasantly surprised. But it was the process, the factoring up process, instead of finding some middle when you combine all the different costs, including salaries. It was the typical approach, when it came in from Bill, I wasn't surprised. I was disappointed.[185]

Minister McIntosh, who was responsible for the Department in 1996 when the government announced its formal response to the Commission's report, argued that, in government's estimation, the implications of transitioning from the current system to the one envisaged by the Commission were "nightmarish" and the negative consequences would far exceed the likely benefits:

> . . . if the world was fresh and there were no school divisions whatsoever, then his [Norrie's] recommendations would have probably been very workable. The problem that we faced was that the province already had an established system, so before you can construct a new one you had to demolish or deconstruct [the old one], and it was the deconstruction that was the negative process. The deconstruction had never really been examined by Norrie. He took a blank slate and painted on divisions and it was good. But if you took a slate that already had mountains and valleys and rivers and streams, and you had to chop down mountains and turn them upside down and fill in the valleys to make a level playing field, then the cost became prohibitive in some cases.[186]

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[185] Manness interview. In reference to government's "guarded" reaction, see also Aldo Santin, "New map leads to millions?", Winnipeg Free Press, February 4, 1995, A1. Mr. Manness acknowledged that if the government "ever dared to factor sideways or down rather than factoring up, as has been the experience in this country around all amalgamations . . . then the Society [MTS] would instantly become an opponent" to amalgamation.

[186] McIntosh interview. The Minister's view certainly mirrored, in this instance, the opinion of the editorial board of the *Winnipeg Free Press* when it wrote:

"The carving up work [from amalgamation] will require enormous upheaval as new collective agreements are prepared, school division policies are integrated, existing practices are blended

If the review commission's report was greeted with some disappointment by political actors, what other options were considered? If neither voluntary nor directed amalgamation, what else? In coming to the decision that it could not support directed amalgamation, what political considerations were at play to shape that outcome? What impact, if any, did stakeholder groups within the education community play in government's decision? If, as Lindblom has said, public policy is ultimately about politics, what were the dynamics within the Progressive Conservative government that led it to reject the primary recommendation of its own commission?

THE POLITICS OF POLICY CHOICE

Considering Norrie: A Road Map to Nowhere?

On April 25, 1995 the Progressive Conservative party was re-elected, winning 31 seats to again form a majority government.[187] Of those 31 seats, 18 were held by members whose constituencies fell outside of urban Winnipeg (see

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and assets are haggled over. The anxieties and uncertainties of reorganization will absorb all the spare energies in the school system. Mr. Norrie and his committee looked conscientiously for adequate reasons why the government should proceed with its dream of creating new school divisions, but they found none. They found plenty of evidence of the costs, grief and absurdities that will result. The idea of pulling all the school divisions apart and putting them back together again should be scrapped."
"A fruitless exercise," Winnipeg Free Press, February 4, 1995, A6.

[187] In its 1995 election campaign platform document, the Conservatives had the following to say about school division amalgamation:

"We are conducting an in-depth review of the report of the Boundaries Review Commission, chaired by former Mayor Bill Norrie. The Filmon Team will ask school boards and other educational players to do the same to ensure that we meet our goal of directing dollars to the classroom rather than administration. We are committed to reducing the number of school divisions from the current 57, but will do so in further consultation with the public and the education system."

In an obvious attempt to assuage rural voters, the document goes on to state:

"The Boundaries Review Commission also made it clear that boundary changes do not mean school closures."

Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba, Gary Filmon's Plan Manitoba: A Vision for the Future (1995), 29.

Appendix 4). As noted earlier, during the public hearings held by the Boundaries Review Commission, and in the subsequent reaction to its recommendations to reduce the number of school divisions, rural Manitobans appeared largely opposed to amalgamation. The newly returned Conservative government was, therefore, in a dilemma: what should it do with a report wherein the major recommendation was likely to alienate a significant portion of the party's electoral base of support?

The pressures brought to bear upon Conservative members, particularly on those from rural constituencies, were acutely felt within the government. When asked whether caucus members were being pressured by rural school division trustees to oppose directed amalgamation, Rosemary Vodrey (who, by 1995, was in the Justice portfolio) recalls that:

> I think Caucus probably had a good idea [about rural reaction to potential amalgamation] because the concerns of rural Manitobans are concerns whether we're talking education or health or highways, or any of those things. A government's position in communities, that's in education too, is really important to the community. So most communities, regardless, would have said they didn't want to lose anything, and they would have been worried about losing. And they would have been worried about transportation [school busing], particularly; it's a bigger issue than it is in the city.[188]

Linda McIntosh suggested that, on this issue, the weighing of divergent opinions from constituents was much like every issue a provincial politician encounters and must wrestle with:

> Every member comes into government – and this is true of MLA's of every party and of every political stripe – representing their community. You could never forget the needs of your community because they're the ones who elected you, they're the ones that count on you to help make their community the way they want it to

[188] Vodrey interview.

> be. Occasionally those views will come into conflict. And then the MLA has to work through it to figure out what's best.[189]

Although arguing that the government was attuned to public concerns in Winnipeg with respect to the Norrie Commission's proposals, Don Leitch acknowledged that the government was also "very sensitive to what would happen in rural Manitoba", in large measure because

> . . . all rural MLA's have a very strong sense of local issues because they are not far removed from their local municipalities. They [municipalities] exert a significant degree of influence on provincial governments and, coupled with the fact that you had MLA's and Ministers that had been school trustees and councilors . . . there was that sensitivity. There always has been, and I would expect it continues today, a strong local government influence on policies and programs of the government.[190]

The strong rural lobby against amalgamation was evident to those within the senior levels of bureaucracy inside the Department of Education. Deputy Minister Carlyle, for instance, recalls that while he felt the Boundaries Review Commission had conducted a thorough review and been fair in its conclusions, he knew that was not a view shared by several members within the government caucus:

> It [amalgamation] was too hot to handle. It was a very hot issue. School trustees were not happy, some may have been, but generally speaking it was "Norrie got it wrong, this isn't what I thought we were going to see. It's too political, this has nothing to do with what we were suggesting." It was a very, very controversial issue. It was controversial within the government caucus, no surprise. Mr. Norrie, I believe, rendered a conclusion that tried to be honest in the context of tax bases and geography and so on, and because of it certain school divisions that were within certain ridings of certain members of the government weren't happy. So there was internal strife. Maybe strife is the wrong word. There was internal disagreement. Caucus members were saying "I don't accept this, I'm not going to have this happen, not on my watch", so it was really too hot to handle. And I don't recollect the timing, but there may have been an election in the offing somewhere in there and that probably led the government to think "you know, this is not a line in the sand for us

[189] McIntosh interview.
[190] Leitch interview.

> that we want to cross during this election," and so they backed off. The political will was not there to act on it. But there was political will to cause amalgamation to occur, somehow.[191]

Brian Hanson believed that by allowing almost 16 months to pass between the time the Commission issued its report and the government formally announcing a decision on the recommendations, those opposed to amalgamation were able to marshal their forces and stymie any attempt by government to proceed:

> I think what happened is [government] didn't move sufficiently quickly on the Norrie Report, because by the time the Report finally came out local school board trustees, particularly in the rural areas, many of whom had Progressive Conservative leanings, especially in WestMan, South Central Manitoba, that sort of area, they were starting to exert some not so subtle pressure that amalgamation shouldn't proceed or at least not *à la* Norrie. School boards didn't want to lose their power base and if there had to be amalgamation, well, let us trustees do it. "We'll figure it out," they said. So, yes, I think there was pressure.[192]

The role of stakeholder groups within the Kindergarten – Grade 12 education community may also have played a role in government's decision not to proceed with directed amalgamation. Within that community, the major interest groups, the so-called "stakeholders", were the Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS), Manitoba Association of School Trustees (MAST), Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS), Manitoba Association of School Business Officials (MASBO), and the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils (MAPC). It is important to consider the influence of these external organizations because, though the degree of influence of each may vary, all seek to influence government policy on particular aspects of education. They do so, in part because government has a responsibility for ensuring the overall effectiveness of

[191] Carlyle interview.
[192] Hanson interview.

the education system and they see their perspective and input as an important contribution toward that, but also as a defensive measure because, as Levin argues, in identifying and defining problems, government's education reform initiatives have frequently, either purposely or consequentially, "sought to diminish the influence of those within the education system."[193]

Interviews with lead political actors and senior bureaucratic officials suggest that, at the time, MAST opposed directed amalgamation, MTS was in support of it, and that MAPC, by and large, expressed a fair degree of trepidation about moving forward. MAST, in principle but also, one might reasonably believe, because of the weight of its predominantly rural membership, opposed the directed nature of amalgamation, preferring to allow boards to exercise their own autonomy in determining whether or not amalgamation should be voluntarily pursued and implemented. As noted earlier, the Manitoba Teachers' Society, in its brief to the Boundaries Review Commission, expressed the belief that larger operating entities provided greater economies of scale which would improve program offerings for students, an enhanced tax base, and better working/teaching conditions for staff. MAPC, as an organization, may have seen the difficulties attendant in declining enrolment divisions, but was fearful that amalgamation would lead to the closure of schools in small communities. As former Minister McIntosh said:

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[193] Levin, Reforming Education, 72-74, 120. On this view, see also Taylor, *supra*, particularly chapters 6 and 8.

Similarly, Kingdon writes "there are great political stakes in problem definition. Some are helped and others are hurt, depending on how problems get defined. If things are going basically your way, you want to convince others that there are no problems out there."
Kingdon, *supra*, 110.

> The parents, when it came down to it, didn't want it. Whatever the official position of parent councils were, the phone calls and the letters to me and my office were such that it was very clear to me that the overwhelming majority of parents were fearful of the change. They identified in their minds what they thought might happen with amalgamation, treated it as real and then phoned and blasted me for considering doing this thing to their children. If you know you're going to do something and the parents are going to come in on day one and say "okay, what are we losing by this?" instead of "what are we gaining by this?", you're going to have trouble.[194]

Similarly, she confirms that the input of stakeholders played some role in the government's decision not to go forward with directed amalgamation. When asked whether opposition to or support for amalgamation factored into government's thinking on how it might proceed, the Minister suggested that "it always does, with all of those groups, because they are the system and we're about to make a decision that's going to drastically alter that system. And the players in it have to believe enough in it to make it work."[195]

Deputy Minister Carlyle suggested that, simply because of the resources they possess, these stakeholder groups did command government's attention. However, from his perspective, whether organizational positions had more *cachet* with government members than did the voices of individuals within their own local constituencies is difficult to gauge:

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[194] McIntosh interview.

[195] *Ibid*. In a similar vein, Mr. Leitch stated that stakeholders within the education community brought "very, very different perspectives to the table" and government paid significant attention to that because "they all represent large, vocal groups that are capable of helping to implement, or scuttle, a policy change."
Leitch interview.

> Non-government organizations have a very vital role to play in part of our democratic process because what they can do that the average citizen cannot is mobilize forces, voices, resources, and present papers and opinions that can form a collective opinion representing a group. And these are not insignificant voices, so it should be no surprise to say on this matter, from start to finish, that the government through time heard from MASBO, MAST, MASS, MTS, and MAPC. And each group had similar and differing opinions on this. So did that shape government's thinking? Of course it did because, the wonderful thing about democracy, it's not simple, we're all human beings, and you don't just pour a quart of thought into your head and suddenly out spouts a conclusion. You have to listen to it all. So there was definitely an iterative process going on, including listening to what the organizations had to say. And I can't say their role [in terms of] influencing government was greater or lesser than that of the general public. But I am going to go back and say the views of individual members of caucus were probably shaped more by their own constituents than they would have been by any one individual organization. But organizations are nonetheless very influential and they wield a lot of weight when it comes to government making decisions.[196]

The degree of influence of stakeholder groups, particularly of MAST and MTS, is also somewhat contingent upon the party in power. Levin suggests that MAST has a closer relationship to the Progressive Conservative party, while the NDP shares a greater affinity for the MTS.[197] In surveying the party alignment of these organizations based generally on where they had cast their political support, or opposition, on other issues, Brian Hanson concluded that "MAST had more influence with the Tories than did MTS. I think MTS clearly has more influence with the NDP. . . . There was no love lost between the Teachers' Society and the Progressive Conservative government. I don't think that's telling tales out of school. . . . So MAST probably influenced the eventual Tory decision

[196] Carlyle interview.
[197] Levin, Governing Education, 55-56, 181.

to go with voluntary rather than forced amalgamation.[198] Deputy Minister Carlyle concurred although, again, doubted whether the strength or weakness of an organization's relationship with government proved decisive in the amalgamation decision:

> Throughout the [PC] government's tenure it's probably fair to say that the relationship it had with the Manitoba Teachers' Society is not what I would have called a "love affair". There were certainly ample examples where the government and MTS clashed. And there were ample examples where the government didn't clash with the trustees, but whether that was paramount in their thinking? I'm going to suggest it might have been a factor, but probably the most important factors were what they were hearing back in their own constituency. I'm going to go out on a limb and say I doubt very much that the government's views, positively or negatively towards those two organizations, was a significant issue.[199]

When asked whether or not the positions of these organizations, or any in particular, were especially weighty for government, Minister McIntosh indicated that it was largely because of the sense that there was little public support for directed amalgamation (and the concomitant system-wide disruption the Boundaries Review Commission's recommendations would have created) that government adopted a voluntary position. Minister Vodrey, although not recalling the specific discussion within Cabinet and caucus at the time, believed that "the consideration of the role of other elected people, and that's the trustees of those divisions, would have been something to be respected."[200]

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[198] Hanson interview.
[199] Carlyle interview.
[200] Vodrey interview. As Mrs. McIntosh and Mr. Carlyle suggested, fidelity to the policy position of a favoured organizational interest may not have been the key determinant for government. In a small jurisdiction like Manitoba, where personal relationships often cross political and organizational lines, and interests change with time, policy formulation may in fact more closely resemble the process as described by Clayton Manness:
"[When embarking upon change] you've got to use good skills and you've got to be as sincerely friendly as you can. As I told the Teachers' Society, and I told the superintendents and

Ironically, as the unfolding of future events would demonstrate, condemnation from the Opposition New Democratic Party over the boundaries changes suggested in the Norrie Report may also have assisted the government politically in getting to its preferred position of supporting voluntary amalgamation. The NDP was vocally critical of the Commission's report, arguing that the Commission had failed to make a compelling case in advancing the claim that boundary changes would be educationally advantageous. The NDP Education critic, Jean Friesen (MLA for Wolseley), suggested that the Commission had failed to listen to the concerns of rural Manitobans, that the proposed alignment of school boundaries with municipal boundaries would be detrimental to local communities of interest, to existing transportation and trading lines, that there would be a fragmentation of programming available to children in Winnipeg if school divisions were reconfigured in the city to the extent recommended in the Report, and that no evidence of cost savings had been shown. Drawing upon her academic background in Canadian history, Ms. Friesen made analogous reference to another issue of contention in Manitoba's past when she concluded that imposing amalgamation upon school divisions was the wrong approach:

> . . . the whole issue . . . of forced change is one that people addressed in that second round [of the Commission's supplementary review in 1995]. . . . The minister may be familiar with Prime Minister Laurier in the Laurier-Greenway compromise

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everybody else when we started the reform package, we're going to push this but I want you around the table. And I understand why you may not be able to be there at the end. I understand that. But let's walk as far as we can because I want to hear your views, because I'll listen and I'll use them where I can. But if it's next week, next month or a year from now and you say you've had it and you don't want any part of this, I understand. But please, let's start off together." Manness interview. See also Levin, Reforming Education, 103.

> [of 1896]. He talked about his sunny ways and he had a little childhood story about the difference between the power of the sun and the power of the wind, and it is the sun which persuades the man to take off his overcoat, not the wind. I think that is what rural Manitoba is talking about: find us the best practices; find the right principles; support those who are ready to amalgamate; create the kind of pilot projects that will demonstrate to us, that will show us, where the improvements are to be made.[201]

As noted in Chapter 1, to understand the public policy process, and to get a sense as to how an issue rises and falls from government's agenda, one must have an appreciation of the decision-makers themselves, their goals, styles, position within government, the tactics they employ to achieve their goals, and the political resources they wish to invest in seeing an issue through.[202] Given the centrality of the Premier in the policy process within government, what was the view of Gary Filmon on this issue? Although he had been able to solidify his control of the Progressive Conservative party as a consequence of his enhanced personal stature following the national constitutional debates of the late 1980s and early 1990s, and in gaining majority governments in 1990 and 1995, by personal bent and through political necessity the Premier was inclined towards consensus building in reaching decisions. In the opinion of Don Leitch, on the amalgamation issue the Premier was consistent:

> He wanted Cabinet to have full and open discussions on all issues. On this issue it was a prolonged and extensive attempt to build consensus, and I can say his position was very much the position of the government: there had to be change, we had to do something. What was being debated was what is it, what precisely is the plan for implementation, what's the timing, what's the road map, is the time right? Filmon was of the view that change was necessary, was desirable, would be good for the system, and it was more a matter of timing and what precisely you do. He looked to the Minister of Education to carry the file and to take most of

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[201] Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, Debates and Proceedings (Hansard, Volume 24B), Committee of Supply, 2nd Session, 36th Legislature, April 26, 1996.
[202] Simeon, *supra*, 308.

> the consultations that had to take place out there. But on significant high priority topics, and there are always a few on the go in a four or five year term of a government, this is one of the ones that was a real potential "hot button" in terms of the politics. And so the Premier was fully on top of it. He delivered speeches and may very well have talked to school trustees a few times. His position was essentially that change is desirable, change is necessary, that we succeed better if we don't resist and fight change but manage, control and direct it in the way we want to change it. And so that was very much his view, but I think he understood the depth of the feelings at the local level and how MLA's, whether they're in Cabinet or in caucus, are on the front line in receiving local comments. So it was a political decision which had to be made, and it was one that was extremely important for all the participants, and all of the stakeholders.[203]

The role and personality of the Minister of Education, too, must be considered when assessing the reasons the Filmon Government opted to pursue voluntary amalgamation. While an issue such as amalgamation would have required the support of the Premier, Cabinet and caucus, its prospect of success would have had much to do with the commitment, assertiveness, and degree of influence of the Minister promoting that cause. Indeed, *had* the government been favourably disposed to directed amalgamation, the likelihood of success in seeing such an initiative through to completion would have owed much to the particular Minister advancing the file. As Mr. Leitch stated,

> . . . there are a lot of policy issues where a Minister that is prepared or is inclined to, or by personality is prone to drive harder and push an issue, can help a Premier achieve a policy objective if they want it. And if the Minister is softer or less forthright or less aggressive in terms of pursuing the change with the Cabinet, the caucus, or with the stakeholders, it does make it more difficult for a Premier to see a government policy change come about. You need your Ministers to be delivering those things the government wants to do, and oftentimes it is under the leadership of the Premier. The Premier says here's a policy direction, Cabinet agrees, and you need a strong Minister to deliver.[204]

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[203] Leitch interview.
[204] *Ibid*.

Asked for her view of the role of a Minister in policy development, Mrs. Vodrey suggested that while Ministers have a strategic advantage over those outside the Cabinet, inasmuch as they are able to keep bringing back to the decision-making table the issues which are of importance to them (albeit in modified form in order to meet initially expressed concerns or objections), what is also critical is in recognizing that

> . . . government is very personal, and it very much depends upon the Minister of the day leading the Department and what that Minister's personal priorities are. Sometimes things get bumped up and you don't necessarily expect it, but you do come in with your own views. That's why you're put there. . . . You do have, and this is the thing that impressed me about government, I honestly believe individual Ministers have a great deal of power and influence based on their particular interests, backgrounds and, again, partly on how well they can bring forward issues and how much their colleagues accept what they have to say.[205]

Linda McIntosh saw the role of Minister somewhat differently, suggesting that a key function of a Minister is to wade through the tremendous volume of solicited and unsolicited information from stakeholders and the public on an issue like amalgamation, decipher and make some sense of it, and then share that with Cabinet colleagues in an effort to educate them beyond the usual "tip of the iceberg, talk radio response". Having provided information to inform the discussion, and the Minister's personal recommendation for action, it is then up to Cabinet to argue it through and come to a decision.[206]

Clayton Manness, not surprisingly given the forceful nature of his personality and the strong convictions he held, viewed the Minister's role more closely along the lines as suggested by Minister Vodrey. For Mr. Manness, an

[205] Vodrey interview.
[206] McIntosh interview.

effective Minister needs to have the support of the Premier on any given initiative but must, as well, have a sense of "mission". As he pointed out, "in our democratic system, ministries were meant to be held by strong ministers. That's the way it is supposed to be. And you can tell who is in control of their ministry and who isn't."[207]

Might the amalgamation decision have been different had someone like Clayton Manness been Minister of Education in 1996 rather than Linda McIntosh? It is a matter of conjecture, of course, but the style and personality of each was clearly different, with one favoring a more aggressive approach and the other adopting a more conciliatory posture.[208] Given the perceived depth of hostility to amalgamation in rural Manitoba, the nervousness of much of the Conservative caucus, and the disruption the Boundaries Review Commission recommendations would have created throughout the education system, the pragmatic option of voluntary consolidation likely fit well with both the political vicissitudes of the time and Minister McIntosh's personality. In analyzing why

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[207] Levin, Reforming Education, 104-105. Mr. Manness reiterated that view in his interview with the author.

White contends that "powerful ministers are allowed greater policy autonomy by their colleagues. This is true virtually by definition, since what generally makes a minister powerful is the high degree of faith (from the premier and other ministers) in his or her competence and judgment that is the *sine qua non* of according autonomy."
White, *supra*, 261.

[208] When speculating on how he might have tackled the amalgamation question had he not retired from politics in 1995 and subsequently remained as Minister of Education, Mr. Manness suggested that among his first orders of business would have been to "peer into the Department" and determine whether or not "the troops were too burnt out to take this on. Because this [following the reform initiative] would be like a whole new flank. I'm looking at it in terms of warfare here, and that would have to lead to an immediate assessment."
Manness interview. For a good overview of the critical role Mr. Manness played in the Filmon Government, see Levin, Reforming Education, 98-105, and Saunders, *supra*, 324-328.

Minister McIntosh, by way of contrast, expressed a preference for a gentler, more cooperative style which was summarized best in her comment: "I think you catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar. I've tried both approaches. Vinegar stings."
McIntosh interview.

she preferred a voluntary approach rather than a directed one, Mrs. McIntosh indicated that she felt, over time, similar results could be achieved while minimizing the social costs of conflict, polarization and disruption which would otherwise result:

> We believed it [the desired results] would come without disruption, without a lot of chaos, without a lot of turmoil, without a lot of bitter, angry feelings that would hang on for generations. Without battles between school boards and the province, and teachers and school boards because they couldn't agree on a harmonized amount for their contracts. Maybe some costly court cases, all of those things. We felt those would be destructive, we felt those would have a terribly negative effect on students in the classrooms during the period of transition. And as Minister, for me, what I said was, I don't want to force this. I want to encourage it and actively encourage it on a voluntary basis. And, quite frankly, I didn't even really care if they changed their divisions to one. I guess I would say I didn't care if they got married, necessarily, as long as they were living together in a cooperative venture and committed to helping each other. It was the results that we were wanting.[209]

When the question was posed as to why he thought the Conservative government opted to proceed down the path of voluntary amalgamation in 1996, Mr. Hanson suggested that having been in office for eight years at that point the government had gotten "sidetracked". "I guess," he said, "they had too many issues to deal with, all of these fiscal issues and so on, and I think it overwhelmed them." In his opinion, the government was also tiring and the forceful political actors it needed were no longer in place or engaged to drive the agenda forward:

> I think the war horses were getting tired or they were getting unhappy, and by the war horses I mean the strong Progressive Conservative guys like Manness who was pretty much out of the picture by that time, and [Don] Orchard and those kinds of guys. There seemed to be by about 1994, 1995, there was starting to be

[209] McIntosh interview.

> some problems with leadership succession, in-fighting perhaps, and that forcefulness and determination of the Tory government were waning. Whether you agreed with it or not, that style did move government's agenda along quickly in the first Filmon mandate. In the early part of the Tory mandate there was a very clear idea as to where they were going and how they were going to get there. By 1994, 1995, they were starting to "peter out". Why? It's speculation, but my thinking would be that the guys who were the power behind the throne – and I'm not saying that Filmon wasn't a strong leader, he seemed even tough at times – but I think he looked to guys like [Darren] Praznik and Orchard and Manness and so on, to be that key core of Tory support for government policy and they were starting to have their own agendas by then.[210]

Out of office in 1996, Mr. Manness remembers a profound sense of disappointment in learning that his former government was not prepared to adopt a more determined approach to amalgamation. Yet he was not surprised that this choice had been made:

> I was upset at a lot of things sitting in this house, but when you leave you leave. That's the way it is. You can go and rant and rave and all that, but at the end of the day you're not sitting there. So I was disappointed with the initial response, the olive branch approach to make it voluntary, and when I began to realize that virtually nothing was happening, that prompted my response. And it was so predictable.[211]

In Mr. Manness' view, the debate over directed versus voluntary amalgamation was over before it began. In his estimation, the Conservative government after 1995 was fatigued and had forfeited much of the momentum and public support gained from its earlier *New Directions* reform agenda because it had lost the willpower to carry it forward. The strong leadership within the party needed to sustain those initiatives was no longer there, and had not been

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[210] Hanson interview.

[211] Manness interview. When asked of his reaction to the Doer Government's 2001 amalgamation announcement, Mr. Manness remarked: "I was very supportive. Yes, I was overjoyed. I was, again, ticked off because we didn't do it. I remember, at the time, shaking my head, I was so disappointed by our own group because we wouldn't have lost anything."

replaced. Asked about the disposition and stance of the government at the time of the decision to encourage voluntary amalgamation, Mr. Manness was characteristically blunt:

> Gutless. Afraid. And this would then be the sway in a new government where you didn't have some strong people who would argue for that [amalgamation]. We had lost Orchard, we lost myself, so those battles were never fought. Derkach wanted to go easy, would always go easy. Vodrey would want to go easy, and for sure Linda would want to go easy. Linda thought my approach was probably the wrong one and she was going to try to win the day through favour. And at the time Filmon, who knows what approach he might have taken? I think he may have wanted the safer, easier approach also. If he did, that's the way it was going to go. I said immediately, on the outside, it's going nowhere. I really believed that.[212]

Similarly, Deputy Minister Carlyle has suggested that, in his estimation, the government saw amalgamation as "too hot to handle" politically. In his view

> This was a significant issue for education, in the context of government, but it was also a significant issue politically because, as we all know, people in Manitoba on matters of boundaries and even right down to the local school, like try to close a local school and you'll see how interested in education the public suddenly becomes. You can raise taxes easier than you can close a school. Similarly, you can raise taxes easier than you can close a school division. So it was a political risk they had to take and I don't think they really felt comfortable doing it.[213]

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[212] *Ibid*. See also Saunders, *supra*, 326-329, for an account of the differing personalities and approaches of Mr. Manness and Mr. Derkach.

In terms of Premier Filmon's public attitude on amalgamation, his position was clear when responding to criticism in the Legislature from a Liberal member that his government had failed to take decisive action in follow-up to the Norrie Commission. The Premier acknowledged that the recommendations around boundary changes had generated "a great deal of opposition by people at the local community level." He argued that government had taken these concerns into account by setting the conditions to encourage voluntary amalgamation and that such an approach ". . . is ultimately the best way to go, because you need to have the support of the public when you are making such major changes. If the member opposite just wants us to bring down the hammer and do it from the provincial government, please have him stand up and say that and let him take the consequences of that statement."
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, Debates and Proceedings (Hansard, Volume 25B), Oral Questions, 4th Session, 36th Legislature.

[213] Carlyle interview.

This belief in the political peril of amalgamation is not shared by all. As Fleming writes, targeting school boards for reductions in staff, in operating expenditures, or even in the number of entities themselves, has proved to be of low political risk to governments:

> In the ecology of educational politics, trustees and district bureaucrats have few natural allies and enjoy little public support. They have no political constituencies save for themselves: parental concern about schooling usually extends no further than the local school and, for large elements of the public, "representativeness" at the district level is simply not an issue. Indeed, slashing "officialdom" has been a long-standing popular cause, and a "safe" political response….[214]

In some respects, Fleming's observations reflect the view of Clayton Manness. Standing on the electoral sideline, Mr. Manness expressed dismay at the unwillingness of the government to tackle the issue. Indeed, he was perplexed at the notion that directed amalgamation would have provoked an oppositional response from which the government would not recover. In his view, amalgamation was a "yawner to 95% of the people. They don't know or care." The larger battle would have been in overcoming the negative reaction, the fright and the worry within Cabinet and caucus, fights he had already been through in promoting the reform agenda:

> Yes, we would have had that [a strong reaction], but now you get into the dynamics of the Cabinet room and the caucus room. I mean, it's ultimately that group of people that have sway and I already had a lot of it out of the reform package. In my view, had we continued, we would have won those battles. There's no doubt there'd be disruption and anger in rural areas but not nearly as much as you'd think. I mean, we've had amalgamations now here between Red River and Morris Macdonald [School Divisions], and I don't know if they had 20 people out to those meetings. . . . I still think we could have won it in Cabinet or caucus and convinced the

[214] Fleming, *supra*, 21. See also Levin, Governing Education, 58, 143.

> Premier that this was worthwhile. We would go slower, we wouldn't try to take the whole pie on in one bite, we would take it on in bites.[215]

Rejecting Norrie: Amalgamation *if* Necessary, But Not Necessarily Amalgamation

In June 1996, Education and Training Minister Linda McIntosh announced that the government would not act upon the recommendation of the Boundaries Review Commission to impose amalgamation. Instead, government would encourage voluntary amalgamation and would provide financial incentive to assist school boards in reaching their own local conclusion on the desirability of consolidation. "While government supports the concept of fewer divisions, it also believes the best way to achieve greater effectiveness is through local involvement and decision-making," the Minister stated.[216] Cost savings and improved programming could be obtained by the pooling of resources to achieve greater efficiencies in procurement practices, for example. Monies saved through bulk purchasing of fuel, paper, and other school supplies could be

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[215] Manness interview. When asked if he thought Premier Filmon would have supported him in launching a more aggressive approach to amalgamation, Mr. Manness suggested he would have: "I think the Premier, certainly, was very supportive through this reform time and one of his most loyal lieutenants at the time, Taras Sokolyk [Chief of Staff, 1990-95], was really into this. And politically, we weren't losing a vote over this." See also Saunders, *supra*, 324-325, in reference to the role of Mr. Sokolyk in promoting the Tory reform agenda.

On the other hand, when the question was posed to him as to whether or not government's eventual decision on amalgamation might have been different had Mr. Manness or someone of that ilk been in charge of the Education portfolio, Mr. Leitch expressed scepticism: "Linda's style was very different from Manness' and had she been more aggressive would they have made a different policy decision? Perhaps. I don't know if just that sheer personal will that Clayton may have brought to the table would have been enough to persuade a lot of his colleagues to bite the bullet. I'm not convinced."
Leitch interview.

[216] "Government Supports Voluntary Changes to School Division Boundaries," Manitoba Government News Release, June 24, 1996.

redirected into areas of instruction, special needs, and for other education purposes.

One year later, in a further step toward encouraging amalgamation, the Minister declared that the government would provide a one-time grant of $50 per pupil for divisions choosing to voluntarily partner with another division. "Amalgamation," said the Minister, "is about maximizing access to educational programming for children in the most cost effective way. Amalgamations can benefit students, parents and local taxpayers by enabling pooling of the best programming and practices from the amalgamated divisions and the sharing across a broader population of equipment, facilities and expertise."[217] In addition to this direct financial support, amalgamated divisions would be allowed to set differential mill rates for up to two years before establishing a common mill rate. This would give divisions adequate time to adjust their budgets, and to mitigate possible "tax shock" for residents who might see their local education mill rate climb to a higher level within an amalgamated division.

Kingdon argues that in order for a policy idea to be attached to a problem, it must overcome the constraints of budget (cost), public acceptability, and the receptivity of politicians.[218] It appears clear that, at the time, the Conservative Government was unconvinced that directed amalgamation was the appropriate policy solution given the disruption to the education system which was likely to result, and concerned about the likelihood of increased system-wide costs due to harmonization of collective agreements, leveling up of infrastructure

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[217] "Government Supports School Divisions in Efforts to Improve Efficiencies," Manitoba Government News Release, July 9, 1997.
[218] Kingdon, *supra*, 200.

requirements, and other related expenditures as had been noted in the Boundaries Review Commission study. In the estimation of the politicians, it was also not an idea endorsed by the public, particularly by parents with school-aged children, and certainly not by MAST, an organization to some degree aligned politically with the government. In recalling that time, Mr. Leitch noted that

> . . . there was still a high degree of scepticism, if not outright resistance, at the local level to amalgamation. People still did not believe it was important, they didn't think they should be doing this. Some of the smaller divisions were concerned about being "swallowed" up, there was a strong local feeling in a general sense, and I'm not saying that it was so in every community, but in many communities a sense that if they went to amalgamation they would somehow lose autonomy. They were afraid that if they went the direction of amalgamation their views and their voice would be watered down and diluted, and they would lose the ability to control their future in many respects. There was a strong sensitivity around the Cabinet table and around the government caucus that the population generally wasn't quite ready for it.[219]

Lastly, and related to its sense of the public mood, the government had to contend with a rural caucus clearly apprehensive about amalgamation and of the political repercussions of such a decision for itself, as a government and as a political party in power. Voluntary amalgamation, with incentives, would demonstrate government's interest in promoting greater equity in terms of program access for students and efficiency in a fairer distribution of costs among ratepayers. It left the question for school trustees to decide, which placed accountability for the decision at a location away from the Legislature. Further, it was an approach which calmed the political jitters of government members, and fit with the preferred decision-making style of the Minister of the day.

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[219] Leitch interview.

Was the choice between directed and voluntary amalgamation all that was considered? What of downsizing divisions in a different configuration, of lesser scale, or over a longer period of time than was suggested by the Boundaries Review Commission? What of doing away with school boards entirely, as had been tried in New Brunswick? Were any other approaches given serious consideration? When asked the question of whether or not government had considered other policy options, Mrs. McIntosh replied:

> We talked about everything. We "blue skied" on absolutely everything that we could think about that might work. . . . We thought, was there some other way that we could achieve the same end? Because one of the attractions in the theory of amalgamation would be that it could save money and improve educational opportunities. So we sat down and looked at what could be done to achieve some of these goals without actually taking away the identity of school divisions.[220]

In the end, however, it was determined that voluntary amalgamation, supported by incentives, was the most suitable direction:

> We decided, then, that having explored every single thing we could think of from forced amalgamation through to leaving things as they are and doing nothing, that this evolutionary approach would be better for the overall picture of education in Manitoba. The evolutionary model could work without disrupting the current system. It's renovation as opposed to demolition. And demolition may seem easier in one sense by diving in and blowing the whole thing up, but it has consequences. With renovation you can keep things intact but you end up with something that looks and acts and feels completely different.[221]

In the Minister's view, by actively encouraging cooperation, the development of purchasing consortia, sharing human resources at both administrative and staff levels, and blending programs wherever possible, the benefits of amalgamation

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[220] McIntosh interview.
[221] *Ibid*.

would be achieved without the disruption and bitterness that looked certain to otherwise develop. Boundaries would then, she believed, be effectively invisible:

> We were trying to penetrate boundaries. Our thinking was this: if we could penetrate boundaries, chop holes in the Berlin Wall so that people could get through, then eventually the wall would come down. So we kept pushing against the boundaries, and we provided financial incentives, we provided personnel support, administrative support to help school divisions.[222]

The recollection of senior officials within the government and inside the Department of Education is less definitive, however, regarding the canvassing of a wide array of options. It did not appear, for example, that there was any appetite at all for importing to Manitoba the New Brunswick model of abolishing school boards. Mr. Leitch recalls that this approach was rejected as "extreme", pointing out that while it may have "made sense in a province like New Brunswick, as it is more geographically compact, it was not a solution that was acceptable or palatable in Manitoba because you'd be cutting out and removing a significant degree of local involvement and electoral control over school divisions. And the view was that there should continue to be some local control."[223] Mr. Hanson suggests that any consideration of doing likewise was aborted because of the political sensitivities of key actors within the government.

> There was some rudimentary talk about is it [the New Brunswick model] a possibility, what are the pro's, what are the con's? But I think, within the Conservative Party, you had your hard-liners and your not-so-hard-liners. The hard-liners were more in favour of centralized control, but they didn't trust the Department enough to take the leadership in that regard. They didn't have faith that the Department had the will power, the *chutzpah*, the ideology, whatever, to strongly direct a school system which would be run from a central base. So I don't think there was any serious consideration of it beyond some talk in the early stages. I think, as well, the Progressive Conservative caucus was heavily salted with former trustees,

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[222] *Ibid*.
[223] Leitch interview.

> Len Derkach, Manness, McIntosh, you name it. And while they wanted greater control of education, I don't think they had totally forgotten their compatriots on the school boards. While they wanted to have more control, they didn't want to take the small "p" political power away from the local politicians. So there was a kind of schizophrenic thinking on this.[224]

Deputy Minister Carlyle recalls that other options were not actively considered by the Department at all. While different map scenarios were drawn up, to give the Minister and Cabinet some possible alternatives to consider, other policy approaches were not on the table for discussion.[225] That did not seem to matter because

> . . . the conclusion I came to at the time was it didn't matter what, this was an issue that the government didn't want to deal with directly. And at that time no formal papers were required or discussions held on "let's do the Maritime model and get rid of trustees." That was never discussed in my presence. I think it goes back to what I said earlier, that the motivation for the boundaries review in the first place was not an animosity towards teachers or trustees as in "those darned teachers are a thorn in our side, let's have an amalgamation so that we screw their heads around differently," or "let's deal with these trustees who are not doing a good job, let's get rid of trustees." The Boundaries Review Commission was driven by what I said earlier. That is, density of population, the costs, and other provinces had looked at it. Never, in my presence, was there a discussion of getting rid of trustees, as an alternative.[226]

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[224] Hanson interview.

[225] Mr. Carlyle indicated that, knowing government was struggling with the issue, Department staff worked within the parameters of the Commission's study to determine whether or not other division boundaries or configurations were possible. He questioned whether or not different permutations were possible. As he stated, "I think Mr. Norrie would agree that nothing is so fine as to just come out with one conclusion. It's like, I presume, drawing a picture. There are different ways of portraying a face."
Carlyle interview.

[226] *Ibid*.

Clayton Manness stated that, within the limitations of time available for a general discussion of issues around the Cabinet table and within caucus, he would challenge his peers on the continued relevance of and need for school boards. "I was always one, with tongue in cheek, who challenged my colleagues to say "why do we need school boards?" For sure, we were aware of the New Brunswick model. So I would throw that out because I questioned whether or not we have too much government. I'm a small government guy. If you're going to ultimately be held accountable, particularly for the quality of education, as a provincial government and that's where the quality category ultimately fell, I, for one, questioned the value of school divisions."
Manness interview.

Interestingly enough, having decided to move forward on a voluntary basis, it was evident to those within the Department that such a step would never generate much action at the school board level. Minister McIntosh believed that eventually, similar to the shift in response of governments due to changing public attitudes over smoking in public places and commercial establishments, a Conservative government might very well have had to take a harder line on amalgamation:

> Whether or not, as time went on if success didn't occur, would we have imposed it? I don't know because we were booted out of office. . . . I see this issue the same way [as the smoking debate]. There might come a point where we'd say, "okay, enough is enough, we've gone down this road, there's hardly any place left you can smoke anyhow, come on, we'll finish off the job." Bang, you've got to amalgamate the rest.[227]

Deputy Minister Carlyle's assessment was rather more pessimistic and mirrored that of Bill Norrie's in believing that a voluntary approach, while signaling a desire of some kind to act, essentially meant little progress would be achieved on the amalgamation front:

> In its heart of hearts, did the government believe that this would result in significant amalgamation? I don't know, I never had that conversation with them, but being a realist I doubt it. I think there was a sense that this was a reasonable alternative to forced amalgamation or doing nothing at the time. Was there a long-term belief that it really would result in dozens and dozens of amalgamations? Probably not.[228]

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[227] McIntosh interview. Mr. Leitch expressed agreement with this supposition, saying that "I suspect that had Filmon been re-elected in 1999, and this is my personal view, there would have been a stronger push to go that route and to cause more amalgamations to take place. I would hazard a guess that forced amalgamation probably would have taken place a little faster [than 2002] had there not been a change in government just because they were more familiar with the file."
Leitch interview.

[228] Carlyle interview.
Brian Hanson was more categorical in his assessment, arguing that the government's failure to be decisive meant that it had squandered an opportunity to move forward on amalgamation in

SUMMARY AND POSTSCRIPT

Although the indicators of declining enrolment, particularly in several rural school divisions, and increasing system-wide costs continued to present themselves, the decision of the Filmon Government in 1996 to step back from directed amalgamation allowed the issue to slip out of public consciousness and off the political radar for the balance of the government's term in office. With the exception of voluntary amalgamations in 1998, between the Norwood and St. Boniface School Divisions, and the Pembina Valley and Tiger Hills School Divisions, the subject lapsed into dormancy.

Why did the Progressive Conservative government not take up the recommendation of the Boundaries Review Commission and move forward on directed amalgamation? In the search for an answer, Kingdon's analysis is insightful: "windows [of opportunity] are opened either by the appearance of compelling problems or by happenings in the political stream."[229] Given that the government ultimately chose a voluntary approach to amalgamation, one is led to conclude the following: first, in the estimation of government, the problems evident in the elementary and secondary education system which might have necessitated the "remedy" of directed amalgamation were not yet of crisis proportions; and, second, that the political will to impose amalgamation did not exist. With regard to the former, although there was some degree of pressure

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a meaningful way: "You can't reform education as strongly as they wanted to reform education on a voluntary basis. You've got to get in there, you've got to hack and cut when you have support, do whatever changes you're going to do, and then back off. They waited too long into their mandate, and they lost momentum for whatever it was they intended to do in education reform."
Hanson interview.

[229] Kingdon, *supra*, 20.

being exerted on government to examine the educational *status quo*, which ultimately gave rise to the establishment of the Boundaries Review Commission, in the end those problems were not, as noted by Deputy Minister Carlyle, viewed as “cataclysmic”. The system would, particularly in urban divisions, propel itself forward even if only through its own inertia.

In terms of the latter, it is clear that the government’s calculation of its own political interests warned it of the potential electoral dangers of moving forward on directed amalgamation. Owing much of its success to a solid base of support in rural Manitoba, the government was wary of provoking a strong backlash from its core constituency. The Commission report of 1994 did not produce, for the Progressive Conservative government of Gary Filmon, a policy window. It did provide a clear-pane view, so to speak, of the problems in the K-12 sector but it was through that clear pane that many, indeed most, in the government perceived unfavourable political consequences for itself if the Commission report was implemented as Mr. Norrie had recommended. Implementing the report would unsettle the largest portion of its political base of support in rural Manitoba and in certain areas of suburban Winnipeg. Although this fear was not shared by prominent Conservatives such as Clayton Manness, by 1996 he was no longer Minister of Education, was out of government, and therefore not in a position to carry that fight forward through Cabinet and caucus. A voluntary approach, favoured by Minister McIntosh, seemed better suited to her own personality, the political climate of the times, and provided a tonic which calmed the nerves of a

disquieted PC caucus. Without strong champions advocating a different approach, any meaningful discussion of other options was stillborn.

As Bill Norrie suggested, the recommendations being passed to government from the Boundaries Review Commission were a political “hot potato”. As evident in the government’s response, and in the testimony of insiders, notably the bureaucrats, it was “too hot to handle”. With the election of a new government in 1999, and when amalgamation emerged once more as an issue, would it become so again?

CHAPTER 4

DIRECTED AMALGAMATION ADOPTED: 1999 – 2002

> "Meteorologists see perfection in strange things, and the meshing of three completely independent weather systems to form a hundred-year event is one of them. 'My God,' thought Case, 'this is the perfect storm.'"[230]

On September 21, 1999, the New Democratic Party (NDP) led by Gary Doer captured 32 seats to defeat Gary Filmon's incumbent Progressive Conservative government. The election represents a turning point in the amalgamation story for, as Kingdon argues, "agendas are changed because some of the major participants [in government] change … bringing new priorities onto the agenda by virtue of the turnover."[231] It marked the opening of a window of opportunity: "A problem is recognized, a solution is developed and available in the policy community, a political change makes it the right time for policy change, and potential constraints are not severe."[232]

Although the NDP had included a number of commitments related to elementary and secondary education, as well as post-secondary education, as part of its "Hope for Young People" election platform, school division amalgamation was not among them. Why then, within mere months of assuming office, was the new Minister of Education and Training publicly expressing an interest in the issue? Given the controversy that the Boundaries Review

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[230] Sebastian Junger, The Perfect Storm (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1997), 158.
[231] Kingdon, *supra*, 153.
[232] *Ibid*., 165.

Commission report had generated only five years prior, the NDP's stated antipathy at the time to the report's recommendations around amalgamation, and the former government's subsequent decision to back away from it, what prompted the NDP to pick up this "hot potato"? What did it see as the compelling educational rationale to do so? Were other options investigated? Was amalgamation in 1999 seen as a political winner?

POLICY

The first public indication of the new government's interest in amalgamation appeared as a story in the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Education and Training Minister Drew Caldwell indicated that government intended to take a new look at the Boundaries Review Commission report and, although he hoped school divisions might act in a voluntary way, directed amalgamation was a possibility. Expressing what would become an oft-repeated theme, the Minister stated that "my objective is to get resources into the classroom. I'm very, very supportive of ways that will increase administrative efficiency and free up resources for the classroom."[233] That declaration caught many unaware, even those on the "inside". Newly appointed Deputy Minister of Education, Dr. Ben Levin, for example, recalls his surprise at seeing the newspaper story:

> I was in my first week in the job, in November 1999. I remember this distinctly. I was going out to Brandon to speak to superintendents. I got there early in the morning and in that day's *Free Press* there was this headline in which the Minister, Drew Caldwell, was talking about amalgamating school divisions and I thought to myself "oh no!" I spoke to him the next week and asked "you're not going to be serious about that, are you?" And he said,

[233] Nick Martin, "NDP eyes plan to merge school divisions," Winnipeg Free Press, November 19, 1999, A1.

> "no, not really." But, as I later learned, Drew never said anything that he wasn't serious about, and nothing was a throw away remark.[234]

Other policy and political staff indicated that they, too, were astonished by the Minister's comment, given that it had received no play during the recently concluded election campaign. One suggested that "it came up all of a sudden", another stating that "amalgamation just sort of came out of the blue and hit us in the side of the head."[235] It appears, however, that its genesis can be found in the discussions of the NDP's education policy committee between 1995 and 1999. That specific mention was not made in the 1999 election is not, as Levin suggests, particularly surprising since "as happens now in all election campaigns, the central campaign management committee had to decide which particular issues would be central."[236] Paul Vogt, who prior to the election was head caucus staff person for the NDP, and subsequently became Policy Secretary to Cabinet and later Clerk of the Executive Council, indicated that consideration was initially given to replacing existing board governance structures with a "much more robust model" of site-based school management. Eventually, however, the decision was reached to work toward a more "modest version which is that, without touching division structures, you would just try to strengthen parent councils and get them more active. And that's eventually what we went for."[237] Amalgamation, which would reduce the number of divisional entities, but

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[234] Interview by author, tape recording, Winnipeg, Manitoba, August 16, 2006. See also Levin, Governing Education, 141. In December 1999 the Minister was quoted as saying, "I'm encouraging people to work together [on shared services and purchasing]. It doesn't have to be formal amalgamation. I'm not inclined to impose anything. I'm really not." Nick Martin, "Big hike in spending on education ruled out," Winnipeg Free Press, December 22, 1999.
[235] Interviews by author.
[236] Levin, Governing Education, 79.
[237] Interview by author, tape recording, Winnipeg, Manitoba, September 28, 2006.

preserve the governance structure, appeared to be an outgrowth of that pre-1999 policy position of the NDP. Such a position was less than explicit, however, with respect to active consideration of possible amalgamation and, therefore, it is not surprising that key figures within the Department and the central Policy Management unit appear to have been caught unaware by Minister Caldwell's ruminations on the subject.

The declaration by the Minister was also all the more intriguing given the NDP's previous opposition to the amalgamation recommendation in the Boundaries Review Commission report. As referenced in Chapters 2 and 3, the NDP had been very critical of the recommendation to reduce the number of school divisions to 22, arguing that doing so would be needlessly disruptive, diminish accountability to parents, and neither save money nor improve educational outcomes for students.[238] As someone new to elected office in 1999, his party's previous position did not seem to create any awkwardness for Minister Caldwell, although he acknowledged that some "tension" did exist:

> I never really bothered myself with what the position of the party was pre-1999. And, I have to be quite frank with you, I had discussions with Jean Friesen who was the critic, obviously, and with the Deputy, Ben Levin, who was part of the policy-making body of the party previous to 1999 and part of our transition team for our government coming into office. I had a number of discussions with the Premier, as we moved forward, about the issues Norrie set out as being important to address: inequities, quality of education, tax base, and so forth, were all there and were all important. Those inequities needed to be dealt with. . . . That tension was never completely resolved with the critics who were there previous to 1999.[239]

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[238] See also Tom Brodbeck, "Combining divisions won't save," The Winnipeg Sun, November 15, 2001.

[239] Interview by author, tape recording, Winnipeg, Manitoba, November 27, 2006.

Mr. Vogt suggests, however, that the party's previous position owed more to the specific nature of the Boundaries Review Commission recommendation on how amalgamation should occur than to the concept of amalgamation itself:

> You have to remember what the Norrie Commission was going to do. It was going to create this [4-sliced] pie in Winnipeg. The biggest objection that the NDP had at the time was you were disempowering the central neighbourhoods. I mean, effectively, if you had a pie with skinny little wedges into central neighbourhoods of Winnipeg, the suburbs would dominate in every single division. Right now you have Winnipeg School Division, it takes in some of the wealthier suburbs but it pretty much includes the entire core. And so there is a lot of what you might call "redistribution" in the sense of programs that are across the division. Therefore, kids in River Heights are getting the same standards as kids in Point Douglas. So that was a very important principle that Norrie was going to take away. I don't know that the objection might also have been the element of reducing the amount of local representation, but I think that it was actually the way that Norrie was proposing to do it as much as the principle of amalgamation.[240]

Resurrecting the amalgamation idea required a committed Minister, backed by a supportive Premier. In the estimation of those close to the political center of activity, and even of bureaucrats who would later be charged with implementing the plan, both the Minister and the Premier were strongly supportive of moving ahead on amalgamation. They were, employing Kingdon's phraseology, the policy "entrepreneurs" sponsoring the idea and promoting its acceptance. Various participants described Minister Caldwell's role as "critical", that he showed "no reluctance" in pursuing it, that this was not something "foisted on him – he was interested in it." The support of the Premier, for a significant policy initiative of this kind, would also be essential and it appears, on all

[240] Vogt interview. On provincial recognition of the unique role of The Winnipeg School Division in inner-city education, see Levin, Jane Gaskell and Katina Pollock, "What Shapes Inner-City Education Policy?" (2007), 61, Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy.

accounts, to have been present. The Premier was characterized as being the "driver", of "liking it [amalgamation] a lot", being "definitely interested in it", and in having an "abiding interest in the issue and took the initiative to put it on the agenda."[241] As will become apparent, that interest was sparked by what was seen as a solid educational rationale for pursuing amalgamation, complemented by a perception of favourable public reaction to the reduction in the number of school boards.

The problems visible in the K-12 education system continued to manifest themselves in the years after the Boundaries Review Commission issued its report. Declining enrolments in several divisions, inequitable access to programming throughout the province, and a stagnant or shrinking local tax base to pay for an increasing share of education costs were chronic concerns. Minister Caldwell expressed this perspective in the Legislature:

> The situations have also changed considerably since 1994. Rural divisions have significantly smaller enrolments and populations than they had in 1994. Financial pressures are obviously substantially greater than they were in 1994. We have had a number of years, as the member knows, of substantial cuts to provincial support for the public education system. Rural depopulation continues. That trend has not been reversed. It continues.[242]

Senior policy and bureaucratic staff echoed the view that pre-existing conditions continued to deteriorate, throwing into question the capacity of some school

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[241] Interviews by author.
The Premier had remarked publicly in the media of his dissatisfaction with the lack of action by divisions on amalgamation. With only four divisions partnering voluntarily since 1998, in the Premier's view "that's not enough progress – there's too many more changes that should be made."
Tom Brodbeck, "School boards face forced mergers," Winnipeg Sun, March 18, 2000.

[242] Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, Debates and Proceedings (Hansard), Committee of Supply, 2nd Session, 37th Legislature, June 25, 2002.

divisions to meet their mandate of providing an adequate education for resident children. Ron Desjardins, a Senior Policy Analyst in the Executive Council Office, has suggested that this was a very real worry:

> I think there was some question around the viability of some divisions, especially in rural areas. Number one, they were very small in terms of their enrolment and declining, declining every year for 30 some years now, since the 1970s really. And they were very weak and vulnerable in terms of their assessment base and not having the assessment base to really deliver the kinds of programming that may be desirable. There is certainly an ongoing social and policy objective with the public on efficiency and organizing something efficiently. Are you spending your money efficiently, are you delivering your programming efficiently? And an element to that is we had over 400 elected school trustees and people might view that a little bit negatively, that's way too many elected officials even if the expenditure on that, *per se*, isn't that great. There would be a perception of a real lack of efficiency in being over-governed.[243]

One Department official similarly remarked that declining enrolments, scale of program offerings, and lack of adequate tax base in some divisions were seriously problematic and the Department felt it had to begin to address such problems:

> Declining enrolment was an issue and the amount of programming that existing divisions could support, of course, was an issue and that is tied to declining enrolment. We had some divisions where the enrolment, many divisions actually, where the enrolment had been going down steadily over the years and some divisions where it was getting to the critical point where there just weren't the economies of scale necessary to allow the school divisions to provide the programming that we think all students should have access to. So that was a large part of it. The other part of it was that in some of those divisions there just wasn't the property tax base available to support the array of programming we think students should have access to. And so, again, it was a matter of, in the face of declining enrolment, finding a way to reconfigure those school divisions as organizations, as administrative and educational units, to find economies of scale.[244]

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[243] Interview by author, tape recording, Winnipeg, Manitoba, July 25, 2006.
[244] Interview by author, tape recording, Winnipeg, Manitoba, October 4, 2006.

Equity issues, programmatic and financial, were fundamental considerations and points of agreement among policy specialists and with some stakeholder groups. As Kingdon has noted, equity concerns frequently drive matters forward onto government's agenda for decision.[245] Similarly, Mr. Desjardins noted

> That was definitely a component of it, issues of equity in terms of taxation, too, in the way that the burden is spread out. People were, you know, looking at the issue. Many people looked at it and we were very careful on those taxation issues, but certainly the question of delivering programming in a division, having a capacity to deliver programming, has a strong equity component vis-à-vis other divisions in the province.[246]

The position of the Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS), an organization of influence with the government, had long been in support of reducing the number of school divisions in order to provide students with greater opportunities regardless of where they resided in the province. MTS had made a similar argument before the Boundaries Review Commission in 1994, and would do so again several years later.

> Greater equity in access to programs and services can be achieved when there is greater symmetry in operating scale among divisions. Through the reconfiguration of divisions . . . more school divisions will benefit from the advantages that economies of scale can offer. . . . Amalgamating school divisions may also reduce tax inequities between divisions. The current variation in taxation bases among divisions means that taxpayers making the same effort with the same special levy generate different amounts of money for school divisions.[247]

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[245] "Proposals sometimes come to be prominent on governmental agendas because they would serve to redress inequities, imbalances, or unfairness. Governmental officials and those around them sometimes perceive an inequity so compelling that it drives the agenda. Even if a principle of equity is not a driving force, fairness or redress of imbalance is a powerful argument used in the debates for or against proposals."
Kingdon, *supra*, 135.

[246] Desjardins interview.

[247] Manitoba Teachers' Society, Presentation to Law Amendments Review Committee, June 25, 2002, 3-4.

Given the litany of concerns, Minister Caldwell believed it was time to "dust off" the Boundaries Review Commission report. It was, as he explained, one of the items on his desk as he took charge of the portfolio in fall of 1999:

> I think it is standard practice for any new government to review the record and review the work of the previous government. And in this instance, it was a piece of unresolved work that was brought to my attention on assuming the office of Minister of Education and Training. . . . This was one of many items, youth television network, collective bargaining, there were a number of things, but the Premier's view was that this was one of many issues worthy of review when we formed office in 1999.[248]

Mr. Desjardins concurs with this assessment, noting that the thorough, professional nature of the Commission's work had brought the amalgamation issue to the fore; it was, he believed, a "positive contribution, and it was certainly at that point that the amalgamation initiative began under this government."[249] Dr. Levin has suggested that, given the prior existence of the Boundaries Review Commission report and the fact that all provinces with the exception of Manitoba and Saskatchewan had recently taken steps to reduce the number of school boards, amalgamation in Manitoba had a "sense of inevitability."[250] Mr. Vogt, however, disputes the idea that sipping from the chalice of amalgamation was somehow preordained for the new government:

> I don't actually know that what we did had any inevitability to it. I don't think we intended to get involved in it. Other jurisdictions had done it, but what they reported to us was that you pay a price for it. It's one of those issues where people agree in principle, but then nobody actually wants to do it. At the local level they all complain that they are losing something and then focus on what it is they are losing. So I would disagree with that a bit, actually. We had before us the experience of the Norrie Commission in the Filmon

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[248] Caldwell interview.
[249] Desjardins interview.
[250] Levin, Governing Education, 143. That view was reiterated in his interview with the author.

> Government, and they had found that the politics were just impossible and backed off. And we were actually doing the thing that you are always advised against which is to go half-way [in terms of implementation of a recommendation].[251]

THE POLITICS OF POLICY CHOICE

Reconsidering Norrie

Prompted by the expression of interest from both Premier Doer and Minister Caldwell, and cognizant of the continued press of problems within the existing system, a review of the amalgamation option began in earnest inside the newly-elected government. It had the Norrie blueprint in its hands. It now had to determine whether it wished to follow that plan, consider a modified version of it, or look at other options such as incentives toward voluntary amalgamation, abolition of school boards, or a greater emphasis on pooling of resources without disrupting existing governance structures. It appears that it did not take long for the conclusion to be reached that, while the Boundaries Review Commission report was the impetus for moving forward in some fashion, its recommendation for a total revamping of divisional boundaries and the creation of 22 new entities was "off the table". Indeed, Minister Caldwell has stated that the reason why his government declined to adopt the Commission's recommendations and implementation strategy was essentially the same as that which compelled the previous government not to act: it would be too disruptive to the entire system.

> I am just speculating on why they [PCs] didn't proceed with Norrie, but you couldn't proceed with Norrie in light of changing the boundaries completely, ignoring the existing school division boundaries. Every single school division has a number of collective agreements, every single school division is defined by boundaries,

[251] Vogt interview.

> defined by law in terms of their boundaries and in terms of their organization. School trustees are not appointed, they're elected officials. So not recognizing existing school division boundaries was the major, major, major flaw of Norrie. I mean, you could not manage without totally dissolving the entire public school organizational structure. That's the only way you could manage [to implement] Norrie. As I sit here now, it's inconceivable: a government completely destroying an existing system to move forward, destroying collective agreements, destroying long-standing institutional organizations in communities throughout the province?[252]

Minister Caldwell's special assistant at the time, the late Annalea Mitchell, likewise suggested that had the Norrie Commission report been implemented, "it would have affected every single division in the province, and I think the sense was that this would have been incredibly disruptive for a longer period of time. There was also a real concern that issues in the inner city, and in the core of Winnipeg that Winnipeg School Division deals with, might not receive the same degree of attention if that division was divided up and amalgamated with more suburban divisions."[253] A similar view was held by Mr. Desjardins. For him, the Boundaries Review Commission recommendations would have created paralysis in the system over the course of several years since it was not a workable plan, but rather a "grandiose scheme" that couldn't realistically be implemented:

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[252] Caldwell interview. Minister Caldwell had stated the same view publicly on many previous occasions, including in the Legislature at the time of the amalgamation debate:
"…Norrie essentially threw out all school division boundaries and had a massive reorganization of school divisions in the province. We look at Winnipeg. Norrie made a map of Winnipeg and divided it into quarters. It had no reflection on current school division boundaries, no reflection on collective agreements that were negotiated between different school divisions, and it is complex to even merge or harmonize collective agreements between two divisions merging in totality together, but when you start fracturing school divisions up based upon boundaries that do not recognize current division boundaries, you end up in a different scenario than when you are amalgamating two discrete entities together."
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, Debates and Proceedings (Hansard, Vol. 54), Committee of Supply, 3rd Session, 37th Legislature, June 25, 2002.

[253] Interview by author, tape recording, Winnipeg, Manitoba, July 28, 2006.

> . . . it was almost like theoretical restructuring. They redrew virtually every boundary and they redrew it along municipal lines. It was almost a, I'm not criticizing any individuals there, but there was almost a compulsion to neatness to put them along municipal boundary lines. Yes, okay, that's tidier but for whom? For people drawing maps? Or, maybe, for municipal officials so you can have the same mill rate for a school division within the same municipality? Well, yes, that's tidier and if you were starting over from square one that might be how you did it. But you're not starting from square one, you're starting from a certain reality, and why create something that's totally disruptive for everybody?[254]

Although not supportive of directed amalgamation in any guise, Deputy Minister Ben Levin was of the view that if it was to go ahead, it had to be something less draconian than that which the Boundaries Review Commission had suggested. In his advice to government, Dr. Levin said that "part of what I tried to do was consistently to get the government to be more modest in what it would do under the label of amalgamation, and in that I did have some success because we ended up with a relatively modest plan."[255]

The Norrie Plan Modified

If the Norrie plan was off the table, were any other policy options considered which might meet the imperatives of restoring equity in programming and financing, managing costs, and enhanced viability of operations at the local level? Although the New Brunswick experiment provided a possible alternative model, it was not given serious consideration. Minister Caldwell noted that, while

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[254] Desjardins interview. In speculating why the previous administration failed to act on the Norrie Report, Mr. Desjardins suggested that "they [PCs] may have reacted to a lot of the connections they have, especially in rural Manitoba, and they could see some resistance and some anxieties about amalgamation, so they backed down from doing anything aggressive. I think that voluntary is always the path of least resistance, voluntary looks fine, you don't necessarily achieve your objectives that way but you certainly can appear to do it. And, as I said before, I don't think that Norrie gave them a road map to get somewhere."

[255] Levin interview. See also Governing Education, 144.

other avenues were explored, the point of return was always the Norrie Commission report:

> The whole range of options, as we moved forward on this, was under discussion and under consideration. The full range. There is an active debate, not only in Canada, but around North America and around the world, as to what level national, state and local governments should be involved in public education. The whole range of initiatives underway in Canada was up for discussion as we went forward as a government. But I don't want to overstate that. Our basis was Norrie, and the analysis of Norrie was the foundation for moving forward with this. Where we differed from Norrie – and it was a fundamental difference – was how we progressed with respect to existing institutions, not disregarding those existing institutions.[256]

Consideration of the abolition of school boards was briefly discussed, but quickly abandoned. Mr. Vogt indicates that, while in Opposition, the NDP had considered many possibilities in crafting its educational policy, but doing away with school boards was seen as "too radical a step." There was a concern within the party that eliminating an arena for local political involvement and participation in the education governance process was unwise.

> I would say the worry about doing that was, it is true that for the average parent the divisions don't have much salience anymore, and you can see that from the turnouts for voting and the fact that incumbents always get returned and so on. But, on the other hand, it is a place where people who are very interested in education from the community get elected, so there is a constituency of trustees which is actually quite important. And it is a recruiting ground where people go up to other levels of politics. So I think there was a feeling that the accusation would be of abolishing the whole level of democratic involvement, and that was pretty serious for those who took it on. I think the feeling in the party was they just couldn't go that far, and there would be a lot of people who were active in the party who had run for school board office.[257]

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[256] Caldwell interview.

[257] Vogt interview. For a recent example of a school trustee making a foray into provincial politics, see Nick Martin, "School trustee to make bid for provincial seat," Winnipeg Free Press, March 26, 2007, B3. For perspective similar to Mr. Vogt's, see Jon Young, "System ensures accountability while strengthening education," Winnipeg Free Press, April 13, 2006. Nonetheless, in the October 2006 election of school boards, of 313 trustee positions across the province a total of 135 were filled via acclamation or, to a lesser extent, board appointment (source: MAST). See also Nick Martin, "Contests for school board seats a rarity, and worrying trend," Winnipeg Free Press, October 2, 2006.

Both Deputy Minister Levin and Mr. Desjardins argued that doing away with boards, while not only reversing over one hundred years of tradition of local involvement in education, would have also presented a whole host of troubling policy and political implications. As Dr. Levin put it,

> I seem to recall some kind of discussions about maybe we should get rid of boards entirely, but they never really went anywhere seriously. I don't think there's any advantage to getting rid of boards and some significant disadvantages. One thing I'd point out to a number of Ministers is if there are no boards, every local problem is your problem. That's a persuasive argument for politicians. [In addition] it just becomes a huge complex. You have to go to 100% funding, then you have to figure out what you're going to do with equalization, you have to figure out what you are going to do with assessment. It would be a really big change. I don't recall any serious work done on it, or even any really significant conversation about it.[258]

Mr. Desjardins' recollections are similar on the same question:

> . . . the issue was raised, and I would say it was discussed, but it wasn't seriously analyzed. I don't think anybody looked on it as a real solution to whatever foreseen problems there were. I think people saw that New Brunswick did that, but New Brunswick is a lot smaller geographically and they went backwards to some degree on the issue anyway. I think there's also a perception that if you do away with these school boards you'd be embracing all of those administrative issues, every nit-picking little issue, and bringing every complaint that everyone has into the Minister's office, and be super-centralizing of everything. And I don't think anybody had an answer about how to deal with that because that's not practical, that's completely impractical.[259]

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[258] Levin interview.

[259] Desjardins interview.

As Ms. Mitchell remarked, "There wasn't any sense on the part of the government that school boards were useless and they ought to be abolished. The government recognized that school boards have an important role to play in terms of being closer to their communities than a provincial government bureaucracy could ever be. And the government did not want to get into the business of running each individual school in the province."
Mitchell interview.

Even if amalgamation was deemed as the only practical policy option available, there was, nonetheless, a degree of comfort in it as a policy instrument that had been used before in Manitoba, elsewhere in Canada, and abroad. Certainly, the context and justification for once again adopting such an approach had been articulated by the Boundaries Review Commission and conditions within the education system had not improved; in fact, they may have deteriorated with the passage of time. Amalgamation offered to government what Fleming has termed a "historical strategy revisited": the redrawing of boundaries, a shrinking in the overall number of school divisions, and reducing the number of elected trustees and senior administrators. Its ostensible purpose was to improve educational opportunities for children by increasing access to a wider array of program offerings, and fostering system-wide efficiencies by scaling back on the size of governance and administration. It would give provincial authorities a means to "de-govern, not re-govern" the educational system in the province.[260]

If amalgamation was to be the government's policy, how would it be achieved? Would it be voluntary, an approach which the Boundaries Review Commission had condemned, or compulsory, the scope of which as promoted by the Commission had already been rejected by the Doer Government? If directed, on what scale would it be implemented? By 2000, the government had made it clear that amalgamation was going to occur, and prior to the election of trustees and municipal councilors in October 2002, but that the preferred approach at the outset was for voluntary consolidation. In an interview with the

[260] Fleming, *supra,* 19-20.

Winnipeg Free Press, Minister Caldwell stated that "we intend to continue right now with the voluntary approach. If, however, there is no progress after one year, we will take stronger measures."[261] Shortly afterward, in a letter to stakeholders, the Minister commented that school division amalgamation was "a theme that the Premier and I have mentioned a number of times over the past few months, and we have not changed our view. . . . I am concerned about maintaining organizational units that simply are not viable either educationally or financially" (see Appendix 5).[262]

In September 2000, the Minister wrote to chairs of school boards, encouraging them to "look seriously at possibilities for amalgamation or recombination." It would be prudent for divisions to engage in a dialogue with potential amalgamation partners to assess whether consolidation "would result in gains in efficiency or quality of education," he argued. School divisions were urged to consider program and geographic synergies, projected enrolments, and the local taxation base when contemplating the prospects for amalgamation. The $50 per pupil amalgamation grant, initially offered by the previous government, was again made available, as was a one-time offer of up to $10,000 to each group of divisions exploring amalgamation to assist in recouping travel and research costs. The Minister promised to follow-up with divisions in spring 2001

[261] The President of the Manitoba Association of School Trustees (MAST), Rey Toews, was also quoted as saying that the Premier had "strongly indicated" to that organization that directed amalgamation would, in the absence of progress toward voluntary mergers, be forthcoming. Nick Martin, "Merge or be merged, school boards told," Winnipeg Free Press, June 30, 2000, A1.
[262] Honourable Drew Caldwell, letter to stakeholder organizations, July 10, 2000, 3.

to ascertain the extent of progress being made in amalgamation discussions and efforts (see Appendix 6).[263]

The response of school divisions to the Minister's letter was tepid and, in some cases, hostile. A number of trustees expressed little interest in amalgamation, citing the idea as "offensive" or as a poor solution to problems which could be addressed through more money and changes in the provincial funding formula for schools.[264] Also, little significant movement occurred around the province during the early part of the 2000-2001 school year and, with the exception of serious discussions and preliminary agreements between The Morris-Macdonald School Division No. 19 and The Red River School Division No. 20, The Boundary School Division No. 16 and The Rhineland School Division No. 18, and The Frontier School Division No. 48 and The School District of Churchill No. 2264, there was not much visible evidence of progress. Many school divisions appeared to take the view that, for programmatic and taxation reasons, there were no compelling reasons to pursue amalgamation. The position of one division was expressed this way by its superintendent:

> They [trustees] kept coming back to the financial realities and they felt that the financial realities did not support moving forward on some form of amalgamation. On the program side they felt there were solid programs in the school division, and in examining the options that were available program-wise in the neighbouring divisions they saw no enhancements coming. In fact, their argument was that if there was a unique program that was offered in the other division, the schools of choice option was always available.[265]

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[263] Honourable Drew Caldwell, letter to Chairs of School Boards, September 25, 2000.
[264] Nick Martin, "Most school divisions too small: Caldwell," Winnipeg Free Press, September 26, 2000, A1.
[265] Interview by author, tape recording, Winnipeg, Manitoba, October 17, 2002.

On January 9, 2001, the Minister once again wrote to all school divisions on this subject. He signaled the government's intention to move ahead with amalgamation, and asked all boards to file a report with him by April 20, 2001 identifying the steps taken in response to his earlier correspondence. Boards were encouraged to "take this opportunity to identify changes that would, in the long run, be good for education throughout the province" (see Appendix 7).[266] The Minister's feelings were made even clearer in an interview with the *Winnipeg Free Press* following release of the letter. "In the absence of good faith discussions," he said, "it tells me decisions would have to be made in the Minister's office. The school board boundaries are a creation of the provincial government, at the end of the day."[267]

To assist school boards in preparing their reports, and to allow the Department to more effectively assess common and comparable elements, an amalgamation analysis template was provided to all school divisions/districts to use if they so chose. The template was to assist school divisions in their examination of amalgamation, and serve as a common point of reference when meeting with neighbouring divisions to discuss the prospects for consolidation (see Appendix 8).[268]

The quality of the information provided by school divisions to the Minister by April-May 2001 varied considerably. Partnerships and the sharing of services, as ways of improving educational opportunities and attaining operational

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[266] Honourable Drew Caldwell, letter to Chairs of School Boards, January 9, 2001.
[267] Nick Martin, "NDP prods school boards to merge," Winnipeg Free Press, January 20, 2001, A6.
[268] Deputy Minister Ben Levin, letter to Chairs of School Boards, February 13, 2001.

efficiencies, were obvious suggestions as alternatives to amalgamation. Some responses were thorough, with thoughtful, detailed effort evident in the nature of the submission. Some others provided only cursory information, recycled submissions previously prepared for the Boundaries Review Commission in 1993 or 1994, or short one or two-page letters to the Minister. It was Deputy Minister Levin's view that most divisions adopted a position opposed to amalgamation, saying, in effect, "we don't want to do it so we'll write a report telling you why we don't want to do it." Divisions, he suggested, "were not going to help the government move this agenda forward."[269]

Having received formalized responses from school boards, it was evident to the government that amalgamation, if left to school boards, was not going to occur or if it did, only on a very limited basis. While a natural disinclination toward change may always exist, particularly a change that from an institutional perspective would cause uncertainty, disruption and create additional work,[270] in the government's view this was compounded by what it considered to be myopic thinking on the part of school boards. As the Minister declared, "I don't have any patience with parochial attitudes about this. 'I'm all right, Jack' doesn't cut it in this office. Every child in every classroom in the province of Manitoba has the right to equity. I'm the superintendent of the school division known as Manitoba."[271] However, there was a recognition in the Minister's office that the

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[269] Levin interview; Governing Education, 144.
[270] For a discussion on the resistance of education institutions to change, particularly when change is imposed externally, see D. Pettit and Ian Hind, "Reorganising the Delivery of Educational Services and Educative Leadership" in P.A. Dunigan and R.J.S. Macpherson, eds., Educative Leadership: A Practical Theory for New Administrators and Managers (London: The Falmer Press, 1992), 119-125; also Schon, *supra*, chapter 2.
[271] Nick Martin, "Deadline looms for school divisions," Winnipeg Free Press, July 17, 2001.

government's pronouncements to date were seen by most school boards as mere "bluster"[272] and were not being taken seriously:

> I think there was a perception in the school division communities, amongst trustees and so forth, that if the Tories weren't going to go down this [amalgamation] path, the New Democrats weren't going to go down that path. So there was a degree of lag, for although we announced that this was going to occur for the municipal elections during the next cycle [October 2002], I don't think we were taken seriously for probably a good year.[273]

The Minister's Special Assistant, Annalea Mitchell, concurred with the Minister's assessment as to how the government's requests for information and announcements were being viewed by most in the field:

> No, I don't think they realized how serious government was. They had already been through the whole business with the Norrie Commission report and the previous government didn't act on that. And I honestly think that they thought that this was something that government would get over, the previous government had too, and if we just hang on long enough we won't have to deal with it. So I don't think they realized how serious government was in moving forward on that agenda. I think it caught some of them by surprise.[274]

Amalgamation Rationale, Strategy and Scope

In moving forward with amalgamation, it appears that the NDP government had to be satisfied that two basic "tests" were met: was there a sound public policy rationale for proceeding with consolidation of a number of school divisions; and, secondly, would such a policy initiative be achieved with substantial public support and would opposition be limited, muted or ineffective? With regard to the first test, the government recognized that change even on a

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[272] Nick Martin, "School division can't find a willing dance partner," Winnipeg Free Press, September 14, 2000.
[273] Caldwell interview.
[274] Mitchell interview.

scale smaller than the Boundaries Review Commission had recommended would prove wrenching for the divisions affected. Therefore, on what compelling policy rationale would the government justify such upheaval? The second test required an assessment of likely public reaction, stakeholder support, and of the political will within the government itself to carry through on a policy that might well encounter some resistance. The previous government had backed away from directed amalgamation, in part because of the nervousness of its caucus over what it perceived as a negative reaction from parents and especially from rural Manitobans. Was the Doer Government similarly troubled? Would political will overcome the inclination to be cautious or hesitant?

Having come to the conclusion that the capacity of many school divisions, and particularly of several in rural Manitoba, to provide adequate levels of programming at equitable levels of cost had deteriorated significantly since the Boundaries Review Commission's report in 1994, and having given some consideration to other options, the government chose to proceed with a policy of directed amalgamation with limited scope. One official within the Department of Education indicated that declining enrolments and small tax bases had, in government's view, seriously compromised the operational effectiveness of some divisions. Without an economy of scale, divisions had "financial difficulty in offering a full slate of programming to students, professional development for teachers . . . and by bringing small entities together to form bigger entities you would have advantages of eliminating the administration from one of these combining entities and redirecting those resources to the classroom for kids, for

teachers, for improving learning, and just the dynamics of a larger size, larger scale operation."[275]

For Minister Caldwell, it came down to

> . . . how are we going to provide the best education for Manitoba's youth? How are we going to provide the best instructors, the best programs? In the earliest round of consolidation, in the one-room school you could get only so much done in terms of reading, writing and arithmetic, but in moving five one-room schools to a consolidated school where you had five or six classrooms and six or seven teachers, it was a huge advance forward in terms of the quality of education being provided to those students. The same motivations that moved those initiatives at the turn of the 19th century, in the middle of the last century, and in 2001 were all consistent. It was how could we improve the public school system.[276]

From a central government perspective, educational quality was contingent, to some extent at least, upon program options for students and efforts to expand that programming. This was a significant problem for most small school divisions. Mr. Vogt argues that

> . . . smaller divisions just didn't have the ability, when you're trying to introduce more specialized programs or programs that would involve itinerant people traveling around to different schools. Take a small example, like art in the school, where you have people who go around to schools but they are not based in schools and delivering it. The smaller divisions just weren't able to do it. The contrast between Winnipeg School Division which can offer an incredible variety of experiences to children because they can have people circulating between schools, and then you had divisions that had fewer than 1,000 students. What we found was a real challenge on programming.[277]

That there were benefits to be found in constructing educational units large enough to take advantage of economies of scale was an argument consistently

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[275] Interview by author, tape recording, Winnipeg, Manitoba, July 17, 2006.
[276] Caldwell interview.
[277] Vogt interview.

made by the government, the echoes of which reverberated at least as far back as the Boundaries Review Commission in 1994, the Michener Commission in 1964, and the MacFarlane Commission in 1959. A pooling of resources, to form a larger student and assessment base would, it was contended, allow for greater program access and variety at a reduced per pupil cost. Amalgamation would allow revamped divisional entities an opportunity to examine and adopt best educational practices, enhance the opportunities for professional growth and the sharing of expertise amongst staff, and foster greater specialization in some divisions in areas such as curriculum development and implementation. These considerations reflected, for example, those of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, which had been a consistent advocate of amalgamation in 1994 and again in 2001-02.

This view has not been universally endorsed, though, and there have been, and still are sceptics of the presumed benefits of the consolidation of school jurisdictions. Even the Boundaries Review Commission, although ultimately endorsing a significant reduction in the number of school divisions in Manitoba, acknowledged that a significant variation of opinion existed within the academic literature on the presumed benefits of larger school division units.[278] Other researchers, such as Haller and Kleine, have written that the largest education reform initiative undertaken in the United States in the last century, that being the consolidation of small school districts, was based on the conviction

[278] One of the consultants it had retained, Dr. Richard Rounds of the Rural Development Institute (Brandon University), had advised the Commission that in light of the minimal savings potentially recouped by amalgamation, recombination of divisions to the extent being envisaged "…could not be justified in light of the impacts, politics and dislocations experienced." Paul Samyn, "Co-operation may save boards: McIntosh," Winnipeg Free Press, March 28, 1996.

that larger entities were more effective educationally and more efficient economically. They have suggested that research demonstrates that amalgamation "routinely achieves neither of these results."[279] Walberg contends that the consolidation of school districts into larger units "has been a move in the wrong direction. Generally, it appears, that the smaller the district, the higher the achievement when the socioeconomic status and per-student expenditures are taken into account."[280] Ostrom has likewise written that there is not much in the way of empirical evidence to substantiate what most would believe is common sense. The "danger of self-evident truths" is the

> . . . presumption that large numbers of small governmental units serving a metropolitan area produce inadequate, inefficient, and inequitable services has been widespread throughout this century. Its converse – that big, centralized governments are more professional and offer economies of scale in the production of public goods and services – has been considered to be similarly obvious.[281]

Interestingly, such scepticism reached into the highest echelons of the Department of Education, notably in the person of the Deputy Minister, Dr. Levin. He had been a consistent critic of amalgamation, having submitted a brief to the Boundaries Review Commission in which he argued that amalgamation would

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[279] Emil J. Haller and Paul F. Kleine, Using Educational Research: A School Administrator's Guide (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 2001), xviii. See also Ornstein, *supra*, 169; Robert W. Jewell, "School and School District Size Relationships: Costs, Results, Minorities and Private School Enrollments" (1989), 21, 2, Education and Urban Society, 140-153.

[280] Herbert J. Walberg, "District Size and Student Learning" (1989), 21, 2, Education and Urban Society, 163.

[281] Elinor Ostrom, "The Danger of Self-Evident Truths" (2000), 33, 1, PS: Political Science and Politics, 33. Ostrom's critique was based on a review of urban policing within a number of metropolitan centers throughout the United States. Her findings, therefore, may not necessarily be generalizable to the provision of educational services in very small rural areas faced with declining enrolments and general depopulation.

"neither save money nor improve education."[282] Dr. Levin was of the view that, in addition to the extra costs incurred due to salary harmonization, system restructuring, and the general disruption and time taken away from classroom matters, reforms aimed at strengthening student performance, such as school organization and education governance, only weakly influence those factors which do have an impact on enhanced learning outcomes and improved graduation rates: classroom teaching and learning practices.[283] The Deputy Minister's distinct lack of enthusiasm for amalgamation, particularly in the face of other parallel initiatives requiring Departmental energy and attention such as formulating a Grade 3 comprehensive assessment model, contending with the fallout from the Morris-Macdonald School Division adult education scandal, and working on the development of the *K-S4 Education Agenda*, was on the public record and well known within government. Mr. Vogt made mention of this fact when recalling internal discussions on whether or not government would proceed in that direction:

> My recollection is that, actually, the Minister's department was not a big fan of this option. In fact, the Deputy at the time, Ben Levin, reminded us many times that he had written quite extensively against amalgamation as a solution to anything. And so we actually had to see this all through over his wishes, but he did his best as a loyal civil servant to implement it, but he didn't agree with it.[284]

Although Minister Caldwell acknowledged that this significant gulf in the policy preference of government and the Deputy Minister's considered opinion of its

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[282] Levin, Governing Education, 140. His views are also outlined in an article entitled "Bigger school divisions don't mean better ones," Winnipeg Free Press, March 8, 1992, A7, and Stevens Wild, "U of M prof condemns school review," Winnipeg Free Press, July 21, 1993, B2.
[283] Levin, Reforming Education, 27.
[284] Vogt interview.

doubtful educational soundness created some "tension,"[285] it was clear that government was prepared to accept the advice of previous education commissions, to rely on Manitoba's own past experience with consolidation, to trust strongly its own political assessment of likely success, and to move forward with amalgamation. This decision was consonant with Levin's contention that beliefs drive political action much more so than does empirical evidence; that is, to some voters reducing the number of school divisions would obviously save money by eliminating administrative duplication and bureaucracy. Even if research produces evidence contrary to such an intuitive and appealing assessment, "where beliefs are strongly held, political leaders challenge them at their peril."[286]

Did the government believe that a decision on directed amalgamation would meet with general public support? If so, what were the particular factors which needed to be considered in coming to a conclusion favourable to government and with the public? Even if it could be shown that amalgamation

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[285] Caldwell interview.

In the Legislative debates of May-June 2002 on amalgamation (Bill 14), the Opposition parties made frequent reference to the Deputy Minister's prior public statements questioning the educational rationale for amalgamation. The Minister himself admitted that this line of attack was "...a terrible position to put the deputy in, in terms of views that he expressed to the Norrie Commission eight or nine years ago," but that once the government had made a decision to proceed with amalgamation "the deputy's job was to make sure it happened effectively and expeditiously." Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, Debates and Proceedings (Hansard, Vol. 54), Committee of Supply, 3rd Session, 37th Legislature, June 25, 2002.

For his part, Deputy Minister Levin suggests that the Minister "was not particularly put out" by his prior public utterances and "was able to point out, quite correctly, that ministers, not deputies, make policy decisions on behalf of government. He [the Minister] was also confident that most of the public did not know who the deputy minister was, nor did they care what his opinions were." Levin, Governing Education, 155.

[286] *Ibid*., 20. Dr. Levin emphasizes this point in the title of his chapter on amalgamation, "Giving the Public What It Wants."

In his autobiography, former Prime Minister Chrétien reflected on the influence of public opinion in policy development: "The public is moved by mood more than logic, by instinct more than reason, and that is something that every politician must make use of or guard against." Jean Chrétien, Straight From The Heart (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), 62.

made for “good politics,” it was nevertheless clear that the following favourable conditions would be required: an accurate sense of the public mood, an activist Minister willing to push the agenda forward, the support of the Premier, Cabinet and caucus, and knowledge of where key educational stakeholders stood on the issue and whether or not their support or opposition indeed mattered.

The degree of public support for a policy initiative can often be measured by the extent to which it generates little negative reaction. In the estimation of key actors central to the amalgamation saga, the decision to reduce the number of school divisions appealed to the general belief that the system was over-governed, inefficient because of duplication, and was seen to be, aside from some pockets of localized opposition, largely a non-issue. Amalgamation was characterized as “popular”, and it appears to have been so but for different reasons with different individuals and groups. For example, although Minister Caldwell had described it as a “tremendously popular initiative,” when asked if amalgamation was a contributing factor in the government’s re-election in 2003, he candidly replied:

> I don’t think so. I mean, in my own constituency, it wasn’t. Around the province it may have helped Mr. Schuler [PC MLA] in Springfield because he made it a centre piece of his championing for Springfield. So it may have in that single constituency, whipping up passions and so forth. But around the province, I don’t think so. I think, if anything, it did demonstrate that we were a government that was not going to be passive in carrying forward public policy initiatives. I think it solidified our reputation, as a government, as being active and one that would not shirk difficult decisions, which I think is important in the public, and is a foundation for public support. I think it is a very important thing.[287]

[287] Caldwell interview. The NDP was returned to office, with an improved seat count, in the 2003 provincial election. NDP – 35, PCs – 20, Liberals – 2.

He went on to say:

> We were trusted as a government, I think, to be thoughtful on matters educational. I think with Norrie we had quite a vigorous discussion as that Commission was going around the province examining amalgamation in the years before we became government. So the groundwork had certainly been laid, the sod turned, the soil had been tilled. We certainly had the expertise with caucus to move forward and have a thoughtful discussion around issues dealing with education. In terms of the *zeitgeist* around smaller government, we've had 20 years of Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, Brian Mulroney and the whole neo-con idea that's only recently been discredited, I think, in America with George Bush and reflected in the recent changes to Congress and Senate. But the *zeitgeist* is certainly for smaller government. You know, for anybody that's an administrator, there is a lot of public hostility towards them. I think, partly, that's why politically it was a popular decision exterior to what we were trying to achieve internally. But exterior to this building and to public policy, there is a big constituency to punish people in suits, people who make fairly good money and are educated. It's unfortunate, but it's a political reality after 20 years of pushing smaller government in North America. So, I think those conditions came together to make it, not necessarily an opportune time, but there was a window of opportunity to move forward with amalgamation.[288]

When asked of her sense of the public mood around amalgamation, Ms. Mitchell responded:

> I believe that most of the public probably didn't care or were perhaps supportive, with the exception of a small group in Springfield. There was also a group in Pine River who were not opposed to amalgamation but requested that their community be amalgamated with the new Mountain View School Division instead of Frontier School Division as originally proposed. Their request was accommodated. Aside from these two areas there was little public comment, which I found surprising. But perhaps that is because most people with kids relate directly to their schools and usually not to their school boards. As well, a lot of people don't have kids in school so they often pay little attention to the education system. I think amalgamation was just not relevant to a lot of people. Is putting two school boards together going to effect how my particular school is operating? Probably not significantly, or it may even have a positive effect. So it just seemed to me that it wasn't on a lot of people's radar screens.[289]

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[288] *Ibid*. On public trust in the NDP with respect to provision of social programs such as education, see Levin, Governing Education, 79.
[289] Mitchell interview.

Given the experience of the previous government as it considered the amalgamation option in the mid-1990s, it could reasonably be anticipated that public reaction in 2001 would be mixed, with reluctance and opposition coming from rural areas of the province, and a greater degree of enthusiasm to be found in Winnipeg. Rural Manitoba had, over the course of the 20th century, been witness to the demise of its small school districts in favour of larger divisions initially responsible for secondary education (1959) and, shortly thereafter, for elementary education (1967). With these changes came the gradual disappearance of the small local school, and of a way of life and sense of place and attachment romanticized in community history books and in the reminiscences passed on from one generation to the next. Dunne has described those opposed to amalgamation as "rural conservators," the "classic antagonists of consolidation – country people who remember their own schooling with fondness, or at least respect, and who do not want their children removed from their sphere of influence."[290]

As revealed in Chapters 2 and 3, the dichotomy of opinion between rural and urban areas had been amply demonstrated in the early 1990s as the

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[290] Faith Dunne, "Choosing Smallness: An Examination of the Small School Experience in Rural America." Jonathon P. Sher, ed., Education in Rural America (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977), 84. On the experience and perceptions of rural Manitobans during previous eras of consolidation in this province, see Levin, "The Struggle over Modernization in Manitoba: 1924-1960." Rosa del C. Bruno-Jofré, ed., Issues in the History of Education in Manitoba: From the Construction of the Common School to the Politics of Voices (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, Ltd., 1993), 88-91.

Rural "alienation" may have been compounded by the greater physical and psychological distance between trustees and centralized management, and local consumers of educational services. Walberg suggests that with bigness came the establishment of provincial and divisional bureaucracies which "took on classic Weberian features: centralization of control, formal hierarchies, professional credentialism, specialization of function, and precedence of impersonal means over ends."
Walberg, *supra*, 157.

Boundaries Review Commission conducted its hearings across the province. As the Commissioners had heard, there was a commonly expressed theme that the local school was the final bond holding small rural communities together. Without a school, the prospect of attracting young families would disappear, spelling the eventual demise of the community. In its presentation to the Commission, the Union of Manitoba Municipalities (UMM) spoke out against forced amalgamation, arguing that it would ultimately lead to school closures. Instead, it urged the Commission to consider "transparent" boundaries, and to encourage greater use of distance education technology and the sharing of divisional resources. A group calling itself the Small Schools Association of Manitoba spoke of its "adamant" opposition to wholesale moves toward larger divisions which would "severely threaten the very existence of small schools in Manitoba."[291] Indeed, worry over the potential closure of schools and the loss of a local connection to education had not abated much a half-dozen years later. As Levin writes, "alleviating this concern was an important policy need." As part of the policy package around amalgamation, a three-year moratorium on school closures in amalgamated divisions was eventually written into legislation to "reassure communities about their schools' future."[292] This had the effect of muting some of the negative reaction and fear regarding amalgamation outside of Winnipeg.

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[291] Union of Manitoba Municipalities presentation to Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission, April 19, 1994; Small Schools Association of Manitoba presentation to Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission, April 19, 1994. For a flavour of rural reaction as reported in the media, see also Doug Nairne, "Lines drawn in school boundary battle," Winnipeg Free Press, January 5, 1994, A1; Nairne, "Rejig school divisions? Not in my backyard . . ." Winnipeg Free Press, January 5, 1994, B3; and Aldo Santin, "Division changes touchy," Winnipeg Free Press, April 21, 1994, B1.

[292] Levin, Governing Education, 148.

In Winnipeg itself, if "enthusiasm" for amalgamation somewhat overstates the case, then it appears that the possibility of reducing the number of school divisions in the city would not have engendered any great sense of public loss. As recently as the 1990 provincial election, as Chapter 2 showed, some provincial politicians were questioning the need for so many school divisions within the City of Winnipeg. As Dr. Levin remarked, "I doubt you could find ten people on the street who would say nine school divisions is the right size for this city. Most people would say one."[293] Even the Mayor of Winnipeg, Glen Murray, weighed in, arguing for the creation of one school division for Winnipeg which would then standardize property tax rates, the current variations in which were, he claimed, affecting the patterns of development in the city.[294]

The two major education stakeholders, MTS and MAST, adopted, as they did in 1994, different positions on amalgamation. MTS, as has been noted elsewhere, endorsed amalgamation as a means of introducing greater economies of scale in the system, which would (it believed) enhance program opportunities for students, expand the local tax base, and improve working conditions for teachers. When asked for his view as to why MTS supported the NDP on amalgamation, Brian Hanson suggested that it was equal parts opportunism and philosophy:

> I think it was, in part, a *quid pro quo*: you support us on some of our issues around revising *The Labour Relations Act* and stuff like that, and we'll give you some support on things that are important to you. So part of that was going on. But I think if you set aside the union issues, MTS was not totally wrong in its view that we've got

[293] Levin interview.
[294] Nick Martin, "Mayor wants one school board for city," Winnipeg Free Press, September 27, 2001, A1.

> some silliness in this province and some of the little divisions that are running around are not good for their membership in terms of career opportunities, it's not good for students, it's not good for pedagogy. So, I think there was some recognition on the part of MTS and/or the teacher locals that amalgamation had its positive points. I mean, I could be snide and say "well, they were going for amalgamated contracts where the lower paid would come to the higher pay," and that may have factored in with some part of the MTS. But I think, overall, their support of amalgamation was probably more altruistic and student and classroom teacher driven than it was collective bargaining driven.[295]

MAST, to the contrary, opposed directed amalgamation. The essence of its stance is captured in its remarks to the Law Amendments Review Committee: "The position of the school boards and MAST remains unchanged: amalgamations should be voluntary, and should only occur where there is community support and demonstrable benefit to students. We do not believe that the amalgamations mandated by the government meet these tests."[296] As noted in Chapter 3, MAST was an organization at a political disadvantage in that it seemed unable to rally any significant public support for its position.[297] With the change in government in 1999, its political influence was also somewhat diminished. A superintendent of an urban school division recalled this lesson in "Education Politics 101":

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[295] Hanson interview.

[296] Manitoba Association of School Trustees, Presentation to Law Amendments Review Committee, June 25, 2002, 2.

[297] As Mr. Desjardins observed it, "there is nobody out there manning the barricades to defend the continued existence of school divisions. There is very little of that. People are connected to the school that their kids go to, or they are connected to their school if there is a school in their neighbourhood. They're not closely wedded to their school division, it's a concept for most people, even in rural areas because they're so large they're really not a part of the community in the way of schools. So there is not a huge vested interest in maintaining the *status quo*." Desjardins interview.

> You know, the Premier told me straight to my face, public opinion in Winnipeg is 80% in favour of doing away with school boards all together. So he says this is a winner politically. As a politician he gets up and says "we're amalgamating, and this will save money. Look at the money we're going to save, $10 million." The public hears this and says, "yeah, get rid of those darn school trustees," but the reality of it is that it [saving money] ain't gonna happen.[298]

When asked if they believed that the support of or opposition from stakeholder groups influenced government's decision-making process, or its outcome, in any significant way, a number of key participants expressed differing perspectives. Mr. Desjardins, for instance, felt that while the pulse of organizations was certainly taken, their influence was not significant because of the sense that, broadly speaking, the public was in favour of amalgamation. The influence of any organizational opposition did not affect the broad parameters of the government's decision to amalgamate. However, the government did accommodate local citizens and some school boards by adjusting final boundaries in certain areas.[299] Ms. Mitchell noted likewise, suggesting that "it wasn't one particular group that was driving it in terms of getting it on the government agenda."[300] Mr. Vogt, on the other hand, suggested that to the extent that opposition was expressed, it did have a braking effect on the government's plans:

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[298] Interview with author, tape recording, Winnipeg, Manitoba, October 22, 2002. The $10 million figure was in reference to a comment made by Minister Caldwell that the savings which would occur from reducing the number of trustees and senior administrators, as well as a calculation between the difference on what divisions were currently spending on administration and what they would be able to spend with administrative cost caps in place, would notionally be that amount. See Levin, Governing Education, 151.

[299] Desjardins interview.

[300] Mitchell interview.

> I think it made us hesitate. I think that probably we would have rather gone further than we did. I think that the resistance we got from the divisions, trustees, and also from local government people, municipal government people, it did probably push us off from a more ambitious model. I think we had more amalgamations on the board when we started than where we ended up, and we scaled back a couple of times from where we were going to go. So, yes, it did have an impact.[301]

For Minister Caldwell, while the viewpoints of stakeholders were important, it was subordinate to what government believed to be the public interest in the matter. As he put it:

> I am always sensitive to, and I think this government, at least, is always sensitive to voices of Manitobans and voices of stakeholders. In an initiative like this, people are pretty intimately involved with it and intimately affected by it, so there was a lot of respect and a lot of weight given to every voice that was part of this debate. The macro policy, though, and how it plays out macro-wise in Manitoba, is always going to be the most important factor because a government should not be an arbitrator of winners and losers between stakeholders. A government should always be about how is the province as a whole going to win on any issue? How is this going to benefit, long term, the public education system in the Province of Manitoba? How is this going to benefit future generations of students? How is it going to benefit the management and administration of public education for the future in Manitoba? That was always the overarching perspective on this initiative.[302]

The calculation of public opinion, rural and urban, the positions of key stakeholder groups, and the NDP's previous stance in opposition to amalgamation, all made for a sometimes contentious internal discussion on the merits of moving forward with directed consolidation of some school divisions. The Minister was, however, mindful of the kind of advice offered by former Premier Duff Roblin that "the care and feeding of the caucus is a skill every party

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[301] Vogt interview.
[302] Caldwell interview.

badly needs. It is a basic political requirement. . . . Caucus members mediate local opinion. They bring shrewd judgments to bear on government proposals."[303] As he noted earlier, the Minister recognized that tension existed among some of his peers in Cabinet and in caucus on this initiative. Conversations with his colleagues were useful to him, however, because caucus "offers constructive criticism and constructive advice on a whole gamut of policy that's before government." Such advice was as much political as it was about the soundness of the idea from a public policy perspective:

> It was a discussion that alerted one to pending challenges or problems or pitfalls, and supporting one when one was under attack by those in opposition to this initiative. Warning one when you might be getting too close to having a political problem, and warning of political problems as they were seen in the constituency. Daryl Reid [NDP MLA], for example, in Transcona was very, very good in advising me about what was happening on the ground in the Transcona-Springfield amalgamation. The Premier was also very good from a political sense, macro-wise in the province, because he's around the province all the time and knew how it was playing on the ground.[304]

Although the Minister described the internal debate around amalgamation as largely positive, collegial and "absent division in any meaningful way", other observers have suggested that deliberations were somewhat more fractious. Some in Cabinet and caucus questioned the policy and political wisdom of grasping the amalgamation nettle. In his interview, Deputy Minister Levin noted that "there were a number of Ministers who weren't very keen on the idea at all, so there was some back and forth on that, how big would it be, smaller,

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[303] Roblin, *supra*, 97.
[304] Caldwell interview.

bigger?"[305] Mr. Vogt remarked that the presence in Cabinet and caucus of a number of individuals who had been educators or who had served at the school board level enabled "more so than almost any issue that I can recall, a group of people who could step outside of their own portfolio and really speak with some experience and passion on the issue."[306] He pointed, in particular, to Ministers such as Greg Selinger, Tim Sale, and MaryAnn Mihychuk who possessed extensive experience and involvement in the education sector. It was, consequently,

> . . . a very contentious issue within government. There were people on both sides of it, people saying that the worst thing you could do was to get caught up in very intense local politics. People would be losing local representation, as they saw it. "You're going to lose your whole education agenda," was the concern often expressed. And there were other people who were saying that our education agenda within these smaller divisions was already getting lost. There were things we couldn't do as long as we were dealing with these tiny little divisions and their limitations. As I recall, the give and take was such that the decision could have gone the other way. You knew, inevitably, that this was going to be a big issue for elected members and, particularly, for the MLA's representing areas where there was going to be amalgamation. The whole idea could have easily been rejected.[307]

To the extent that dissentient views were being expressed even as the NDP government moved to directed amalgamation, one is then left to speculate as to the factors that eventually pushed the deliberations decidedly in that

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[305] Levin interview. See also Nick Martin, "Division border changes close," Winnipeg Free Press, November 8, 2001.

[306] Vogt interview. Minister Caldwell concurred, arguing that the presence of several former educators proved a useful resource to him, and made the discussions "thoughtful, provocative, and incisive." Caldwell interview.

[307] Vogt interview. During the Legislative debates on Bill 14, *The Public Schools Modernization Act*, in May-June 2002, Progressive Conservative members would attempt to play up those divisions to politically embarrass the government by repeatedly pointing out the position Deputy Premier Jean Friesen had taken with respect to the Norrie Commission's report, and more specifically to her stated opposition to forced amalgamation which the report had encouraged.

direction. It would seem reasonable to suggest that the following played a major role. First, the idea was endorsed by the Premier. His lengthy tenure, since 1988, as party leader, and recent electoral success in returning the NDP to power had inspired, on the part of Cabinet and caucus, a great deal of confidence in the Premier's political acumen and savvy. Indeed, more than one party insider had remarked, with admiration, about the Premier's acutely sensitive political "nose". Had it been too close to call, the Premier's voice would ultimately have prevailed. Second, the idea was also forcefully pursued by Minister Caldwell. He considered himself an activist Minister during his time in the Education portfolio, with an agenda to pursue, an approach which may have conferred some type of advantage in securing an overall consensus:

> In terms of individual Ministers, some Ministers are more powerful than others through virtue of their personalities and characters. Some Ministers are very happy, and this is just an observation, but some Ministers are content with allowing the civil service to manage their department without taking any personal initiatives or championing any agendas. Other Ministers get into departments and want to be very hands on and very activist. I personally believe that we're in government to make the world a better place and to change the world, so I'm going to use my time in office in an active way. I think that's why we're here, to move items forward. In this case, to move public policy in education forward.[308]

A third factor was the government's decision not to move forward on amalgamation in the manner suggested by the Boundaries Review Commission. This assuaged the anxiety of some government members who were hesitant to

[308] Caldwell interview. As he later commented, the government hoped to create in Manitoba "the road to the 'New Jerusalem', in Tommy Douglas' phrase. We are a caucus of passionate idealists in terms of making a better world for those who live in this province, and education is a foundation."

favour amalgamation as Norrie had proposed. This was not unimportant, suggests Mr. Caldwell, because

> I think there was a degree of comfort given to my colleagues by the fact that we weren't going to go down a route that was going to cause institutional chaos and probably extended litigation. You could not manage throwing into the wind, as it were, literally hundreds of collective agreements, and ignoring the historical transportation and community realities of existing divisions. You had to have some structure as you moved forward.[309]

Amalgamation, therefore, would be consolidation on a smaller scale, using existing divisional boundaries and leaving many divisions untouched. Deputy Minister Levin viewed the eventual amalgamation plan as a "pretty low key effort."[310] Minister Caldwell characterized it as

> . . . a very modest change. I mean, obviously, on the ground where you've got two divisions coming together in communities and schools having to make decisions about rationalizations, it is more monumental. But from the provincial perspective it was very incremental, a very small change. We spoke before about trying to harmonize collective agreements, which was challenging enough and in some cases still goes on with existing units, but discarding the entire system and starting anew? That way lay dragons.[311]

Finally, unlike in 1996 when the former Filmon Government was very cautious about, and ultimately declined to act on, directed amalgamation because of the concerns of rural Manitobans, the NDP did not face a similar problem. Of its 32 seats, only 11 were from outside of Winnipeg (see Appendix 9). As well, given that its eventual plan was of smaller scale and that it had less representation in rural areas to begin with, the antipathy which may have existed beyond the perimeter of Winnipeg was of lesser political concern. Approximately 60% of

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[309] *Ibid*.
[310] Levin interview.
[311] Caldwell interview.

Manitoba students would be left untouched by division restructuring, and in the case of rural constituencies, only three NDP held seats were affected – Dauphin-Roblin, Swan River and La Verendrye. Even in these instances, the La Verendrye and Swan River ridings were only modestly affected by the amalgamation of divisions partially within their constituency boundaries, and in the Dauphin-Roblin riding the Intermountain School Division had voluntarily agreed to merge with Dauphin-Ochre School Division, in any case.

The NDP's base of support, urban Winnipeg and northern Manitoba, proved to be of advantage to it when moving ahead on amalgamation. In the north, seats such as Thompson, The Pas, Flin Flon and Rupertsland were largely unaffected except in instances where some very small communities joined with The Frontier School Division. In Winnipeg, it would appear that amalgamation of some existing divisions was relatively popular with urban voters which meant there was no significant political price to be paid by NDP MLA's in the city. The "stars," therefore, seemed to align thereby clearing the way for the amalgamation of some school jurisdictions where negative political repercussions for the government and party of Mr. Doer would likely be very minimal or non-existent. The next major determination was which divisions would be affected by the policy of directed amalgamation.

Amalgamation *is* Necessary, But Not Necessarily Amalgamation for Everyone

On November 8, 2001, Minister Caldwell announced that the Government of Manitoba was directing the amalgamation of a number of school divisions and districts in the province, such that before the next round of trustee elections in

October 2002, the number of divisions/districts would be reduced to 37 from 54 (see Appendix 10).

The decision to selectively amalgamate school jurisdictions was itself a politically astute calculation, if not administratively wise. Table 3 (below) provides a summary of the divisions effected by the government's decision, with whom they were partnered, and the names of the new entities:

TABLE 3

Existing Division/District	New Division
Assiniboine South No. 3 Fort Garry No. 5	Pembina Trails
St. Boniface No. 4 St. Vital No. 6	Louis Riel
River East No. 9 Transcona-Springfield No. 12 (urban)	River East Transcona
Transcona-Springfield No. 12 (rural) Agassiz No. 13 Pine Falls No. 2155* Whiteshell No. 2408**	Sunrise
Boundary No. 16 Red River No. 17 (part) Rhineland No. 18 Sprague No. 2439	Border Land
Red River No. 17 Morris-Macdonald No. 19	Red River Valley
White Horse Plain No. 20 Midland No. 25	Prairie Rose
Mountain No. 28 Prairie Spirit No. 50	Prairie Spirit
Dauphin-Ochre No. 33 Duck Mountain No. 34 Intermountain No. 36	Mountain View
Pelly Trail No. 37 Birdtail River No. 38	Park West
Souris Valley No. 42 Antler River No. 43	Southwest Horizon
Frontier No. 48 Churchill No. 2264 Lynn Lake No. 2312 Leaf Rapids No. 2460 Snow Lake No. 2309 Duck Mountain No. 34 (NE portion)	Frontier

* Joined Sunrise School Division in 2005, through decision of the Board of Reference
** Identified to join Sunrise School Division, but to date this amalgamation has not yet occurred (see Levin, Governing Education, 145)

In his account of the amalgamation initiative, Dr. Levin has written that there were three primary operational factors which determined how the map of school divisions would be drawn: amalgamation of rural divisions with small enrolments, respecting where possible existing transportation and commercial linkages, but without creating new entities of impossibly large geographic size; folding a number of small, single school, districts into The Frontier School Division; and reducing the number of school divisions in Winnipeg so that it would be left with a number more closely resembling that in cities of comparable size elsewhere in Canada.[312] These were commonly expressed objectives by those interviewed for this study. For example, a senior official in the Department of Education stated that

> There were a number of factors at play. One, of course, had to do with declining enrolment. You look first at those divisions with the lowest enrolments to make an assessment as to how viable you think they are with regard to providing the kind of education that you think kids should have access to. You look at how much sense it makes to amalgamate school divisions when you are looking for economies of scale, when you're looking at the sharing of revenue sources. You have to look at whether or not the amalgamation is a good fit in terms of "like" communities working together, communities having somewhat the same philosophy. And, as well, you have to consider geography.[313]

This view suggests that small enrolments, low assessment bases, desire for greater equity in taxation and programming, and opportunities to make gains in efficiencies, were paramount considerations, especially in rural mergers. However, some divisions, which by all accounts should have been candidates for amalgamation, did not make the final list. Turtle River School Division, for

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[312] Levin, Governing Education, 145.
[313] Interview with author, October 4, 2006.

instance, a small rural division of approximately 900 students, was not partnered with anyone. This, of course, led to much speculation on the part of the media, suggesting that "there was little rhyme or reason as to why some school divisions were forced to merge while others were left alone."[314] When asked about this specific example, Deputy Minister Levin replied:

> There wasn't a natural partner, and because we were breaking up Duck Mountain, it wasn't obvious what to do with Turtle River. And Turtle River had written a report in the spring of 2001 in which they had been particularly adamant that they be left alone. And in the fall of 2001 they were astounded when they were left alone and couldn't understand why. I remember saying to them, "well, read your report. You told us." So there wasn't a really good option with Turtle River. That's the real story, there wasn't a really good option that we could see.[315]

In the north, it was government's view that it made sense to bring small, remote school districts under the operating umbrella of The Frontier School Division. Frontier already had responsibility for most public schools north of Township 22, and it seemed prudent to bring four more communities into the fold. As Mr. Desjardins explained it,

> we had all those almost vestigial little special revenue school districts and other districts which existed, and they basically had one school. So, it's obvious to throw them into Frontier. Churchill and Frontier had already begun discussions on voluntary amalgamation, and Lynn Lake, Leaf Rapids and Snow Lake were just naturals to go into Frontier. There's no compelling reason why they should not do that and why wouldn't you, as a small, single

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[314] Nick Martin, "Why were some divisions untouched?", Winnipeg Free Press, September 30, 2002.

[315] Levin interview. See also Governing Education, 145.

Asked why he thought Turtle River School Division was not amalgamated, Brian Hanson replied: "I think politicians just got tired of the whole amalgamation issue. And, in truth, Manitoba never does anything very strongly. It's kind of 'good old, right up the middle, Manitoba' and if it requires a heavy duty decision with a lot of strong arming – lots of talk, not much action. And I think that was part of it, Turtle River was kind of the orphan. Nobody particularly wanted it, and by that time nobody was really prepared to say 'well, tough, you're going to take Turtle River.'" Hanson interview.

> school, district in a remote mining community, join up with the resources of a much larger division with much more resources to call upon? And in the north, because they were so isolated, some of the local autonomy issues were very strong for some of the parents in that area, but Frontier has a governance structure that can accommodate that.[316]

What to do with Winnipeg divisions was far more complex, and difficult to justify on the basis of the previously enunciated grounds of declining enrolment, shrinking tax base, and program access. Enrolments in the nine Winnipeg school divisions ranged from a low of 6,206 in The St. Boniface School Division No. 4 to 34,054 in The Winnipeg School Division No. 1.[317] Even the Boundaries Review Commission, while acknowledging that a definition of "optimal size" for school divisions was elusive, suggested a minimum enrolment of 5,000 in urban areas.[318] Clearly, on this score, Winnipeg divisions met the test. It would appear, however, that urban divisions were targeted for amalgamation largely out of a sense of political balance, coupled with the perception that the general public would be supportive of such a move. As Mr. Desjardins pointed out, there was

> . . . an issue of fairness between urban and rural. If you're going to have a initiative that people support and is seen as reasonable and as democratic, you can't just go and shake your finger at rural divisions and say, "oh, you've got no students, and you've got no tax base, they've got to join" when you've got nine divisions in Winnipeg. When, and this is one of the issues that was examined with some scrutiny, because so many other cities and large cities in Canada have one school division, or they may have one public and

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[316]Desjardins interview. Frontier School Division's method of election of school trustees is an indirect one. Candidates are first elected to sit on their community's local school committee, a smaller number from among those are elevated to sit on an area advisory committee, and two individuals from each of the five area advisory committees are then selected to move up to the Board of Trustees.

[317] Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, Enrolment Report (September 30, 2001).

[318] Manitoba School Divisions and Districts Boundaries Review Commission, Final Report & Recommendations (November 1994), 61. See also Florence R. Webb, "A District of a Certain Size: An Exploration of the Debate on School District Size" (1989), 21, 2, Education and Urban Society, 125-139.

> one Catholic division city-wide, and certainly the question was asked of many of our elected officials, "why do we need them, why don't you have one division?"[319]

Minister Caldwell indicated that discussion of the "one big division" option was considered by government, but would eventually be rejected because of historical considerations and the recognition of unique communities within Winnipeg itself:

> We talked about having one big school division in Winnipeg. We had a lot of arguments about that because most urban areas do not have multiple school divisions within their boundaries. And it really was, in Winnipeg, a concession in large measure to the historical reality of this city and the fact that we have a unicity with different communities within it. It came back, ultimately, to the respect for local autonomy in different divisions and letting local voices have authority as to how divisions managed their affairs.[320]

The uni-division model for Winnipeg, although it might have paralleled existing divisional structures in other large Canadian cities, was jettisoned largely out of concern for matters such as lack of connection between trustees and voters, creation of a very large single entity which would have substantial political clout, and some difficult implementation issues. Again, as Mr. Desjardins suggested,

> . . . where's the local control in a division of that size? You lose local control, so you create these city-wide elected officials. You'd have, say, nine trustees governing a city-wide school division. You have more city councillors than that, you have more provincial legislators than that, and you'd create this very, very large single entity. Quite powerful, but at the same time you haven't addressed those issues of accountability, of people's engagement with their trustees. You might still have a 20% [voter] turn-out for a city-wide entity with this giant budget. And I think you would have had

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[319] Desjardins interview.

[320] Caldwell interview. Mr. Vogt expressed a similar view, stating that "…within Winnipeg, there's a strange inequity. You have one massive division and then you've got these other small ones and some of them are very small. And so, to the extent that you could do it [amalgamate] without losing community identity, because Winnipeg has community identities too, we thought it was possible."
Vogt interview.

> significant differences in mill rates, and you would have to find a way to blend them, and that would be very painful for people. We were trying to create something that was reasonable and implementable. So we backed up, and in terms of finding options for Cabinet and government, we looked at a whole bunch of different configurations.[321]

Those configurations came to include the pairing of St. Boniface and St. Vital School Divisions, Fort Garry and Assiniboine South School Divisions, and River East School Division with the Transcona portion of Transcona-Springfield School Division. Left alone were Winnipeg School Division No. 1, St. James-Assiniboia School Division No. 2, and Seven Oaks School Division No. 10. In the case of the first two sets of pairings, the decision to merge was based largely on roughly similar mill rates and, as has been earlier referred to, a sense as to their compatibility in general philosophy and approach toward education. Splitting Transcona-Springfield, with rural Springfield being folded into the new Sunrise School Division, left urban Transcona in need of a partner. Disentangling urban and rural sections of Transcona-Springfield was seen by policy-makers as necessary given a long history of disharmony and polarization of opinion, based on the urban/rural split, which had troubled that division for many years.[322] Being geographically coincident with River East, and already

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[321] Desjardins interview.

[322] In mid-2000, in a 5-4 vote, trustees of Transcona-Springfield School Division narrowly defeated a motion tabled by Trustee Boychuk that urban Transcona separate from Springfield and join with either River East or St. Boniface School Divisions. The chasm between urban and rural trustees was made more pronounced by strike action taken by bus drivers in that division in fall 1999. The work stoppage was a major inconvenience and irritation to rural parents who were affected more significantly than were urban parents. When the board, controlled by urban-based trustees, refused to meet the strikers' demands and the walkout dragged on for over a month, accusations of urban insensitivity were often expressed. See also Nick Martin, "Transcona trustee wants to shed rural area," Winnipeg Free Press, May 18, 2000, A10; and Levin, Governing Education, 146.

having partnered St. Boniface with St. Vital, the decision was made to couple River East with Transcona.

Some bureaucratic officials within the Department suspected that Winnipeg School Division No. 1, for instance, was left alone for political reasons as much as for sound educational policy. Deputy Minister Levin, for example, sensed that there was a reluctance to make that division larger because doing so would have greatly skewed a sense of balance or proportion among divisions in the city, further emboldening it as an independent political force.[323] For Mr. Hanson, the difficulty in enlarging Winnipeg No. 1 was that it would have created a *de facto* Department of Education, with those two entities squared off in an ongoing battle over jurisdiction and control.[324] That concern, along with the fact that both Winnipeg and Seven Oaks had school boards controlled by NDP supporters, combined to produce a decision which he said created a map of urban divisions crafted for reasons which were

> . . . partly political and partly realistic. You had the political decisions to leave Winnipeg School Division as it is, you had the political decisions to leave Seven Oaks as it is, and you had the political decisions to bust up Transcona-Springfield. [There were] the realistic kinds of considerations around St. Vital and St. Boniface, it's a good fit, it's a cultural kind of thing, we can improve educational opportunities for children by having somewhat larger divisions, and clearly you can do so in Louis Riel by combining St. Vital's resources and St. Boniface's resources. Same in Pembina Trails. I think Fort Garry and Assiniboine South were a good blend in terms of getting a larger economy of scale, they flow together geographically. In St. Boniface and St. Vital you had, perhaps, not only a cultural goodness of fit but you certainly didn't have two boards strongly opposed politically. And the same in Assiniboine South and Fort Garry, they were a lot more similar than different. There wasn't any thinking that there was going to be

[323] Levin interview.
[324] Hanson interview.

> a huge turf war if you collapse those two divisions together. The boards of these partnering divisions seemed relatively politically sympatico.[325]

SUMMARY AND POSTSCRIPT

In November 2001, Minister Caldwell made the announcement that a significant reduction in the number of school divisions would be implemented by mid-2002. Having tried for a year to encourage voluntary amalgamation, the government had acted upon the Boundaries Review Commission report recommending shrinkage, although it chose to do so on a far more moderate scale and tried, in almost every circumstance, to meld existing divisional units rather than creating entirely new ones.

The conditions for creating this "perfect storm" were set, as Kingdon has suggested, with the coming together of the problems, policies and politics streams. The election of a new government in 1999, led by a Premier and Minister of Education supportive of directed amalgamation and not constrained by the antipathy of a strong rural constituency, as had been the case for the Filmon Government, created a new political opportunity. The continuing "problems" in education, those being declining enrolment, program access inequities, shrinking tax bases, increasing costs, and a sense of system over-governance, were successfully coupled with the partial amalgamation policy "solution". The "historical strategy revisited", as Fleming has described a prior era of amalgamation in Manitoba, allowed the province to adjust educational governance by reducing the number of divisional entities while at the same time

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[325] *Ibid*.

preserving the long entrenched ideal of the local autonomy of school boards through their taxing power, in collective bargaining, and in the employment of school personnel.

The particular configurations of divisions, once the decision to proceed with directed amalgamation had been made, were both political and administrative. Divisions in rural Manitoba were combined because of geographic location one to the other, comparable mill rates, and the need to create economies of scale by putting together two small divisions with low enrolments together to create one moderately sized one. In the north, the governance structure, history and experience of The Frontier School Division in managing and operating schools across that far-flung expanse made it a natural choice to assume responsibility for some very small, remote school districts.

In Winnipeg, amalgamation occurred out of a political sense of balance and fairness. Amalgamation would not be seen as “beating up” on rural Manitoba. It was also done because, politically, there was popular support in the city for the elimination of 1/3 of the existing school boards. Fewer boards, it was believed, would be more efficient. The idea of one division for the City of Winnipeg was ultimately declined as an option because of concerns that it would be too large, be insensitive to the wishes of ratepayers and parents, and acquire a political strength that would lead to imbalance within the system. Instead, different configurations were chosen, leaving some divisions unaffected (Winnipeg, St. James-Assiniboia, and Seven Oaks), while others were led, reluctantly, to the amalgamation altar to be wed.

In the end, the difference in approaches between PC and NDP governments on this issue was almost mirror opposite. The political "hot potato" which the prior government had concluded was too perilous to handle, had been transformed into something which the NDP government believed would be politically advantageous to it. Reducing the number of school boards was not seen to be a political liability, but rather an indication of a government with a resolve to "make tough decisions". It appealed to the climate of the times and slashed away at the layers of administration embedded within the education system at the local level. By taking decisive action, disadvantaged students in many parts of the province would, it was argued, be given greater access to educational programming. Where one government had seen "dragons" and retreated, another saw promise and advantage and seized the opportunity. In Kingdon's conception, a policy window was provided by the timely confluence of problems and politics, with an already fashioned solution in the form of a targeted or selective amalgamation of school jurisdictions. This policy solution would very likely prove feasible, even popular, because, in the words of the government's news release of November 8, 2001 which announced the decision to "modernize school division boundaries", it was designed to "reduce administrative duplication and costs . . . and to focus those resources into the classroom for the benefit of our children."[326] The conditions, and timing, were thus seen to be right to move forward on this file.

[326] See Appendix 10, "Province Moves to Modernize School Division Boundaries," Manitoba Government News Release, November 8, 2001.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

> "Despite the existence of such external and internal determinants, the individuals at the centre of our inquiry were not ciphers or mere 'front-men'. They had an input that is not simply reducible to a personalized representational function of such forces. Historical change, certainly in the short term, invariably results from the interaction of external determinants and individual agency. . . . Their fateful choices were directly determined by the sort of individuals they happened to be. At the same time, though, they were not made in a vacuum as arbitrary whims of personality. They were choices made under preconditions and under external constraints."[327]

On July 17, 2002, Bill 14 (*The Public Schools Modernization Act*) amending *The Public Schools Act* was given Royal Assent.[328] The legislation gave legal force and effect to the new configuration of school divisions in the province. The purpose of this research was to examine the dynamics of the decision-making process of the Government of Manitoba as it journeyed to that point. Why did the NDP Government of Gary Doer choose to proceed with directed amalgamation of school divisions in 2002? With the notable exception of a chapter devoted to the topic in Levin's book, Governing Education, the subject has not been given serious academic consideration to date. The primary question addressed, to paraphrase Kingdon, is why was amalgamation an idea

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[327] Ian Kershaw, Fateful Choices: Ten Decisions That Changed the World, 1940-1941 (New York: The Penguin Press), 481.
[328] Manitoba, Bill 14, *The Public Schools Modernization Act (Public Schools Act Amended)*, 3rd Session, 37th Legislature, 2002 (Assented to July 17, 2002), c. 8.

whose time had come? What prompted the Doer Government to put the restructuring of divisional governance arrangements on its agenda for decision? What had changed between 2001 when directed amalgamation was announced and 1996 when the Filmon Government formally decided it would decline to act upon the recommendation of the Boundaries Review Commission and instead encourage a voluntary approach to amalgamation? In assessing what may have been happening inside the fabled “black box” of the public policy process, it was necessary to examine the history of consolidation of administrative units of elementary and secondary levels of public education in Manitoba and helpful to situate the question within a theoretical framework of governmental decision making designed to achieve a specific policy outcome.

In undertaking this case study of a public policy decision, the theoretical framework selected sharpened focus on the matter being studied. Essentially, Kingdon’s hypothesis is that there must be a timely convergence of problems, policies, and politics before issues achieve status on the government’s decision-making agenda. Kingdon’s model extends the analysis of a public policy decision “beyond the heuristic of stages”, as Thurber has suggested, by providing a fuller account of the forces which drive the agenda-setting process and the timing of specific decisions by government. In short, it seeks to provide an explanation of how and why issues rise and fall from a government’s agenda.

The attractiveness of this dynamic approach is that it gives a researcher a powerful investigatory tool with which to probe for an answer to the question of why, in this particular instance, was school division/district amalgamation an idea

whose time had come? Of all of the possible problems or subjects to which government officials could be paying attention, why did amalgamation warrant special consideration at a particular time and the commitment of energy and political resources to move the issue through the stages of consideration, decision, and implementation? As Kingdon has suggested, the opportunity for propelling a matter onto the agenda is opened when a significant problem is recognized, policy alternatives are seriously identified and political opportunities calculated; that is, when these streams or currents in the governmental decision-making system intersect in a timely and decisive way so as to constitute a policy window.

CONCLUSIONS

A Persistent Problem Begets Governmental Attention

As set out in Chapter 2, significant problems in the Kindergarten-Grade 12 education system began to emerge early in the 1970s. It was at that point that system-wide enrolment began its decline, most precipitously in several rural school divisions. As enrolments fell, there was a corresponding decline in the capacity of these divisions to maintain staff (as provincial funding, driven by enrolment, generated operating dollars to employ teachers), which in turn had a negative impact on the ability of the divisions to offer anything beyond core, mandated programming. Rural depopulation, generally, reduced the number of ratepayers available to collectively shoulder the financial burden of supporting local education, through the special levy on property imposed by school boards. This was exacerbated in the 1990s through declines or freezes in levels of

provincial funding support as the Filmon Government, faced with its own difficulties in sustaining the provincial treasury, reduced its cash commitment to school boards. While system-wide expenditures continued to rise, even in the face of falling enrolments, local property owners were compelled to pick up a larger share of the costs of education and at the same time bear witness to reductions in programming opportunities in many local schools.

These problems gradually deepened, building from year-to-year. They did not generate sensational newspaper headlines, nor provoke a sense of public crisis, thereby galvanizing governments into immediate action in response. As former Deputy Minister Carlyle has suggested, it was not akin to the 1997 “Flood of the Century”. It was like a leaking tap, where the drips became more frequent and louder over time. Nonetheless, it presented a “powerful and pervasive” set of indicators, year over year, which attracted the attention of policy analysts and administrators within government and especially in the Department of Education. In their collective estimation, some rural school divisions in particular had reached the point of program and fiscal non-viability. By what means, then, should these growing problems be addressed?

School division/district amalgamation, by which smaller entities would combine to produce greater economies of scale, was a solution which had been utilized previously in Manitoba, most notably in 1959 when the modern school division structure was introduced to the province. At that time, school divisions were created to assume responsibility for secondary level education in place of the approximately 1,700 small school districts which were still in operation. By

1967 those new divisional entities had assumed responsibility for elementary level education as well, ending almost eighty years of very localized, small-scale control of public education. Amalgamation was seen as a policy panacea, of sorts, which would enhance access to programming, particularly at the high school level and certainly in rural Manitoba where accessibility to programming was very uneven. Larger entities would be able to draw from an enhanced tax base, giving divisions the financial capacity to hire professional, credentialed administrators, attract qualified, certified teachers, and also employ specialist teachers to offer a wider array of program options for students. It would allow young Manitobans from across the province to maximize their potential for personal growth and development and to prepare them for participation in the economy by broadening access to educational opportunities. The efforts of the Roblin Government in the 1960s in modernizing the public school system at the time were, as the former Premier has written, considered to be *the* priority for his administration.

By the 1990s, the same difficulties which had compelled previous governments to take action on consolidation were once again evident. School division amalgamations were, at that same time, also continuing or had been recently completed in a number of other provincial jurisdictions as well as internationally. Alert to these problems, albeit initially reluctant to act on them, and anxious to find ways of reducing education costs (or at least to redirect resources from administration and into classrooms), in 1993 the Filmon Government created a commission headed by Bill Norrie to undertake an

extensive review of public education in the province. After several months of public hearings and deliberations, the Boundaries Review Commission issued its report. Most notable among its several recommendations to the government was that the number of school divisions should, over a three year period, be reduced from 57 to 22, and that the boundaries of the new divisions should be coincidental with municipal boundary lines.

A Policy Window Opens When Political Opportunities Exceed Political Constraints

The problems in public education in Manitoba were neither new nor necessarily of crisis proportion. But they had been persistent and inexorable. A credible explanation for why the Filmon Government chose to endorse voluntary amalgamation, in response to the Boundaries Review Commission report, while the Doer Administration opted to proceed with directed amalgamation, is rooted in the constraints and opportunities presented by the particular political circumstances each regime confronted. It is here that the centrality of the political stream, as an explanation for the different approaches taken by the Filmon and Doer Governments, becomes evident. As Kingdon writes

> Windows are opened by events in either the problems or political streams. Thus there are problem windows and political windows. A new problem appears, for instance, creating an opportunity to attach a solution to it. Or such events in the political stream as turnover of elected officials, swings of national mood, or vigorous lobbying might create opportunities to push some problems and proposals to the fore and dampen the chances to highlight other problems and proposals.[329]

[329]Kingdon, *supra*, 203.

While Manitoba had, in its history, witnessed the consolidation of small school districts into larger divisional units, the experience had not been an easy one for many rural Manitobans. The gradual disappearance of the local small school, the subsequent decline of many rural communities, and the creation of centralized schools which, although offering more and specialized programming meant long bus rides and the sending of children out and away from more direct parental control, had been a difficult transition for many beyond the perimeter of Winnipeg. The nostalgic recollections of a by-gone era, a yearning for a simpler past where home and school connections were more immediate, and a concern for the continuing survival of their communities without the sustaining presence of a local school, remained alive with rural Manitobans. Unconvinced that bigger meant better in educational terms, and suspicious that division amalgamation would inevitably lead to greater school consolidation (and, hence, local school closures and the demise of communities), a second round of division/district amalgamations after 1959/1967 was not seen as a welcome initiative. This message was frequently heard by the members of the Boundaries Review Commission during the hearings held in rural Manitoba.

For a Conservative government, with the majority of its electoral and legislative support based in rural Manitoba, this posed an awkward dilemma. While its own Commission had strongly recommended a significant reduction in the number of school divisions, and although government was anxious to consider such a move if it would improve the classroom experience of students and potentially reduce costs, or redirect monies toward classroom supports, the

Progressive Conservative party's base of political support was, in the estimation of key political actors within Cabinet and caucus, solidly opposed. Strongly influenced by elected members from rural constituencies nervous about proceeding, and mindful of opposition from the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, the government struggled for a solution which would be seen as doing something to address the problems which had been identified, yet not proceed in a manner which would alienate many of its supporters.

By 1996, the Minister of Education, Linda McIntosh, had announced how government would respond to the Boundaries Review Commission's recommendation: it rejected forced amalgamation but would put in place incentives to encourage divisions to pursue voluntary recombination. As Mrs. McIntosh suggested, if school divisions were able to achieve improvements in programming opportunities and greater economic efficiencies, those results were more important to her than was the method of getting there.

The voluntary approach generated, as the Boundaries Review Commission had predicted, limited success. By the late 1990s, only four divisions had proceeded to consummate a relationship. In most areas, particularly in rural and remote parts of the province, no action had been taken by divisions/districts. Inertia had long since settled into the bones of the education system and, without the catalyst of political leadership from the province, was unlikely to change to any significant degree. Apropos now as then is Bergen's observation, made over forty years ago, that "it seems, therefore, that the local district or community left to its own devices neither seeks nor demands change.

Impetus for change essentially comes from without the local community, and leadership at the provincial level of government is of paramount importance."[330]

Change was coming, however, in the form of a newly elected government in 1999. Although the New Democratic Party had not campaigned on school division amalgamation during the election, within two months of assuming office the new Minister of Education, Drew Caldwell, was openly speculating on the possibility of directed amalgamation if divisions did not take seriously government's desire that they pursue it voluntarily. Minister Caldwell considered the Boundaries Review Commission's report to be a piece of unfinished business deserving of the new government's full attention. He believed that the problems of declining enrolment, inequitable access to programming for students across the province, and shrinking tax bases, cast the provision of high quality education in many parts of Manitoba in doubt.

After a year of encouraging school divisions to actively pursue partnerships with their neighbours, the results of which seemed to reap little evidence of success, the Minister announced in November 2001 that the number of school divisions across the province would be reduced by approximately one-third, from 54 to 37. How was the NDP government able to do this? Was it not similarly hampered by the constraints the previous administration laboured under?

It would appear that, given the NDP's base of political support in urban Winnipeg, Brandon and in the north, resistance from rural Manitoba to further amalgamation was not viewed as problematic. Further, in moving to reduce the

[330] Bergen, *supra*, iv.

number of divisions/districts in Winnipeg and in the north, the government tapped into what it sensed as public support *for* amalgamation. The education system, so the voices on Main Street if not on Broadway[331] seemed to suggest, was over-governed, expensive, and inefficient. Politicians frequently heard of comparisons to other provinces, and particularly to other large urban centers, where the number of school boards was far fewer. There was no great attachment, either politically or emotionally, to school boards. Whether or not reducing the number of school divisions would save money or improve learning outcomes for students seemed secondary to the intuitive public sense that fewer forms of government, ie. school boards, was better and that the current system was crowded by too many boards and was administratively top-heavy.

Although Minister Caldwell suggested that amalgamation was a tremendously popular initiative, it is not evident that it generated demonstrable political support for the NDP which it was then able to capitalize on in the subsequent 2003 provincial election. To be sure, the government was re-elected and did improve upon its seat count by three, from 32 to 35. Whether or not amalgamation was an inducement to vote NDP, an ineffectual Opposition campaign bled support away from other parties and over to the NDP, the NDP benefited from the personal popularity of the Premier, or a combination of these or of other contributing factors, is uncertain. Minister Caldwell acknowledged it likely made little difference in his own constituency as a specific issue, but expressed the view that, more broadly, it may have shone a positive public light upon the NDP by being seen as a government willing to take tough decisions. In

[331] The Manitoba Legislature is located at 450 Broadway in Winnipeg.

that sense, it enhanced what was already a generally favourable public perception of the governing New Democrats.

Political Actors are the Crucial Players in the Process of Agenda-Setting and the Choice of the Eventual Policy Outcome

What other factors may have been important in the different decisions reached by the two administrations? Whose views and values counted in shaping the choices made and the actions taken? Kingdon suggests that the role of key political actors is integral to both the process of agenda setting and for the eventual policy outcome. This would seem to be so in this case study as well. Let us begin with the role of Premiers Filmon and Doer. It appears that, at least initially, Premier Filmon was "bullish" on a review of school division boundaries as a means of examining whether or not economic efficiencies, and perhaps latterly, programmatic improvements, could be achieved. The decision to establish a Boundaries Review Commission, under the direction of Bill Norrie, represented a significant expenditure of public monies and signaled government's interest in pursuing the matter. Premier Doer, too, as described in this study by several individuals who walked in the same political circles, was supportive of amalgamation. Amalgamation was seen as a necessary step to rationalize the operation of several divisions which were no longer viewed as viable from either a service delivery or reasonable cost perspective. Amalgamation also appealed to Mr. Doer's political instincts: most voters saw the education system as needlessly over-governed and, consequently, inefficient and expensive. Reductions in the number of school divisions would, therefore,

be applauded as prudent stewardship of scarce resources; that is, amalgamation would likely be popular with the electorate.

Given that the two leaders identified both programmatic and potential economic advantages to amalgamation, the difference in the policy decisions arrived at by each is likely due, in large measure, to a calculation of partisan interests, and the strength of the supporting casts around them. If Premier Filmon had been interested in parlaying the recommendations of the Boundaries Review Commission on amalgamation into decisive action on directed amalgamation, he was constrained in doing so by opposition from within his party, the absence of strong ministers willing to push that agenda forward, and the lack of support from organized interests who were otherwise traditionally favourable to his government.

"Too hot to handle" was how some observed the amalgamation issue during the Filmon era. The restructuring of divisions contemplated by the Boundaries Review Commission would have altered the boundaries and governance arrangements of every school division and district in the province. The implications of creating larger divisional units raised the spectre of both small school closures and the combining of divisions with different operational cultures and educational philosophies. Both were viewed as anathemas to the rural core of political support for the Progressive Conservative party. Rural Manitobans had seen the consolidation "movie" before, and a sequel seemed as unentertaining as the original. Whether individually, or through their local school parent councils, many rural Manitobans expressed their displeasure at the possibility of

amalgamation to Minister McIntosh and to their Members of the Legislative Assembly. The level of angst the prospect of amalgamation created, even before government had rendered a decision on the matter, appears to have been a significant factor in the government backing away from a directed approach. Faced with a restive caucus, the Premier may have concluded that amalgamation was not a hill upon which he was prepared to "die" politically.

The second compelling factor was the absence of a forceful Minister willing to take on the amalgamation challenge in face of internal opposition. As noted in Chapter 3, with the departure of a strong individual such as Clayton Manness, the Premier may have felt very much alone politically had he tried to force amalgamation upon a recalcitrant caucus. Mr. Manness had been a driving force within the Conservative party, commanded considerable respect and a large degree of operating latitude by having come from the Finance portfolio to Education, and, subsequently, by virtue of his forceful efforts in promoting the government's education reform initiative. Although Mr. Manness was of the view that amalgamation was the right course of action, and that opposition to it was overstated and could have been overcome, by 1996 he was no longer in elected politics and therefore unable to lend his considerable personal presence and influence in assisting the government to accomplish such change.

The Minister of the day, Linda McIntosh, had a different personal and philosophical disposition, and her cautious, conciliatory approach fitted more closely with the prevailing mood of most within the caucus on the issue. Mrs. McIntosh concluded that, in the face of public concern, encouragement of

voluntary amalgamation was the better way to proceed. By putting in place financial incentives, and lauding the advantages of amalgamation, school divisions would, she believed, eventually choose that path. The outcome would no doubt take longer to achieve but would eventually be reached, and with far less disruption and pain to the system. Such an approach would also leave decision-making in the hands of local trustees; the political distancing of a contentious issue which doubtless appealed to many government members.

Lastly, and likely of lesser importance but of some significance nonetheless, was the position adopted by the organization representing school boards in the province, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees (MAST). Most observers have suggested that, as an organization, MAST shared a reasonably close political relationship with the Progressive Conservative government. From the time public hearings were conducted as part of the Boundaries Review Commission process, through to 2002 when it came into effect, MAST was on record as opposing directed amalgamation. Amalgamation, should it occur, was best achieved through voluntary means and in a manner respectful of local board autonomy and community wishes, MAST argued. Given the level of political anxiety which amalgamation had created within the Progressive Conservative camp, MAST's position no doubt lent additional weight and credibility to those advocating a voluntary approach. With very few of notable political stature within the government lobbying for a more aggressive strategy, any decision other than one favouring a form of voluntary amalgamation was highly unlikely.

Five years after the Filmon Government had declared on the side of voluntary amalgamation, the new Doer Government announced it would journey down the road of directed amalgamation. Without some of the political constraints which had restricted the range of options the previous government could consider, that ride would be far less bumpy and the NDP could opt for a more forceful approach. Although the NDP had been silent on amalgamation as part of the 1999 election campaign, both Premier Doer and Minister Caldwell were soon signaling publicly their desire to "dust off" the Boundaries Review Commission report and have school divisions give serious consideration to voluntary amalgamation. When it became evident that school divisions either took those urgings less than seriously, or were not prepared to merge of their own volition, government's position shifted from voluntary to directed amalgamation.

Unlike the Progressive Conservative government, the NDP did not owe its electoral success to rural Manitoba. The bulk of its political support, and seat count in the Legislative Assembly, came from Winnipeg, Brandon, and northern Manitoba. For the new government, by adopting amalgamation on a smaller scale than recommended by the Boundaries Review Commission, it could blunt somewhat any negative reaction forthcoming from rural Manitoba (which it did not think would be severe, in any event), and offset that against what it believed would be viewed as a politically popular initiative in urban Winnipeg. Amalgamation appealed to the public sense that the education system featured too many school boards, too many trustees and, particularly in Winnipeg,

unnecessary administrative duplication compared to school board governance in large urban centers in other provincial jurisdictions.

In Drew Caldwell, the Premier also had a minister who viewed amalgamation as the appropriate policy remedy for a number of ailments in the education system, and who was prepared and able to "stick-handle" the issue through Cabinet, caucus, and the legislative process. Mr. Caldwell believed in the efficacy of an activist Minister, one who uses his or her time in office to effect real change, and he was determined to use his ministerial office in such a manner. Although conceding that a tension existed within Cabinet and caucus among those who were opposed to amalgamation, or at least amalgamation as envisaged by the Boundaries Review Commission, with strong advocacy and the support of the Premier he was able to move this agenda forward.

Stakeholders are Important but are not Necessarily Crucial to Policy Adoption

The adoption of selective amalgamation cannot be characterized as driven by the demands of any one interest group, or that it was substantially the result of interactions among several interest groups and the government. The longstanding support of the Manitoba Teachers' Society for amalgamation was undoubtedly part of the government's consideration on how it might proceed on the file, but those interviewed for this study suggested that no one stakeholder group played a primary role in getting amalgamation on its agenda. However, the fact that MTS has had a longstanding, largely positive relationship with the NDP meant that, at the very least, the government knew that an organization representing approximately 14,000 active teachers would not be speaking out

against it on this issue. Conversely, it is reasonable to suggest that another factor played favourably, though not decisively so, in the government's calculation: MAST, an organization with whom the government did not usually share common political ground, might expect to have its influence attenuated somewhat by a reduction in the number of school boards and trustees, reflecting a national trend characterized by critics as the continued narrowing of "the scope and flexibility for local community voice and school board decision-making in education matters."[332]

Time and Timing Matter in Policy Deliberation and Implementation

In addition to the importance of political motivations in the amalgamation policy, Kingdon's notion of a "softening up" period for any idea to gain acceptance may also have some salience. Crick suggests that "time by itself solves nothing; but time is needed to attempt anything politically."[333] When the NDP assumed power in 1999, not only had amalgamation recently occurred in every other province except Manitoba and Saskatchewan, but the report of the Boundaries Review Commission had also been percolating in the public domain and in policy forums for five years. As Kingdon writes, "softening up seems to be necessary before a proposal is taken seriously. Many good proposals have fallen on deaf ears because they arrived before the general public, the specialized publics, and the policy communities were ready to listen."[334] Mitchell, for instance, in his examination of educational politics and policy at the state level

[332] Carolyn Duhamel, "Leadership in the Boardroom: 'Trust me' Isn't Enough!" (2007), 8, 1, M.A.S.S. Journal, 10; also Levin, Gaskell and Pollock, *supra*, 7-11.
[333] Crick, *supra*, 156.
[334] Kingdon, *supra*, 130.

in the United States, observed that not only is the dimension of time necessary as part of a developmental process with a beginning, conclusion, and steps in between, it also determines the pace and shapes the calculations of the decision-making process:

> Responding to political pressures and interests takes time. It takes time to sort out the pressures and determine exactly what problems people are asking to have solved. It takes time to determine whether a proposed policy would be damaging to the interests of others or is adequately responsive to the original problem. It takes time to discover how broadly or intensively particular policy options are supported by various constituent groups or the public. And it takes time to determine whether a proposed policy is important enough to justify the expenditure of scarce resources on its implementation.[335]

Indeed, when speaking about the Conservative government's decision to strike a commission to examine amalgamation in 1993, Don Leitch made reference to both the immediate value of the commission's work in taking the public pulse on the issue at that time, but also of the long-term importance of putting the issue out into the public domain so that action might be taken in the future:

> It put the issue front and centre, it got people thinking about it and talking about it. People knew something had to happen, and I think it needed more time. And there are times when governments have to act and they have to act quickly, and there are times when to do so would create a fire storm and destroy the ability to have an effective policy implementation over the succeeding years. So you really do have to just step back and let it percolate a little while longer. People were thinking about it, were talking about it, and that's what you need in order to move along and have reform and to bring about change. You have to have people engaged, and the Norrie Commission got people engaged.[336]

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[335] Mitchell, *supra*, 461.

[336] Leitch interview.

Although expressing disappointment, in 1996, that the Conservative government had opted not to act upon the Boundaries Review Commission's recommendation to proceed with directed

In reflecting upon the contrasting decisions taken by the PC and NDP administrations on amalgamation, former Deputy Minister Carlyle similarly suggests that the passage of time was likely necessary before a government could move forward in a deliberate way on this issue:

> Maybe it takes sociologists to analyze this better than I can, but my sense is that this is an example of one of those things in the history of humanity that needs to go through a series of transitions from "no, we don't want it at all," to "okay, I don't like the commission but I guess I'll go talk to them," to "actually, that wasn't a bad report but I don't like all of it," to "here's our incentive to get on with it," to actually forcing people to do it. Maybe it had to go that way. Whether it's a Conservative government or an NDP government, I do think that government as an entity does build on what the previous government did. Things seldom occur in a complete and utter and brand new template.[337]

Incrementalism is Inevitable in the Making of Public Policy

Mr. Carlyle's observation also lends credence to the discussion from Chapter 1 that incrementalism is often a feature of public policy-making. His experience in government reflects Easton's earlier characterization of policy-making as "highly interrelated, cumulative, and consistent." Amalgamation had happened before in Manitoba, and had occurred elsewhere in Canada. It was not new in the history of education in the province. The amalgamation experience also seems to bear out Lindblom's contention that, when casting about for policy alternatives, governments are inclined to view decision-making on the basis of "successive limited comparisons." Both PC and NDP

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amalgamation, Bill Norrie recognized that from government's perspective the timing was likely not yet right in allowing it to do so:

"Politically, we were probably ahead of our time. We had the luxury of being an independent commission that could do what is best educationally. The government has to make political decisions, and we knew what we were recommending was a political hot potato."

Glen MacKenzie, "Norrie glad unifying is encouraged," Winnipeg Free Press, June 25, 1996, A3.

[337]Carlyle interview.

governments, although giving some cursory consideration to options such as the New Brunswick experiment of abolishing school boards, chose instead to respect them. Given the long history of local board governance in Manitoba, and the important role played by school boards in financing education through the use of their taxing powers, in managing the day-to-day operations of schools, in collective bargaining with employee groups, and in providing a political forum for local involvement in educational matters, the prospect of doing away with them altogether was not seen as a realistic option by either regime. Less extreme would have been the adoption of the recommendations of the Boundaries Review Commission, but even this was seen as too draconian – again by both regimes – given the complete dismantling of the system that would have been entailed and the establishment of entirely new boundary lines unrelated to that which had existed before.

Instead, the Conservative government chose a voluntary approach to amalgamation, and the NDP opted for a reduction of school divisions by about one-third – but a scheme far less radical than that which had been suggested by the Boundaries Review Commission, and in almost all instances was based on the recombination of existing divisional entities. Both PC and NDP approaches were consistent with what Fleming has described as a “de-governing, not re-governing” of education – in essence, a modification rather than a radical restructuring of the educational *status quo* in the province.

The incremental approach also speaks to the primacy of politics in the public policy process. Not only did the decisions of each government around

voluntary and directed amalgamation reflect their “political meaning” within the context and climate of the times, that is to say, the desire of each government to capture and hold power, but it also represented decision-making in keeping with the moderate, “up the middle” political culture of Manitoba and the desire of politicians not to stray too far from the known and the familiar when developing policy. Generally speaking, it takes time before an idea reaches its “tipping point” when it finally becomes politically expedient for legislators to move forward. Minister Caldwell and Deputy Minister Levin variously described amalgamation as a “modest” change and a “low key effort” – a policy initiative which was seen as politically popular but minimally disruptive to the existing system, and deliberately so.

IMPLICATIONS

Implications for Research

This dissertation has been a case study of a public policy decision by the Government of Manitoba on the amalgamation of school divisions/districts in the province. It did not address decision-making processes and the myriad activities undertaken by trustees and senior administrators in those divisions affected by the government’s announcement in November, 2001. To provide a more complete, system-wide, account of this initiative, it is suggested that future research might consider amalgamation from a divisional perspective. Although it was touched on in this study, it would be interesting and useful to know more about the nature and degree of resistance or hesitation to amalgamation initiatives of whatever kind. Was resistance, for example, based on fears of a

significant financial cost or of an unnecessary disruption in the local delivery of education? Was there concern about entering what Schon has described as a "zone of instability"[338] and the subsequent period of institutional disruption? Were there other factors at play? An examination of the challenges and difficulties experienced by amalgamating divisions related to the coming together of different organizational cultures, harmonization of policies and collective agreements, staffing decisions at senior administrative levels, meshing of board operating styles, and local public expectations of the types and levels of services to be delivered post-consolidation – all of these would round out the story of amalgamation as experienced by players other than government.

Similarly, it might be instructive, too, to have a better understanding of the perspectives of major education organizations such as MAST, MTS, and MAPC. How did these entities see themselves in promoting, or thwarting, amalgamation initiatives during both the PC and NDP regimes? Would a change in their strategies and tactics have made any difference in the outcome? It is clear that MAST and MTS, for instance, viewed amalgamation differently. Although Kingdon argues that "if there is some conflict among the organized forces, the political leaders implicitly arrive at the image of their environment that strikes some balance between those for and those against a given proposal, or for and against the emergence of an item to agenda prominence,"[339] it is not evident that this necessarily holds true in the environment of educational politics. As has been noted by several commentators, "attacking" the system and the major

[338] Schon, *supra*, 229.
[339] Kingdon, *supra*, 150.

players within it – particularly school boards and teacher unions which are frequently described as “special interests” – has been a strategy employed in recent years by provincial governments to attract support from voters and often to curry favour with business interests in order to push reform initiatives and fiscal restraint measures.[340] Faced with a frontal assault, MAST, in particular, was unable to marshal sufficient strength, resources, and public support to be of countervailing force such as might have given the NDP government serious reason to arrest its amalgamation policy. Is there anything school boards, individually or collectively, might realistically have done differently to promote their own agenda or, conversely, to push back against the agenda of others, notably government? Or, ultimately, is it as Levin, *et. al*., suggest, that “even the most powerful school board cannot protect itself from its provincial government, but it does take a determined government with a strong agenda to take on the political challenge of a large school board.”[341]

Finally, although this is a case study of a single policy event in one provincial jurisdiction, it may be illuminating to apply Kingdon’s schema across provincial borders to assess its applicability to amalgamation-like decisions in other provinces. Perhaps most revealing might be a comparison of decision-making between Saskatchewan and Manitoba, particularly since both provinces have just recently completed this process which resulted in a significant reduction in the number of school divisions. Although Gibbins wrote persuasively, many years ago, that the analytical utility of a regional approach to the study of politics

[340] See Levin, Governing Education, 57, and Reforming Education, 11; Taylor, *supra*, 74-81; Gidney, *supra*, 246-247, 261-264.
[341] Levin, Gaskell and Pollock, *supra*, 11.

and policy-making in the Prairie provinces is questionable,[342] the parallels between the two provinces in this instance are striking: both have long histories of local school boards possessing significant educational responsibilities and taxing powers, face declining overall enrolments most acutely felt in rural divisions due to depopulation, and share concerns over distance, sparcity, changing demographics, sustainable and equitable tax bases, and accessibility to quality programming. It is anticipated that Kingdon's framework would work equally well in a study of amalgamation as an agenda item in Saskatchewan, but it would be interesting to see how policy decisions and outcomes were tempered by the role of key political actors, the political opportunities or constraints as perceived by that government, the mobilization of forces for and against amalgamation and whether those had any measurable effect, and the impact of local circumstances and conditions, including political culture, in shaping the eventual decision by government.

Implications for Theory

As theory, Kingdon's model has considerable explanatory power. He has made a significant contribution to the study of the public policy process essentially moving beyond the stages heuristic to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of agenda setting within government. Indeed, the concept of "policy window" gets one deeper inside the "black box" of governmental decision-making; it is a refinement of attempts to understand the politics of policy choice, as the conclusions of this study confirm. It conveys more precisely the dynamics

[342] Roger Gibbins, Prairie Politics & Society: Regionalism in Decline (Toronto: Butterworth and Company (Canada) Limited, 1980).

of the timely intersection that occurs with respect to the recognition of a problem, the examination of a solution or solutions for it, and the calculation by the most influential government actors, notably elected politicians, as to what political interests of the government – interests primarily concerned with the exercise and retention of power – are to be served by the particular choice of official policy, understood as the politically preferred solution to the recognized problem. In Easton's terms, policy as an "output" of the political system reflects one important result of demands and supports as "inputs" to the system. But the idea of a "policy window" tells us something important about how and in what measure demands and supports are understood and responded to by the most significant actor of the system – government. Kingdon's work is a forceful reminder, too, that government has its own quota of interests and can pursue or achieve them in a way unlike that of interest groups who, in the enterprise of policy deliberation and adoption, can only plead and pressure, not decide.

This study provides some solid empirical evidence that Kingdon's model is applicable to the process of public policy-making in the Canadian context. As Howlett found at the federal level, and this study would suggest at the provincial, coherence exists between a "routine" window of opportunity created by a change of government and the subsequent elevation of an issue (in this case amalgamation) onto the public policy agenda. It also appears to support Howlett's observation that "short-term agenda-setting cycles are closely linked to medium- and long-term changes in 'policy moods' or 'sentiments'."[343] The tenor of public opinion in terms of the role and perceived benefit of school boards has

[343] Howlett, "Predictable and Unpredictable Policy Windows", 517.

shifted over time. The attachment locally to schools as opposed to school boards, the frequency in acclamation of trustees in uncontested elections, low voter turn-out rates in trustee elections, and a concern with the capacity of boards for prudent fiscal management in face of increasing program and operating expenditures despite decades of declining enrolment, have combined to make school boards easy targets of criticism from the public and from other levels of government. The prevailing public sentiment questioning the value and importance of school boards made it easier, from a political perspective, for the new government in 2001 to take the decision to reduce their number.

It is also apparent, from this study, that Kingdon's observation that the trademark of liberal democratic government – the primacy of elected politicians in sponsoring and moving an item forward on the public agenda – holds true. The nature of political institutions and of their bureaucracies certainly play a role in how power is wielded and the decisions which get made, but it is clear that without the weight of the Premier, the Minister of Education and the NDP caucus behind the amalgamation decision in 2001, no change would have occurred. In the absence of a crisis or a tsunami of public pressure to revamp the number of divisions and districts, nothing would have happened had the NDP government not chosen to push some form of amalgamation forward. Whether it did so for educational or political reasons, or a combination of both, speaks to the fact that the government exercised its right and authority to act. The *status quo* was deemed to be unacceptable, and the authority of government to exercise its own imperative made choosing a course of action from among different options

possible. The picture of policy deliberation and adoption provided in this study confirms, indeed, Schattschneider's famous dictum that "the definition of the alternatives is the supreme instrument of power."[344] It also provides very strong reasons for agreeing with Howlett's important observation that Kingdon's hypothetical structure ought to be considered "the standard in policy studies."[345]

The amalgamation story speaks, as well, to the power of ideas as a guide to action. As Kingdon argues elsewhere, certain values or ideas held by the wider public can place constraints upon the latitude of politicians to act. As he phrases it, "the mass public in a district sets rather broad boundaries beyond which the legislator may not go; they are there, but are vague."[346] In this instance, the power of democratic localism as a cherished ideal inhibited consideration of policy options which would eliminate, or radically reduce, the number of school boards. There was an implicit understanding of the importance of lay leadership as a manifestation of the local voice in providing elementary and secondary education. There was, too, an acknowledgement of the role of school boards as a pillar of democratic community, and in their consideration of policy alternatives policy-makers concurred with the sentiment expressed by Rallis, Shibles and Swanson that

> . . . local boards of education . . . are not going to disappear. They serve important symbolic and policymaking roles, and they can support authentic democratic deliberation. Since their inception, lay boards have tolerated ambiguity and multiple perspectives in the

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[344] E.E. Schattschneider, The Semisovereign People (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), 68.
[345] Howlett, "Predictable and Unpredictable Policy Windows," 497.
[346] Kingdon, "Politicians, Self-Interest, and Ideas." George E. Marcus and Russell L. Hanson, eds., Reconsidering the Democratic Public (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 78-79.

> formulation of local policy. . . . Their localism honors the contextuality of political decisions and action, and membership does not require expertise, so anyone can participate. They meet regularly and usually in public, providing time and place for deliberation. Moreover, they are credible because the public can *see* and *hear* the deliberation and find comfort and safety in the bounded ritual.[347]

In this case study, the power of an idea was entangled with political self-interest. One buttressed the other. The actions taken by both PC and NDP governments in rejecting the abolition or large-scale reduction in number of school boards spoke both to a respect for the historical tradition of the role of boards, but as well to a disinclination to invite the potential wrath of the community as a consequence of several years of institutional disruption, instability and cost that a new or revamped governance model would very likely have inspired.

Amalgamation also represents an incremental form of policy making. As a continuation of consolidation initiatives from years before, it was not seen as something entirely "new under the sun." The decision to reduce the number of school division/districts, as opposed to abolishing them entirely, was gradualistic and modest in scope. It did not mark a sudden, discontinuous change from what had existed previously. Rather, it represented the continued evolution of the local governance model within the Kindergarten – Grade 12 education system. School boards would continue to exist, and be of relevance, but there would be fewer of them and units would be larger. On a measuring stick of novelty, the amalgamation policy of 2001 was a modest change. Perhaps this is simply the

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[347] Sharon F. Rallis, Mark R. Shibles and Austin D. Swanson, "Repositioning Lay Leadership: Policymaking and Democratic Deliberation." Joseph Murphy, ed., The Educational Leadership Challenge: Redefining Leadership for the 21st Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 257.

exercise of prudent restraint that inhibits a government from leaping into something about which it is uncertain. Isn't incrementalism, then, a cautious conservatism, independent of a particular government's ideological inclinations? Again, as Wildavsky has expressed this idea, "isn't caution, hence conservatism, the inevitable result of knowing more about what not to do than about what to do?"[348]

Implications for Practice

For practitioners within the public policy world, Kingdon's analytical scheme offers a valuable reminder about the place of non-elected officials in the policy process, as well as the safety of limitations (or frustration with constraints, depending upon one's perspective) in developing policy alternatives. In his foreword to Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies, Thurber encourages us to consider whether or not Kingdon's model "rings true". Indeed it does, and does so in two important ways. First, it serves to remind bureaucrats who function as policy analysts that although they may possess specialized knowledge by which policy options may be constructed and advice provided, any policy decision, its shape and outcome is, in the end, determined by those whom they serve: elected officials. Public policy is, ultimately, political and political decisions belong, in the memorable words of Theodore Roosevelt, to those who are "actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood", and who therefore rightfully control and are accountable for its most strategic function – the exercise of government.

[348] Wildavsky, *supra*, 402.

Second, the scope of acceptable policy options on a given problem is more likely to be narrow rather than wide. As Vickers has written,

> Those who are engaged in a course of decision-making soon become aware that each decision is conditioned not only by the concrete situation in which it is taken but also by the sequence of past decisions; and that their new decisions in their turn will influence future decisions not only by their effect on the history of event but also by the precedents which they set and the changes which they make in the way decision makers in the future will see, interpret and respond to event . . . .[349]

Rare is the opportunity to propose, and have accepted, an option radically different from that which has been implemented before. The coming together of the streams of problems, policies and politics which would allow for such a prospect is unusual. Nonetheless, if there is a certain predictability in the opening and closing of policy windows, usually created by changes in the political stream, it provides policy analysts and experts in public administration with an opportunity to plan how they might influence the formulation of policy in a given area. Policy-makers must be alert to those infrequent opportunities for substantial change while at the same time acknowledging that purpose and accomplishment in the arena of public policy-making are not measured solely by large, momentous alterations but also by the marginal adjustments made in consolidating and improving upon that which already exists.

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[349] Geoffrey Vickers, The Art of Judgment: A Study of Policy Making (London: Chapman & Hall, 1965), 15.

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APPENDIX 1

Dear :

I am a doctoral student in the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba, and presently engaged in dissertation research under the supervision of an advisory committee comprised of Dr. John C. Long (advisor), Dr. John Stapleton, and Dr. Paul Thomas. The focus of my study is the 2001 school division amalgamation decision by the provincial government as a case study in public policy-making. More precisely, I wish to examine the amalgamation initiative within the historical context of elementary and secondary school governance in Manitoba, and consider how amalgamation came to assume a place on government's agenda. To that end, I will examine the different policy approaches and decisions taken on the matter by the Filmon and Doer Governments in 1996 and 2001, respectively.

On the basis of extant public documents and information, I have identified a number of individuals from whom I might seek information and opinion regarding this matter. You have been identified as such a person and I would greatly appreciate your assistance. I would like to interview you. The interview would be between 30 to 60 minutes in length, and would be tape recorded.

At no time will the entire transcript of the interview be used in the dissertation but it is my intention to be able to cite certain remarks or observations by you as part of the report of the study. Where these remarks are cited in their literal expression or in paraphrase and are attributed directly to you, by name, position, office or capacity, I will seek your formal approval to do so. Further, where I identify certain remarks or observations that you do not want attributed to you personally, I will ask you to consider allowing me to cite such remarks or observations by attributing them to an "informed observer", "participant in the deliberations", or some other appropriate anonymous acknowledgement. In any case, I would provide you with the text of my reference to your remarks and the manuscript context in which those remarks are presented so that you could decide whether or not you would allow the remarks to be reported or referred to in the report of the study and, if so, what form of attribution, personal or anonymous, you would authorize. Additionally, consistent with the ethical protocols with which I am required to comply as a researcher, you would have the ability to discontinue your participation in the study at any time.

If you conclude that you do not wish to be interviewed or to participate in the study, please know that no observations will be made, or conclusions drawn, as to that fact in the research report. Your decision regarding participation is completely voluntary.

Whether or not you choose to participate, I would ask that you please complete and return the attached Response sheet. A stamped, self-addressed envelope is included. However, if you wish to contact me first, regarding any aspect of the study, I can be reached at or office at , or by e-mail ( ). Dr. Long can be reached at , if you wish to contact him. If you will not be available, your assistance in suggesting another person(s) whom I might contact for information or an interview would be most appreciated.

I would be very pleased and grateful to have your participation, and may I thank you for giving serious attention to my request.

Sincerely,

David Yeo
Ph.D. candidate

_____

Dr. John C. Long
Faculty of Education
University of Manitoba

Attachment

RESPONSE TO REQUEST TO BE INTERVIEWED

Please return this sheet at your earliest convenience in the **stamped, self-addressed envelope provided**:

Respondent's Name: _____
Phone No.: _____
E-mail: _____

Please respond (check ✓) as appropriate:

a._____ I would be available for an interview The following dates and times are most convenient for me.

_____ at _____
Date Time

_____ at _____
Date Time

_____ at _____
Date Time

One of these dates will be confirmed with you in advance.

b._____ I would like an opportunity to talk to you and/or Dr. Long about the study. Please contact me again for this purpose.

c._____ I will not be available for an interview.

d._____ I suggest that you might also contact the following person(s):

Name _____ Phone No. _____

Address _____

Name _____ Phone No. _____

Address _____

Thank you for your assistance with this research project.

_____
David Yeo

APPENDIX 2

Protocol for Individual Interviews

Common Introduction:

Researcher says: "I would like to explore several questions about the subject of school division/district amalgamation, and your role in and observations about the formulation of public policy to address that matter. The questions are open-ended, so that you can say whatever you think, or say as much as you wish. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers. As I have already indicated, your participation is voluntary and your particular answers can, at your choosing, be attributed to you, to some appropriate anonymous acknowledgement, or not used at all. So I invite you to say whatever you would like, but not to say anything more than makes you feel comfortable."

A. Honourable Rosemary Vodrey, Minister of Education (1992-1993)

1 In the early 1990s the government began to consider the need to review existing school division/district boundaries. Do you recall the reasons why the government believed a review to be necessary?

2. In 1993 you appointed a commission, led by Bill Norrie, to examine and report back to the Minister of Education regarding the number and boundaries of school division. Why did you think a Commission was necessary as opposed to direct government action? Did you anticipate that the Commission would recommend a reduction in the number of school divisions?

3. In 1996, following the release of the Norrie Commission Report, the government announced that it would not proceed with directed amalgamation, but would encourage voluntary amalgamation. What factors influenced the government decision to proceed in this way?

4. What roles do Cabinet and caucus play in policy decisions of this kind?

5. Did the positions of education stakeholder groups, including school divisions, influence that decision?

6. What was your sense of the public mood on amalgamation? In favour? Opposed? Not an issue?

B. Honourable Clayton Manness, Minister of Education and Training (1993-1995)

1. In the early 1990s the government began to consider the need to review existing school division/district boundaries. Do you recall the reasons why the government believed a review was necessary?

2. In 1993 the government appointed a Commission, led by Bill Norrie, to examine and report back to the Minister of Education regarding the number and boundaries of school divisions. Why do you think a Commission was necessary as opposed to direct government action? Did you anticipate that the Commission would recommend a reduction in the number of school divisions?

3. In 1996, following the release of the Norrie Commission report, the government announced that it would not proceed with directed amalgamation, but would encourage voluntary amalgamation. What factors do you think influenced the government's decision to proceed in this way?

4. What roles do Cabinet and caucus play in policy decisions of this kind?

5. Did the positions of education stakeholder groups, including school divisions, influence that decision?

6. What was your sense of the public mood on amalgamation? In favour? Opposed? Not an issue?

C. Honourable Linda McIntosh, Minister of Education and Training (1995-1999)

1. In the early 1990s your government began to consider the need to review existing school division/district boundaries. Do you recall the reasons why the government believed a review to be necessary?

2. You were Minister of Education when the government made its formal decision on the recommendations contained in the Boundaries Review Commission report. Why did the government choose not to adopt the Boundaries Review Commission's recommendations concerning the configuration and number of school divisions/districts?

3. Did the government consider options other than the Boundaries Review Commission's recommendations? Downsizing of divisions, but on a lesser scale? "Re-governing" education by abolishing school boards?

4. Why did your government feel that directed amalgamation was not an appropriate public policy approach?

5. Did the position of various stakeholder groups within the education community influence government's eventual decision not to proceed with directed amalgamation?

6. What was your sense of the public mood on amalgamation? In favour? Opposed? Not an issue?

7. What conditions do you think were different, between 1996 and 2001, which might explain the change in position of successive governments around amalgamation?

8. What role do individual Ministers play in shaping significant public policy issues of this kind? What roles do Cabinet and caucus play in policy decisions of this kind?

D. Don Leitch, Clerk of the Executive Council (1988-1999)

1. In the early 1990s the government began to consider the need to review existing school division district boundaries. Do you recall the reasons why the government believed a review was necessary?

2. In 1993 the government appointed a Commission, led by Bill Norrie, to examine and report back to the Minister of Education on several matters, including the number and boundaries of school divisions. Why do you think a Commission, as opposed to direct government action, was necessary?

3. In 1996, following the release of the Norrie Commission report, the government announced that it would not proceed with directed amalgamation, but would encourage voluntary amalgamation. What factors do you think influenced the government's decision to proceed in this way?

4. What roles do Cabinet and caucus play in policy decisions of this kind?

5. What was the Premier's sense on this matter? Did he favour one approach over the other? Was he inclined to seek out and follow a consensus from Cabinet/caucus? To what extent would he have been guided by a recommendation/preferred approach from his Minister of Education?

6. Did the government consider options other than the Boundaries Review Commission's recommendations? Downsizing of divisions, but on a lesser scale than what had been proposed? "Re-governing" education by abolishing school boards?

7. Did the positions of education stakeholder groups, including school divisions, influence government's decision?

8. What was your sense of the public mood on amalgamation? In favour? Opposed? Not an issue? Was there a difference in perspectives between urban and rural Manitoba?

E. John D. Carlyle, Deputy Minister of Education and Training (1989-1999)

1. During your time as Deputy Minister, when do you recall the issue of school division amalgamation first becoming active for the government/Department?

2. What factors do you believe precipitated government's interest in examining the issue and, in particular, in appointing the Boundaries Review Commission in 1993?

3. What did you understand to be the main reasons why the Boundaries Review Commission was established? Why did the government not proceed with direct action on amalgamation?

4. Following the 1994 Boundaries Review Commission report, the government decided it would adopt a policy of encouraging voluntary amalgamation. Why do you think government chose this approach rather than a directed, compulsory approach?

5. Do you believe there were political considerations at play in coming to that decision? If so, what do you think they were?

6. Did government believe a policy of voluntary amalgamation would eventually address systemic problems such as declining enrollments, inequities amongst divisions in program offerings, taxation levels?

7. Did the government actively consider options other than the Boundaries Review Commission recommendations with respect to governance? Downsizing on a lesser scale? A New Brunswick type model (boards replaced by local school and regional councils)?

F. Bill Norrie, Q.C., Chair, Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission (1993-1995)

1. In 1993 you were appointed by the Filmon government to head up a commission to examine several aspects of the elementary/secondary education system, including school division/district boundaries. Can you tell me a little bit about the mandate of the Commission, the process used to gather information, and the Commission's eventual recommendations around amalgamation?

2. Do you recall the position of some of the major stakeholder groups in the education community toward amalgamation?

3. In its report, the Commission recommended directed amalgamation, to be phased-in over a 3-year period. Why did the Commission believe that directed, rather than voluntary, amalgamation was necessary?

4. What did the Commission consider to be the compelling reasons in support of amalgamation?

5. Why do you think the Filmon government declined to act upon the recommendations related to directed amalgamation, and instead chose a voluntary approach?

6. Why do you think the issue was resurrected by the Doer government?

7. Were you ever consulted by the Doer government as it examined the matter in 2000-2001?

8. Why do you think the timing was right in 2001, at least from the government's perspective, to proceed with directed amalgamation when the previous government had declined to do so?

9. What was your sense of the public mood, both in 1996 and in 2001, regarding amalgamation? In favour? Opposed? Not an issue?

G. Honourable Drew Caldwell, Minister of Education, Training and Youth (1999-2002)

1. What prompted your interest in examining school division/district amalgamation?

2. Is it fair to say that during the previous Progressive Conservative administration, and in response to the 1994 Boundaries Review Commission report, the NDP had adopted a position opposing directed amalgamation?

3. What factors served to persuade your party, once in government, to pursue amalgamation? Why do you think the previous government declined to do so?

4. What did you believe to be the compelling arguments in support of amalgamation?

5. Did the government ever consider other policy instruments as means of addressing systemic problems in the elementary and secondary education system? Was the abolition of school boards, for example, ever discussed and debated?

6. Did you believe that amalgamation, as an aspect of education policy, also generated some political opportunities or advantages?

7. School divisions were given an opportunity, between the time you took office and the 2001 amalgamation announcement, to pursue voluntary amalgamation. What made you come to the conclusion that directed amalgamation was necessary?

8. Did the support of, or opposition from, stakeholder groups within the education community play a part in government's decision to move forward on amalgamation?

9. Why did the post-2001 school division map come to look as it does? In other words, what operational factors were in play guiding the decisions as to which divisions were part of (or excluded from) amalgamation?

10. What role do individual Ministers play in shaping significant public policy issues of this kind? What roles do Cabinet and caucus play?

11. Why did you think the time was right in 2001 to proceed with directed amalgamation?

12. What was your sense of the public mood on amalgamation? In favour? Opposed? Not an issue?

H. Dr. Ben Levin, Deputy Minister of Education, Training and Youth (1999-2002)

1. During your time as Deputy Minister, when do you recall the issue of school division amalgamation becoming active for the government?

2. What factors do you believe precipitated government's interest in pursuing the matter?

3. Why did the government choose not to adopt the recommendations of the 1994 Boundaries Review Commission as they related to the configuration and number of school divisions?

4. Why do you think government elected to pursue a policy of directed amalgamation rather than incentives to encourage voluntary amalgamations?

5. Did government consider policy options other than amalgamation? "Re-governing" of education by abolishing school boards, for example?

6. Do you believe there were political considerations at play as government came to its decision to proceed with directed amalgamation? If so, what do you think they were?

7. Why did the post-2001 division map come to look as it does? In other words, what operational factors were in play guiding the decisions as to which divisions were part of (or excluded from) amalgamation?

I. Paul Vogt, Policy Secretary to Cabinet (1999-2005)

J. Ron Desjardins, Policy Management Secretariat (1999 -)

K. Annalea Mitchell, Special Assistant to the Minister of Education (1999-2002)

1. What position did you hold in government at the time of the school division amalgamation initiative?

2. When did interest in examining amalgamation appear on government's agenda?

3. Where did the impetus for amalgamation originate? Premier? Minister of Education? Political Staff? Civil Service?

4. What were seen to be the compelling arguments in favour of amalgamation?

5. Were other policy instruments as means of addressing systematic problems in the elementary and secondary education systems ever considered? Was the abolition of school boards, for example, ever discussed and debated?

6. Did the support of, or opposition from, stakeholder groups within the education community play a part in government's decision to move forward on amalgamation?

7. Why did the post-2001 school division map come to look as it does? In other words, what operational factors were in play guiding the decisions as to which divisions were part of (or excluded from) amalgamation?

8. What was the role of political staff, working with the Premier's Office, Minister of Education, and civil service, in moving this initiative forward?

9. What was your sense of the public mood on amalgamation? In favour? Opposed? Not an issue?

L. Dr. Gerald Farthing, Assistant Deputy Minister, School Programs Division, Manitoba Education, Training and Youth (1999-2004)

M. Brian Hanson, Director of Education Administration Services Branch, Manitoba Education, Training and Youth (1993-2003)

N. Steve Power, Director of Schools' Finance Branch, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (1999 -)

1. When did interest in examining amalgamation appear on the government's agenda?

2. In your view, where did the impetus for amalgamation originate? Premier? Minister of Education? Political Staff? Civil Service?

3. Once government had signaled its interest in examining amalgamation as a public policy initiative, what work were you required to undertake in support of that review?

4. Was a systematic examination of other possible policy instruments, as means of addressing the "problems" in elementary and secondary education, undertaken? Why was amalgamation determined to be the most desirable option?

5. What "problems" in elementary and secondary education was amalgamation intended to address?

6. From your perspective, did the support of, or opposition from, stakeholder groups within the education community play a part in government's decision to move forward on amalgamation in 2001?

7. Why did the post-2001 school division map come to look as it does? In other words, what operational factors were in play guiding the decisions as to which divisions were part of (or excluded from) amalgamation?

8. What, from your perspective, were the most challenging aspects of the amalgamation experience?

APPENDIX 3

SCHEDULE A
(section 6)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose of review commission

1 The purpose of the review commission is to review the boundaries of school divisions and school districts for the purpose of making recommendations in respect to establishing an efficient and effective boundary structure in furtherance of educational excellence and to produce a final report for the minister with conclusions, options and recommendations respecting any alteration of the boundaries.

Scope of review

2 The review commission shall deal with all aspects of the effects of altering boundaries, including the following:

(a) demographics;

(b) patterns of transportation;

(c) economic activity;

(d) the enrolment of pupils;

(e) educational programs;

(f) tax assessments;

(g) cost efficiency and cost effectiveness;

(h) the governance of francophone schools;

(i) the role and responsibilities of schools, school divisions, school districts and the Department of Education and Training;

(j) policy making structures, including the role and responsibilities of advisory committees, elected officials and the parents of pupils;

(k) the impact of technology, including its potential effect on the development and delivery of educational programs;

(l) municipal boundaries;

(m) current legislation and possible amendments to the legislation;

(n) current trends in educational reform;

(o) administrative matters, including employment contracts and the transfer of assets and liabilities.

ANNEXE A
(article 6)

MANDAT

Mission de la Commission de révision

1 La Commission de révision a pour mission, d'une part, de réviser les limites des divisions et des districts scolaires et de faire des recommandations sur l'établissement d'une structure efficace en matière de limites en vue de l'avancement de l'excellence dans le domaine de l'éducation et, d'autre part, de présenter au ministre un rapport final contenant des conclusions, des options et des recommandations au sujet de toute modification des limites.

Nature de la révision

2 La Commission de révision se penche sur les conséquences de toute modification des limites, notamment sur les aspects suivants :

a) la démographie;

b) les courants en matière de transport;

c) l'activité économique;

d) l'inscription des élèves;

e) les programmes éducatifs;

f) les cotisations fiscales;

g) le rapport coût-efficacité;

h) la gestion des écoles françaises;

i) le rôle et la responsabilité des écoles, des divisions et des districts scolaires ainsi que du ministère de l'Éducation et de la Formation professionnelle;

j) les structures servant à l'élaboration de la politique, y compris le rôle et la responsabilité des comités consultatifs, des représentants élus et des parents des élèves;

k) les conséquences de la technologie, y compris dans le domaine de l'élaboration et de la prestation de programmes éducatifs;

l) les limites municipales;

m) la législation actuelle ainsi que les modifications qui pourraient y être apportées;

n) les courants actuels dans le domaine de la réforme de l'éducation;

o) les questions administratives, y compris les contrats de travail et le transfert d'éléments d'actif et de passif.

6(2) After completing the review, the review commission shall provide a written report to the minister containing recommendations respecting the alteration of boundaries and the other matters set out in Schedule A.

6(3) The final written report of the review commission shall be delivered to the minister on a date that the minister may specify.

Rules of procedure

7 The proceedings of the review commission shall be governed by the rules of procedure set out in Schedule B.

August 24, 1993

Rosemary Vodrey
Minister of Education
and Training

6(2) Une fois la révision terminée, la Commission de révision présente par écrit au ministre un rapport contenant ses recommandations au sujet de toute modification touchant les limites et des autres questions prévues à l'annexe A.

6(3) Le rapport final de la Commission de révision est remis au ministre à la date que celui-ci précise.

Règles de procédure

7 Les règles de procédure prévues à l'annexe B régissent les travaux de la Commission de révision.

La ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation professionnelle,

Le 24 août 1993

Rosemary Vodrey

APPENDIX 4

1995 Manitoba Provincial Election Progressive Conservative Party Result Summary	
Candidate	**Constituency**
Jim Downey	Arthur-Virden*
Linda McIntosh	Assiniboia
James C. McCrae	Brandon West
Jim Ernst	Charleswood
Jack Penner	Emerson*
Rosemary Vodrey	Fort Garry
Ed Helwer	Gimli*
Denis C. Rocan	Gladstone*
Eric Stefanson	Kirkfield Park
Ben Sveinson	La Verendrye*
Darren Praznik	Lac du Bonnet*
Harry J. Enns	Lakeside*
Harold Gilleshammer	Minnedosa*
Frank P. Pitura	Morris*
Jack Reimer	Niakwa
Peter George Dyck	Pembina*
Brian Pallister	Portage la Prairie*
David Newman	Riel
Bonnie Mitchelson	River East
Mike Radcliffe	River Heights
Len Derkach	Roblin-Russell*
Vic Toews	Rossmere
Louise Dacquay	Seine River*
Glen M. Findlay	Springfield*
Marcel Laurendeau	St. Norbert*
Shirley Render	St. Vital
Glen Cummings	Ste. Rose*
Albert Driedger	Steinbach*
Gerry McAlpine	Sturgeon Creek
Merv Tweed	Turtle Mountain*
Gary Filmon	Tuxedo

Source: Elections Manitoba
* denotes rural ridings

APPENDIX 5

MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Room 168
Legislative Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA
R3C 0V8

July 10, 2000

Dear Colleagues:

My first nine months as Minister have been an extraordinary time of learning for me. I am proud of the initiatives that our government has already taken in education, such as acting on our commitment to provide funding increases to the public school system in accord with economic growth, commencing the implementation stage of the Special Education Review, announcing the Healthy Child Initiative, establishing a commission on provincial class size, rationalising the delivery of adult education in the province and undertaking an exciting new approach to student assessment in Grade 3. At the same time, it is clear that many important issues remain on the agenda for the coming years.

At the outset, I wish to sincerely thank the many people who have helped me think about and reflect upon educational issues during the past few months. I truly value the insight offered to me through our discussions and your advice has a very real impact on the policy deliberations of government. I have especially enjoyed my many visits to schools and the chance to talk with so many teachers, trustees and students. Your input has been very helpful to me and I am thankful for it.

On June 16th I met with representatives of the main educational organizations involved with public schools in Manitoba. This was the second such meeting and signals a process I intend to continue throughout our mandate as one important way of consulting with educators about policy issues.

At that meeting I shared with participants my emerging views about some of the key issues that we will need to address together in the next few years. For the benefit of those who were not present on June 16th, and given various reports in the media, I want to share these perspectives more widely so that you have a full sense of the critical areas for us to work on together. Among the most important of these are the following:

...../2

- Working to improve success rates among those learners who are currently experiencing the greatest difficulty. I think most of us would agree that we need to mobilize all the capacity and energy we can to ensure that all children have a real opportunity to succeed in our schools. To me this is the most important single issue on the education agenda, and those that follow are all related to it.

- Improving the capacity of schools as learning organizations. It is increasingly important that our schools and school systems are able to plan appropriately, to gather and use data on how well we are doing, and to involve the broader community in a discussion about how we can do better. Ensuring best practices must be a hallmark of our activities.

- Strengthening the participation of parents and communities in education. Student success is strongly related to the support and involvement of parents and the broader community. We need to think carefully about how schools can build strong links with parents and the community that will promote student success. This is particularly important in terms of improving outcomes for Aboriginal students. While committing ourselves to success for all learners, we need to pay particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal learners and communities.

- Strengthening learning and professional development opportunities for educators. Manitoba is fortunate to have many wonderful educators in our schools. However, we have a responsibility to ensure that our educators have ongoing opportunities to develop new skills and to stay current with emerging best practices in education. This requirement involves issues of initial teacher education, but even more so speaks to teacher professional development and continuing education.

- Improving connections between secondary schools, post-secondary education, training and work. Our initial work on the issues raised by the advent of adult learning centres indicates that there is much scope to look at improving linkages among these various sectors so that learners can get the skills and credentials they want and need in the most beneficial way possible.

Strengthening the connections between research, evidence, policy and practice. As research in education and other related fields offers increasing guidance to us in regard to policy and practice, we need to ensure that the best possible evidence is available to people across the province as they make judgments about how our schools should operate. Open discussion and debate about educational issues, in the context of current knowledge, is a vital part of building a strong and healthy public education system.

...../3

- Providing equitable and stable funding for the public school system. Our commitment to provide funding at least equal to the rate of economic growth is one which allows for sound long-term planning. It is our intent to ensure financial stability in the public school system through this commitment.

These are, of course, only very brief comments about issues each of which is complex and demanding. The Department and I will continue to seek your views on these issues as we work together to develop strategies to meet the challenges that face us. I also recognize that there are many other issues that Manitoba Education and Training will need to continue to work on with all of you. We will continue to pay attention to the development and implementation of new curricula, to student assessment, to the effective use of technology, and many other issues.

I also want to comment on the matter of school division amalgamations in light of recent news stories. This is a theme that the Premier and I have mentioned a number of times over the last few months, and we have not changed our views. It is clear that we have in Manitoba a number of school divisions with very low – and declining – enrolments; I am concerned about maintaining organizational units that simply are not viable either educationally or financially. I suspect that all of us would agree that if we were starting over today we might organize school divisions differently. I do not want to have everyone's focus move away from education issues towards school division structures, as we need to continue to put our priority on helping students achieve learning goals, but we must also work towards a more rational school division structure.

My preference would be to continue the existing voluntary process of amalgamation over the next twelve months. By raising the issue now – more than two years in advance of the next school board elections – we hope to give divisions ample opportunity to explore the possibility of improving services through amalgamation, shared service agreements and other coordinated initiatives. Instead of imposing a plan on school divisions, we are raising the issue to give trustees, teachers, parents and other stakeholders an opportunity to develop a course of action that makes sense for each division. We recognise that often the best and most innovative ideas come from the local level, and are interested in encouraging a discussion around those ideas. Indeed, there are already success stories in Manitoba, such as the merger of the Pembina Valley and Tiger Hills school divisions. We also recognise that there are divisions for which merger may not be necessary or desirable, and we expect those views will also be part of the discussions. However, the reality is that the changes of the past few years have not been sufficient to resolve even the most obvious structural problems in the province.

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I would like to ask all of you to think about whether in your own setting some amalgamation or other redrawing of boundaries would in fact result in better services to students or efficiencies in the use of resources, and to pursue such opportunities where advisable. I am prepared to extend assistance from the Department in such efforts if the parties request. The next school board elections are in 2002. I think we have a window of opportunity over the next couple of years to work together to come up with changes in division structures that will allow us to move confidently into the future with an organizational structure that we all think is healthy and stable. My Deputy Minister, Dr. Ben Levin, will be in further contact with you on this matter in the near future.

I would welcome your comments and views on any of the issues raised in this letter. I look forward to continuing to work with all of you in the service of the learners and people of Manitoba. Thank you, once again, for your dedication and commitment.

Sincerely,

Honourable Drew Caldwell
Minister
Education and Training

Distribution:
Manitoba Teachers' Society
Manitoba Association of School Trustees
Manitoba Association of School Superintendents
Manitoba Association of School Business Officials
Manitoba Association of Parent Councils
Chairs of School Divisions/Districts
Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools Inc.
Manitoba Association of Principals

APPENDIX 6

MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Room 168
Legislative Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA
R3C 0V8

September 25, 2000

To: Chair of School Boards

Re: School Division Amalgamations

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing in regard to the position of the Department of Education and Training on school division amalgamations.

We are encouraging school divisions and districts to look seriously at possibilities for amalgamation or recombination where such moves would result in gains in efficiency or quality of education. The government's strong preference continues to be to foster voluntary amalgamations, as these have proved to be quite successful where they have occurred. I am aware that several divisions and districts are already in discussions or have begun steps towards integration, and the Department encourages these developments to continue.

We also recognize that circumstances differ across the province, so that a blanket policy is not the best option. In some cases two divisions may consider amalgamating, whereas in other instances some recombination of three or more existing divisions to form fewer but larger units would probably be a more likely option. We encourage thorough exploration of such opportunities.

The Department believes local dialogue remains the best means for facilitating positive action. However we suggest that you consider the following criteria in determining what sorts of discussions to pursue with neighbouring divisions.

... /2

1. Program and geographic synergies. Divisions should consider whether services to students could be improved through amalgamation. For example, in some cases students might actually be better served with a different set of division boundaries in that they may live closer to schools in what is now a neighbouring division. In other cases a larger division could provide a stronger set of programs or support services.

2. Current and projected enrolment. Twenty years ago most divisions had enrolments of at least 2000 students. Today many are at 1000 and declining. While a reasonable minimum size depends largely on geography, enrolment must be an important consideration in looking at each division's future. I enclose a list of Manitoba school divisions and districts showing current enrolment and change in enrolment over the last 5 years. This list gives some indication of where there may be issues of continued viability for divisions or districts.

3. Tax base. I enclose a list of divisions showing assessment per pupil. Those divisions with very low assessments, especially where enrolment is declining, face very real challenges in maintaining their viability.

While these criteria may seem to apply primarily to rural divisions, the Department also encourages neighbouring divisions in and around the city of Winnipeg to consider whether some reduction in the number of divisions would in fact serve to improve the quality or effectiveness of education.

How should school boards proceed with these discussions? Without wanting to restrict your approach, you might consider a process that includes:

1. Consideration of the medium term viability of the division or district in terms of the above (or other) criteria.

2. Examination of your geography to determine where enrolments are and therefore which neighbouring divisions are best candidates for possible combination.

3. Initial contact with one or more neighbouring units to begin discussions. These initial discussions would no doubt include issues such as:

... /3

- implications of potential changes in enrolment patterns
- implications of differences in current educational services (e.g. patterns of provision of special education, ancillary services, French immersion or other special programs, staff utilization patterns)
- cost implications (e.g. harmonization of collective agreements, savings in administration)
- revenue implications (e.g. impact on provincial funding and local levies)
- governance considerations (e.g. size and organization of a new board of trustees)

On the basis of such preliminary assessments, divisions would determine what further steps might be desirable. We recognize that serious discussion of amalgamation may involve some costs. Manitoba Education and Training will make available up to $10, 000 to each group of divisions/districts interested in exploring amalgamation on a one time basis to support this effort. Funding could be used to offset staff or travel costs, hire an external facilitator, commission appropriate research, or for any other bona fide purpose related to the amalgamation. School boards would be expected to make a formal request for financial assistance, outlining required services and associated expenditures. Payment would be made to one of the divisions bases on mutual agreement on a lead role for payment purposes. No one division can share in or access the $10,000 support in more than one instance. As well, previous measures to support amalgamations, including a one-time payment of $50 per pupil for an amalgamated division and legislation to allow gradual harmonization of mill rates, continue to be in effect.

It will be important, of course, to enter these discussions with an open mind as to potential benefits. In all cases our first concern should be for the welfare of the students. If amalgamations can lead to improvements in education quality, they should be pursued even if there are obstacles.

I would also appreciate it if you could keep my staff informed of any concrete actions in regard to possible amalgamations. Our contact persons for your questions on this matter will be Mr. Brian Hanson, Director, Education Administration Services Branch, 1181 Portage Avenue, 945-7391 and Steve Power, Director, Schools Finance Branch, 1181 Portage Avenue, 945-0515.

.../4

Department staff will be contacting all school divisions/districts in the spring of 2001 to see what positive developments there have been respecting amalgamations.

Yours sincerely,

Honourable Drew Caldwell
Minister
Education and Training

Enclosure

c. Manitoba Association of School Trustees
Manitoba Association of School Superintendents
Manitoba Teachers' Society
Manitoba Association of School Business Officials

History of Eligible Enrolment from 1994/95 to 1999/2000

		Actual Eligible Enrolment						Pupil Change					Percent Change				
		1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	1994/95 - 1995/96	1995/96 - 1996/97	1996/97 - 1997/98	1997/98 - 1998/99	1998/99 - 1999/00	1994/95 - 1995/96	1995/96 - 1996/97	1996/97 - 1997/98	1997/98 - 1998/99	1998/99 - 1999/00
1	Winnipeg	30,314.2	30,212.2	30,027.2	30,037.4	29,695.7	29,924.9	(102.0)	(191.0)	10.2	(341.7)	229.2	-0.3%	-0.6%	0.1%	-1.1%	0.8%
2	St. James-Assiniboia	9,152.3	9,100.3	8,923.9	8,952.4	9,046.2	9,139.4	(52.0)	(176.4)	28.5	93.8	93.2	-0.6%	-1.9%	0.3%	1.0%	1.0%
3	Assiniboine South	6,487.4	6,463.0	6,362.2	6,243.3	6,090.4	5,538.8	(24.4)	(100.8)	(118.9)	(152.9)	458.4	-0.4%	-1.6%	-1.9%	-2.5%	7.5%
4	St. Boniface	5,621.1	5,636.2	5,671.6	5,652.2	5,669.1	5,796.8	15.1	35.4	(19.4)	16.9	127.7	0.3%	0.6%	-0.3%	0.3%	2.3%
5	Fort Garry	6,721.8	6,811.4	6,873.1	6,942.5	6,932.7	7,036.2	89.6	61.7	69.4	(9.8)	103.5	1.3%	0.9%	1.0%	-0.1%	1.5%
6	St. Vital	9,334.7	9,404.8	9,473.3	9,568.2	9,535.0	8,960.9	70.2	68.4	94.9	(33.2)	(574.1)	0.8%	0.7%	1.0%	-0.3%	-6.0%
7	River East	12,764.7	12,765.0	12,853.5	12,696.7	12,729.0	12,661.6	0.3	88.5	(156.8)	32.3	132.6	0.0%	0.7%	-1.2%	0.3%	1.0%
8	Seven Oaks	8,861.2	8,871.7	8,969.6	8,772.8	8,652.9	8,686.9	10.5	97.9	(196.8)	(119.9)	34.0	0.1%	1.1%	-2.2%	-1.4%	0.4%
9	Lord Selkirk	4,458.8	4,395.0	4,529.0	4,609.6	4,593.8	4,677.0	(63.8)	134.0	80.6	(15.8)	83.2	-1.4%	3.0%	1.8%	-0.3%	1.8%
10	Transcona-Springfield	7,910.8	7,891.5	7,875.5	7,871.5	8,025.9	8,088.2	(19.3)	(16.0)	(4.0)	154.4	62.3	-0.2%	-0.2%	-0.1%	2.0%	0.8%
11	Agassiz	2,636.7	2,684.1	2,727.6	2,886.1	3,000.5	3,074.5	47.4	37.5	166.5	112.4	74.0	1.8%	1.4%	6.1%	3.9%	2.5%
12	Selkirk	3,799.0	3,875.3	3,900.0	3,773.7	3,569.9	3,599.6	76.3	24.7	(126.3)	(203.8)	29.7	2.0%	0.6%	-3.2%	-5.4%	0.8%
13	Hanover	5,483.5	5,491.4	5,545.2	5,586.4	5,611.2	5,695.1	7.9	53.8	41.2	24.8	83.9	0.1%	1.0%	0.7%	0.4%	1.5%
14	Boundary	699.7	695.6	706.5	724.6	729.0	740.1	(4.1)	10.9	18.1	4.4	11.1	-0.6%	1.6%	2.6%	0.6%	1.5%
15	Red River	623.4	617.3	612.2	547.5	534.5	523.0	(6.1)	(5.1)	(64.7)	(13.0)	(11.5)	-1.0%	-0.8%	-10.6%	-2.4%	-2.2%
16	Rhineland	1,354.5	1,414.4	1,408.2	1,456.5	1,471.2	1,542.2	59.9	(6.2)	48.3	14.7	71.0	4.4%	-0.4%	3.4%	1.0%	4.8%
17	Morris-Macdonald	1,597.7	1,630.9	1,704.7	1,735.9	2,337.8	4,745.9	33.2	73.8	31.2	601.9	2,408.1	2.1%	4.5%	1.8%	34.7%	103.0%
18	White Horse Plain	1,002.5	1,051.1	1,027.0	1,038.5	1,007.6	979.6	48.6	(24.1)	11.5	(30.9)	(28.0)	4.8%	-2.3%	1.1%	-3.0%	-2.8%
19	Interlake	3,433.0	3,431.4	3,418.9	3,532.3	3,490.9	3,482.2	(1.6)	(12.5)	113.4	(41.4)	(8.7)	0.0%	-0.4%	3.3%	-1.2%	-0.2%
20	Evergreen	1,726.3	1,765.0	1,763.1	1,783.5	1,786.6	1,763.9	38.7	(1.9)	20.4	3.1	(22.7)	2.2%	-0.1%	1.2%	0.2%	-1.3%
21	Lakeshore	1,435.7	1,418.3	1,396.5	1,391.0	1,362.1	1,368.5	(17.4)	(21.7)	(5.6)	(28.9)	6.8	-1.2%	-1.5%	-0.4%	-2.1%	0.5%
22	Portage La Prairie	3,492.1	3,601.5	3,680.9	3,662.4	3,633.6	3,675.8	109.4	79.4	(18.5)	(28.8)	42.2	3.1%	2.2%	-0.5%	-0.8%	1.2%
23	Midland	1,599.7	1,591.2	1,584.7	1,558.3	1,536.4	1,599.8	(8.5)	(6.5)	(26.4)	(21.9)	63.4	-0.5%	-0.4%	-1.7%	-1.4%	4.1%
24	Garden Valley	2,665.0	2,659.6	2,659.8	2,633.8	2,613.1	2,719.0	(5.4)	0.2	(26.0)	(20.7)	105.9	-0.2%	0.0%	1.0%	-0.8%	4.1%
25	Mountain	860.0	872.1	883.2	875.5	844.1	880.4	12.1	11.1	(7.7)	(31.4)	36.3	1.4%	1.3%	-0.9%	-3.6%	4.3%
26	Pine Creek	1,384.6	1,462.2	1,422.6	1,426.1	1,416.4	1,367.9	77.6	(39.6)	3.5	(11.7)	(48.5)	5.6%	-2.7%	0.2%	-0.8%	-3.4%
27	Beautiful Plains	1,643.9	1,653.0	1,660.0	1,678.8	1,664.6	1,720.0	9.1	7.0	18.8	(14.2)	35.4	0.6%	0.4%	1.1%	-0.8%	2.1%
28	Turtle River	1,099.5	1,017.0	977.2	915.6	886.0	872.7	(82.5)	(39.8)	(61.6)	(29.6)	(13.3)	-7.5%	-3.9%	-6.3%	-3.2%	-1.5%
29	Dauphin-Ochre Area #1	2,075.7	1,997.2	1,959.8	1,946.5	1,855.4	1,872.6	(78.5)	(37.4)	(13.3)	(91.1)	17.2	-3.8%	-1.9%	-0.7%	-4.7%	0.9%
30	Duck Mountain	783.0	775.8	794.5	766.0	754.4	706.5	(7.2)	18.7	(28.5)	(11.6)	(47.9)	-0.9%	2.4%	-3.6%	-1.5%	-6.3%
31	Swan Valley	1,874.8	1,916.1	1,891.7	1,889.4	1,908.7	1,908.7	41.3	(24.4)	(2.3)	19.3	0.0	2.2%	-1.3%	-0.1%	1.0%	0.0%
32	Intermountain	1,231.0	1,206.6	1,167.5	1,124.0	1,107.2	1,079.0	(24.4)	(39.1)	(43.5)	(16.8)	(28.2)	-2.0%	-3.2%	-3.7%	-1.5%	-2.5%
33	Pelly Trail	988.6	967.5	952.5	963.0	960.7	948.5	(22.1)	(15.0)	10.5	(2.3)	(12.2)	-2.2%	-1.6%	1.1%	-0.2%	-1.3%
34	Birdtail River	1,236.1	1,255.2	1,255.2	1,222.2	1,193.2	1,189.3	19.1	0.0	(33.0)	(29.0)	(3.9)	1.5%	0.0%	-2.6%	-2.4%	-0.3%
35	Rolling River	2,121.6	2,135.8	2,153.2	2,130.2	2,203.0	2,172.2	14.2	17.4	(23.0)	72.8	(30.8)	0.7%	0.8%	-1.1%	3.4%	-1.4%
36	Brandon	7,916.2	7,771.3	7,756.5	7,557.1	7,437.0	7,444.2	(144.9)	(14.8)	(199.4)	(120.1)	7.2	-1.8%	-0.2%	-2.6%	-1.6%	0.1%
37	Fort La Bosse	1,710.6	1,697.5	1,665.6	1,655.4	1,640.9	1,632.4	(13.1)	(31.9)	(10.2)	(14.5)	(8.5)	-0.8%	1.9%	-0.6%	-0.9%	-0.5%
38	Souris Valley	1,144.5	1,161.0	1,141.5	1,117.0	1,115.9	1,139.2	16.5	(19.5)	(24.5)	(1.1)	23.3	1.4%	-1.7%	-2.1%	-0.1%	2.1%
39	Antler River	905.0	908.6	897.5	905.0	884.0	860.5	3.6	(11.1)	7.5	(21.0)	(23.5)	0.4%	-1.2%	0.8%	-2.3%	-2.7%
40	Turtle Mountain	1,262.7	1,296.5	1,291.2	1,310.3	1,329.6	1,380.0	33.8	(5.3)	19.1	19.3	50.4	2.7%	-0.4%	1.5%	1.5%	3.8%
41	Kelsey	1,847.0	1,770.5	1,936.3	1,947.6	1,923.2	1,832.4	(76.5)	165.8	11.3	(24.4)	(90.8)	-4.1%	9.4%	0.6%	-1.3%	-4.7%
42	Flin Flon	1,520.0	1,498.4	1,473.8	1,424.2	1,388.2	1,405.0	(21.6)	(24.6)	(49.6)	(36.0)	16.8	-1.4%	-1.6%	-3.4%	-2.5%	1.2%
43	Western	1,331.5	1,386.3	1,391.0	1,352.4	1,425.1	1,470.2	54.8	4.7	(38.6)	72.7	45.1	4.1%	0.3%	-2.8%	5.4%	3.2%
44	Frontier	2,561.0	2,629.2	2,673.5	2,755.2	2,658.3	2,597.4	68.2	44.3	81.7	(96.9)	(60.9)	2.7%	1.7%	3.1%	-3.5%	2.3%
45	Franco-manitobaine	4,089.5	4,178.5	4,241.0	4,240.2	4,301.6	4,343.0	89.0	62.5	(0.8)	61.4	41.4	2.2%	1.5%	0.0%	1.4%	1.0%
46	Prairie Spirit	2,048.8	2,017.3	2,004.1	1,974.5	1,909.8	1,881.6	(31.5)	(13.2)	(29.6)	(64.7)	(28.2)	-1.5%	-0.7%	-1.5%	-3.3%	-1.5%
2264	Churchill	224.0	227.1	214.7	202.0	208.2	202.5	3.1	(12.4)	(12.7)	6.2	(5.7)	1.4%	-5.5%	-5.9%	3.1%	-2.7%
2309	Snow Lake	236.6	261.5	277.0	288.5	266.2	262.0	24.9	15.5	11.5	(22.3)	(4.2)	10.5%	5.9%	4.2%	-7.7%	-1.6%
2312	Lynn Lake	248.3	239.1	233.5	236.0	237.5	220.5	(9.2)	(5.6)	2.5	1.5	(17.0)	-3.7%	-2.3%	1.1%	0.6%	-7.2%
2355	Mystery Lake	3,415.0	3,397.9	3,473.2	3,470.9	3,436.6	3,316.1	(17.1)	75.3	(2.3)	(34.3)	(120.5)	-0.5%	2.2%	-0.1%	-1.0%	-3.5%
2439	Sprague Consolidated	140.5	136.1	156.0	148.5	141.0	137.0	(4.4)	19.9	(7.5)	(7.5)	(4.0)	3.1%	14.6%	-4.8%	-5.1%	-2.8%
2460	Leaf Rapids	377.2	392.1	366.6	314.5	298.0	310.0	14.9	(25.2)	(52.4)	(16.5)	12.0	4.0%	-6.4%	-14.3%	-5.2%	4.0%
	Province Total	179,454.0	179,705.7	179,993.0	179,497.7	179,039.9	182,352.1	251.7	287.3	(495.3)	(457.8)	3,312.2	0.1%	0.2%	-0.3%	-0.3%	1.8%

NO.	DIVISION / DISTRICT	1999/2000 Assessment Per Pupil
1	WINNIPEG	122,061
2	ST. JAMES - ASSINIBOIA	151,916
3	ASSINIBOINE SOUTH	149,244
4	ST. BONIFACE	129,785
5	FORT GARRY	152,905
6	ST. VITAL	95,278
9	RIVER EAST	95,049
10	SEVEN OAKS	98,950
11	LORD SELKIRK	128,339
12	TRANSCONA - SPRINGFIELD	102,269
13	AGASSIZ	118,480
14	SEINE RIVER	87,812
15	HANOVER	78,931
16	BOUNDARY	129,749
17	RED RIVER	140,582
18	RHINELAND	97,881
19	MORRIS-MACDONALD	93,536
20	WHITE HORSE PLAIN	129,778
21	INTERLAKE	105,378
22	EVERGREEN	159,416
23	LAKESHORE	85,921
24	PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE	113,398
25	MIDLAND	126,945
26	GARDEN VALLEY	88,034
28	MOUNTAIN	97,676
30	PINE CREEK	102,511
31	BEAUTIFUL PLAINS	121,132
32	TURTLE RIVER	91,064
33	DAUPHIN - OCHRE	97,432
34	DUCK MOUNTAIN	55,268
35	SWAN VALLEY	91,617
36	INTERMOUNTAIN	115,860
37	PELLY TRAIL	113,203
38	BIRDTAIL RIVER	123,100
39	ROLLING RIVER	108,200
40	BRANDON	117,742
41	FORT LA BOSSE	137,754
42	SOURIS VALLEY	123,958
43	ANTLER RIVER	156,526
44	TURTLE MOUNTAIN	100,272
45	KELSEY	68,174
46	FLIN FLON	69,891
47	WESTERN	98,921
48	FRONTIER	22,102
49	D.S.F.M.	101,487
50	PRAIRIE SPIRIT	121,490
2264	CHURCHILL	60,944
2309	SNOW LAKE	50,761
2312	LYNN LAKE	11,773
2355	MYSTERY LAKE	71,044
2439	SPRAGUE CONSOLIDATED	82,134
2460	LEAF RAPIDS	57,256
	PROVINCIAL AVERAGE	110,730

APPENDIX 7

MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Room 168
Legislative Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA
R3C 0V8

January 9, 2001

To: Chairs of School Boards

Dear Colleagues:

Today I had the opportunity to thoughtfully discuss the issue of school board amalgamations and shared services with Rey Toews and Carolyn Duhamel of the Manitoba Association of School Trustees. I am pleased to write to you to further elaborate on this issue.

When I wrote to boards in September, I indicated that amalgamation and service sharing should be undertaken "where such moves would result in gains in efficiency or quality of education". I suggested that boards should consider as criteria: program and geographic/community synergies; expected changes in enrolments; and expected changes in tax assessment. I asked boards to look carefully at these criteria in relation to their own divisions and in relation to their interactions with neighbouring divisions within a regional context.

I indicated in that letter that I would be following up on progress, and, in light of our discussion today, am now asking that all boards file a report with my office by April 20, 2001, which identifies the steps taken in response to my earlier letter. I would like a clear indication from each board of the kind of analysis that was conducted on the three criteria, the results of that analysis, what discussions were held and their current status.

At the same time, I am aware that a number of issues have been identified over the last few months, and I would like to comment on some of these.

In some cases boards can see that there would be advantages from some change in boundaries in a region, but since the program or tax advantages would not be to their current division they understandably feel that it is not their role to move the process forward. Second, people have suggested that amalgamation

...../2

may take a lot of work and are reluctant to commit resources to this activity given other pressures. Third, there are concerns about the impact of division changes on possible school closures, program changes, and the like. Fourth, I know that people are worried about the impact of changes on local jobs, such as those in board offices and service support.

As Minister of Education, I have a responsibility for the education of all children in Manitoba. While I recognize that boards are responsible for their own school divisions, I urge you to take this opportunity to identify changes that would, in the long run, be good for education throughout the province. For the sake of all children, I urge you to move forward even where there may be no immediate benefit to your own jurisdiction, or where considerable input of time and energy is required. If all of us assert the view that problems outside our boundaries are not our problems, then we are losing an opportunity to strengthen public education overall, and that can only be detrimental to everyone in the long run. I realize that entering into these discussions and envisioning the broader educational benefit takes leadership and courage and I commend you for it.

I also want to repeat that my Department will work with boards on these changes. In September I outlined some of the supports for planning and implementation of changes. I am open to other ideas that you might have to promote appropriate changes, whether these involve financial or other considerations

To conclude, I am genuinely committed to a voluntary process in these deliberations. I look forward to working together to ensure that positive change happens for the benefit of all Manitoba students.

Sincerely,

Honourable Drew Caldwell
Minister
Education and Training

c. Manitoba Association of School Trustees
Manitoba Teachers' Society
Manitoba Association of School Superintendents
Manitoba Association of School Business Officials
Manitoba Association of Parent Councils
Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools

APPENDIX 8

Manitoba

Deputy Minister of Education and Training

Room 162
Legislative Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba CANADA
R3C 0V8

February 13, 2001

To: Chairs of School Boards

SUBJECT: AMALGAMATION REPORT

In the Minister's letter of January 9, 2001 he requested that school divisions/districts report by April 20, 2001 regarding their ongoing discussions about school division/district amalgamations. To help you in your reporting, the Department has prepared two templates that school divisions/districts can use to prepare their amalgamation reports. The templates are separated into the three broad analysis criteria (i.e. Program and Geographic/Community Synergies, Enrollment, and Tax Assessment) specified in the Minister's letters of September 25, 2000 and January 9, 2001.

The report templates identify the minimum considerations within each criteria that school divisions/districts should be examining and reporting on. To further assist you, each consideration is followed by examples of some of the factors that could be used as terms of reference for the review or analysis of that factor. Please concentrate only on those examples that are relevant to your discussion. You may also add other factors that are not listed on the templates.

Every school division/district is expected to provide an amalgamation report. Use of either of the attached report templates is optional. However, school divisions/districts that submit their report in another format should ensure that all of the considerations identified in the attached templates are addressed. Joint submissions can be prepared where there is consensus between two or more school divisions/districts on the report content. Separate submissions should be made where school divisions/districts who have been in discussions may not agree on the contents of the amalgamation report.

Electronic copies of the attached sample report templates are available. To obtain an electronic copy, please e-mail jmoorhead@edu.gov.mb.ca requesting a copy

.../2

of the "Amalgamation Analysis Report Templates." Clearly, you will need more space within the template to complete your review and analysis. The templates can be customized to meet your needs. For example, rows and columns can be adjusted to accommodate your specific text requirements.

I look forward to receiving your reports on the outcome of your school division/district amalgamation deliberations. If you require assistance with your analysis, please contact Brian Hanson, Director, Education Administration Services Branch, 945-7391 and/or Steve Power, Director, Schools Finance Branch, 945-0515. Thank you for your cooperation in this regard.

Sincerely,

Ben Levin, Ph.D.
Deputy Minister
Education, Training and Youth

Attachment

c. Manitoba Association of School Trustees
Manitoba Association of School Superintendents
Manitoba Teachers' Society
Manitoba Association of Parent Councils

School Division/District Amalgamation Analysis Template

Report on Amalgamation Discussions Between:
(Identify Home School Division/District) AND _____
(Identify Partner/Potential School Division/District) _____

In reviewing the various considerations in amalgamation, please include an identification of relevant factors, benefits of amalgamation and/or boundary adjustments, nil impact (if applicable), other notes or comments.

I PROGRAM AND GEOGRAPHIC/COMMUNITY SYNERGIES

Geographic Region (legal boundaries, area, natural boundaries, R.M.'s, Cities, Towns, Villages, etc.)

Demographics (Present and projected population by community/region, age, density, ethnic or linguistic groups/patterns, etc.)

Economic Activity (Major economic activity, major employer(s), trading areas and patterns, etc.)

Social Services (Non-educational community support services, social, recreation, health, etc.)

Schools (Number of schools, school configurations, etc.)

Educational/School Services (Student support, transportation, inter-agency collaboration, extra-curricular, etc.)

School Programs (Type of programs offered, grade levels, distance learning, SIC's, SIP's, adult education, continuing education, extra-curricular, etc.)

School Community (ACSL's, parent groups, community access to school facilities, etc.)

Board Governance (Trustees, wards, trustee/elector representation ratio, etc.)

II ENROLLMENT

School Enrollment (Current and future projections all grade levels, schools of choice movement, adult learners, continuing education learners, etc.)

Staffing (Teaching, non-teaching, teacher/student ratios, employee groups, labour agreements, etc.)

III TAX ASSESSMENT

Note: Present legislation under *The Public Schools Act* allows a three-year period to harmonize mill rates for amalgamated divisions/districts. The mill rate question appears to have been satisfactorily handled by the divisions/districts that have amalgamated to date and should not be an impediment to moving forward. A one-time per pupil grant of up to $50 upon amalgamation is also available. Manitoba Education, Training and Youth will commit to ensuring that consideration is given to mitigation of adverse effects that may occur under the Schools Finance Program with amalgamated divisions/districts for a period of time.

Expenditures (Total, per pupil, major categories, major pressures and needs, etc.)

Revenue (Provincial grants, assessment and local taxation, mill rates, etc.)

Financial Position (Surplus, deficit, etc.)

Submitted by:

Name(s) of School Division(s)/District(s): _____

_____

Official Signature(s) & Title(s): _____

_____

Date: _____

_____

APPENDIX 9

1999 Manitoba Provincial Election New Democratic Party Result Summary	
Candidate	**Constituency**
Jim Rondeau	Assiniboia*
Drew Caldwell	Brandon East
Scott Smith	Brandon West
Doug Martindale	Burrows*
Gary Doer	Concordia*
Stan Struthers	Dauphin-Roblin
Jim Maloway	Elmwood*
Gerard Jennissen	Flin Flon
Tim Sale	Fort Rouge*
Becky Barrett	Inkster*
Tom Nevakshonoff	Interlake
Dave Chomiak	Kildonan*
Ron Lemieux	La Verendrye
Diane McGifford	Lord Roberts*
MaryAnn Mihychuk	Minto*
George Hickes	Point Douglas*
Marianne Cerilli	Radisson*
Linda Asper	Riel*
Harry Schellenberg	Rossmere*
Eric Robinson	Rupertsland
Greg Dewar	Selkirk
Greg Selinger	St. Boniface*
Bonnie Korzeniowski	St. James*
Gord Mackintosh	St. Johns*
Nancy Allan	St. Vital*
Rosann Wowchuk	Swan River
Cris Aglugub	The Maples*
Oscar Lathlin	The Pas
Steve Ashton	Thompson
Daryl Reid	Transcona*
Conrad Santos	Wellington*
Jean Friesen	Wolseley*

Source: Elections Manitoba
* denotes Winnipeg ridings

APPENDIX 10

Manitoba Government
NEWS RELEASE

Manitoba

Information Services, Room 29, Legislative Building, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0V8 Telephone: (204) 945-3746
Internet at: http://www.gov.mb.ca E-mail at: iservice@leg.gov.mb.ca Fax: (204) 945-3988

November 8, 2001

PROVINCE MOVES TO MODERNIZE SCHOOL DIVISION BOUNDARIES

\- - -

Amalgamation to Reduce Administrative Duplication, Direct More Resources to Manitoba Classrooms: Caldwell

Education, Training and Youth Minister Drew Caldwell today announced that the number of school divisions in the province will be reduced from 54 to 37--or one third fewer--by merging various divisions and creating new division boundaries throughout the province.

The new divisions will be in place in time for elections in October 2002. As part of today's announcement, the province is also mandating school division administrative cost limits (excluding special needs) throughout the province of four per cent for Winnipeg and Brandon, 4.5 per cent in rural Manitoba and five per cent in the North.

"By reducing the number of school divisions, we have an opportunity to reduce administrative duplication and costs at the school division level and to focus those resources into the classroom for the benefit of our children," said Caldwell. "We believe we have achieved a balanced plan that reduces divisions by about one-third--a significant reduction, but not one so sweeping as to create undue upheaval in the system."

The minister noted that all regions of the province would undergo some changes. The changes are summarized as follows:

The North

Reducing the current eight divisions to four, by amalgamating the Churchill, Lynn Lake, Leaf Rapids and Snow Lake districts with the Frontier School Division.

\- more -

Rural Manitoba

Reducing the current 36 school divisions to 26 with the following amalgamations:

- Boundary, Sprague and Shineland
- Mountain and Prairie Spirit
- Red River and Morris-Macdonald
- Pine Falls, Whiteshell, and the rural portion of Transcona-Springfield with Agassiz
- Souris Valley with Antler River
- White Horse Plain with Midland
- Pelly Trail with Birdtail River
- Duck Mountain with Frontier, Swan Valley, Dauphin-Ochre

Winnipeg

Reducing the current nine divisions to six with the following amalgamations:

- River East with the urban portion of Transcona-Springfield
- St. Boniface with St. Vital
- Fort Garry with Assiniboine South

"In recent years, a number of provincial jurisdictions have examined and restructured school division boundaries," said Caldwell. "The large number of school divisions in our province today is not in sync with the current student population and distribution.

"The result of amalgamation will be more equalization of resources between divisions, lessening of inequalities and a levelling of the playing field between the bigger and smaller divisions. Hard work and co-operation between all the partners in this process will make amalgamation a success. We look forward to working with all divisions on this important initiative that will yield significant long-term benefits."

The minister said that, in recent years, changing population and enrolment in rural Manitoba has meant that a number of divisions have had a decrease in student numbers. He also noted that, despite this fact, there has been minimal modification to school division boundaries--with the last major consolidation of school districts occurring in the early 1960s.

In 1994, a School Boundaries Review led by former Winnipeg mayor William Norrie recommended redrawing school boundary maps and reducing the number of divisions to 22. These recommendations were not implemented in Manitoba. In most other provinces, the number of school boards has been reduced in recent years.

"Experience from the past in Manitoba, as well as from other jurisdictions, indicates that there are benefits to be gained from amalgamation," said Caldwell. "By expanding the student and resource base, there will be more opportunities for students."

He added that, in general, larger divisions have a greater ability to enhance programming options, provide more top-quality services, access technological resources and provide more career development options for teachers.

Other moves associated with the amalgamation plan include:

- Instituting a three-year moratorium on school closures in the new amalgamated divisions to ensure a minimal disruption in the public school system as divisions amalgamate.
- Ensuring divisions participating in voluntary amalgamation continue to receive temporary transitional funding of $50 per pupil. (School divisions already in the process of amalgamation include Rhineland with Boundary, Frontier with Churchill, Morris Macdonald with Red River and Mountain with Prairie Spirit.)

- Mandating administrative cost limits for all divisions--four per cent in Winnipeg and Brandon, 4.5 per cent in rural Manitoba and five per cent in the North--to allow more resources into the classroom. This includes limits on general administration, transportation administration costs, operations, maintenance, curriculum consulting and development costs but excludes costs for special needs services. The average administrative cost level in Manitoba divisions is currently 4.7 per cent, with some divisions' costs at more than eight per cent.
- Capping the maximum number of trustees in any single school division at nine--reducing the total number of trustees in the province by approximately 100. The new divisions are being asked to create new electoral wards by March 1, 2002. If necessary, Manitoba's Chief Electoral Officer will recommend to the education minister an independent arbiter to assist in cases where this ward deadline is not met.

"By sending a strong signal about the acceptable levels of administrative costs, divisions will have to look closely for cost-savings and efficiencies within their own administrative operations," said Caldwell.

"The changes announced today will modernize the existing system and help to ensure the long-term viability of school divisions. At the same time, these changes will create opportunities for our children by freeing up resources to go back into the classroom and support their education."

School division boundary maps are available on the Internet at: www.gov.mb.ca/amalgamation.

- 30 -

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ATTACHED.

BACKGROUNDER

School Divisions

Currently there are 54 school divisions and districts in Manitoba.

- nine school divisions in Winnipeg.
- 36 school divisions/districts in rural Manitoba
- eight school divisions/districts in Northern Manitoba.
- one school division, the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine, has a provincewide mandate

Amalgamations

The divisions that will be merging, including those merging voluntarily, are:

Northern Manitoba

Churchill, Lynn Lake, Leaf Rapids and Snow Lake with Frontier

Rural Manitoba

- Boundary, Sprague, with Rhineland
- Mountain with Prairie Spirit
- Red River and Morris-Macdonald
- Pine Falls, Whiteshell, and Transcona–Springfield (rural) with Agassiz
- Pelly Trail with Birdtail River
- Souris Valley with Antler River
- White Horse Plain with Midland
- Duck Mountain with Frontier, Swan Valley, Dauphin-Ochre

Winnipeg

- Transcona-Springfield (urban) with River East
- St.Boniface/ St.Vital
- Ft. Garry with Assiniboine South

With respect to the Pine Falls and Whiteshell School divisions, the amalgamation process will require more time to complete than with the other divisions. Both divisions have special funding arrangements that must be preserved while amalgamation is discussed.

Administration cost reduction targets

- Average administrative cost in comparison to overall budgets is 4.7% provincewide.
- There are a few divisions that are below 4% already
- The costs included under this definition include costs of the administration component for transportation, operations and maintenance, curriculum development and divisional administration.
- The administrative reduction targets do not include any required reductions in the administrative costs for programming for special needs students

A Brief History of School Boards and Amalgamation in Manitoba

1871 – 24 school districts created throughout province

1924 – 2,094 districts

1946 – Public Schools Act amended to encourage amalgamation

1959 – Royal Commission on Education led to creation of 46 school divisions, but leaving elementary schools in independent schools districts

1966 – Province again encourages amalgamation, all independent school districts soon merged with the 46 school division authorities. In addition, approximately 10 school districts, often in remote areas, continued to exist. This provided the foundation for most of the current divisions

Late 1960s – Boundaries Review Commission recommended creation of regional boards, but the commission's recommendations were not acted on.

1994 – Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission (Norrie Commission) concluded that there are numerous educational and economic benefits from reducing divisions. Norrie recommended cutting the number of divisions to 21 – four in Winnipeg, 13 in rural Manitoba, and two in the North, leaving the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine and the Frontier School Division as is. The recommended number of divisions was later revised to 22. Norrie recommended a complete redrawing of the school division map, not simply division mergers. This report was not acted on.

Late 1990s – Two voluntary school division amalgamations proceeded – Norwood has merged with St. Boniface, and Tiger Hills and Pembina Valley became the Prairie Spirit School Division.

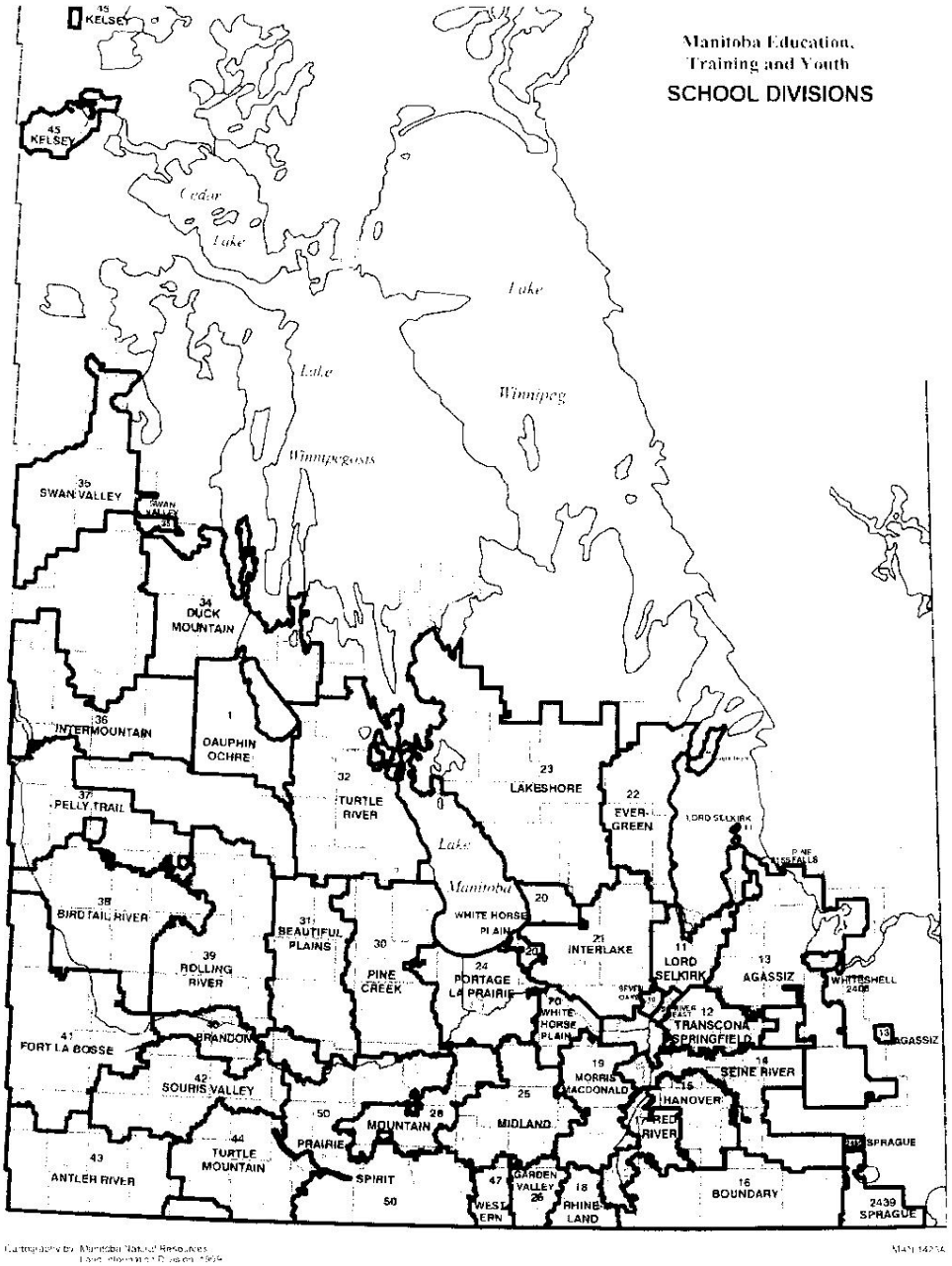
2000 – Education, Training and Youth Minister Drew Caldwell wrote to divisions informing them of the province's intent to reduce the number of school divisions and asked divisions to consider the benefits of voluntary mergers. Since then a number of divisions have moved forward on voluntary amalgamation plans. These include:

- Rhineland and Boundary School divisions
- Frontier and Churchill School divisions
- Mountain and Prairie Spirit School divisions
- Red River and Morris-MacDonald School divisions

Other divisions have indicated interest in voluntary amalgamation but have been unable to find a partner.

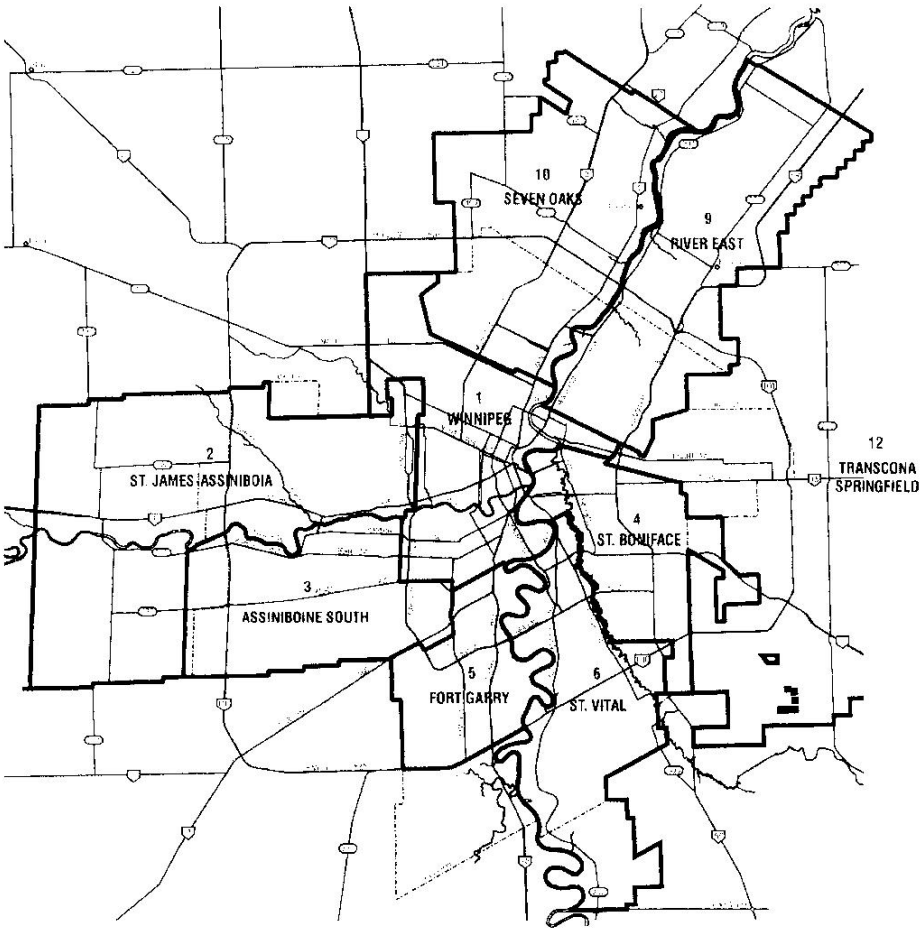
November 8, 2001 – The minister announces the provincial amalgamation plan.

APPENDIX 11


Manitoba Education,
Training and Youth
SCHOOL DIVISIONS
KELSEY
Cedar
Lake
Lake
Winnipeg
Lake
Winnipegosis
Lake
Manitoba
SWAN VALLEY
DUCK MOUNTAIN
INTERMOUNTAIN
DAUPHIN OCHRE
PELLY TRAIL
TURTLE RIVER
LAKESHORE
EVER-GREEN
BIRD TAIL RIVER
BEAUTIFUL PLAINS
WHITE HORSE PLAIN
INTERLAKE
ROLLING RIVER
PINE CREEK
PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE
LORD SELKIRK
AGASSIZ
WHITESHELL
FORT LA BOSSE
BRANDON
TRANSCONA SPRINGFIELD
SOURIS VALLEY
MORRIS MACDONALD
SEINE RIVER
HANOVER
MOUNTAIN
MIDLAND
RED RIVER
PRAIRIE
TURTLE MOUNTAIN
SPIRIT
SPRAGUE
ANTLER RIVER
WEST-ERN
GARDEN VALLEY
RHINE-LAND
BOUNDARY
2439 SPRAGUE

Manitoba Education,
Training and Youth

WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISIONS



Cartography by: Manitoba Natural Resources,
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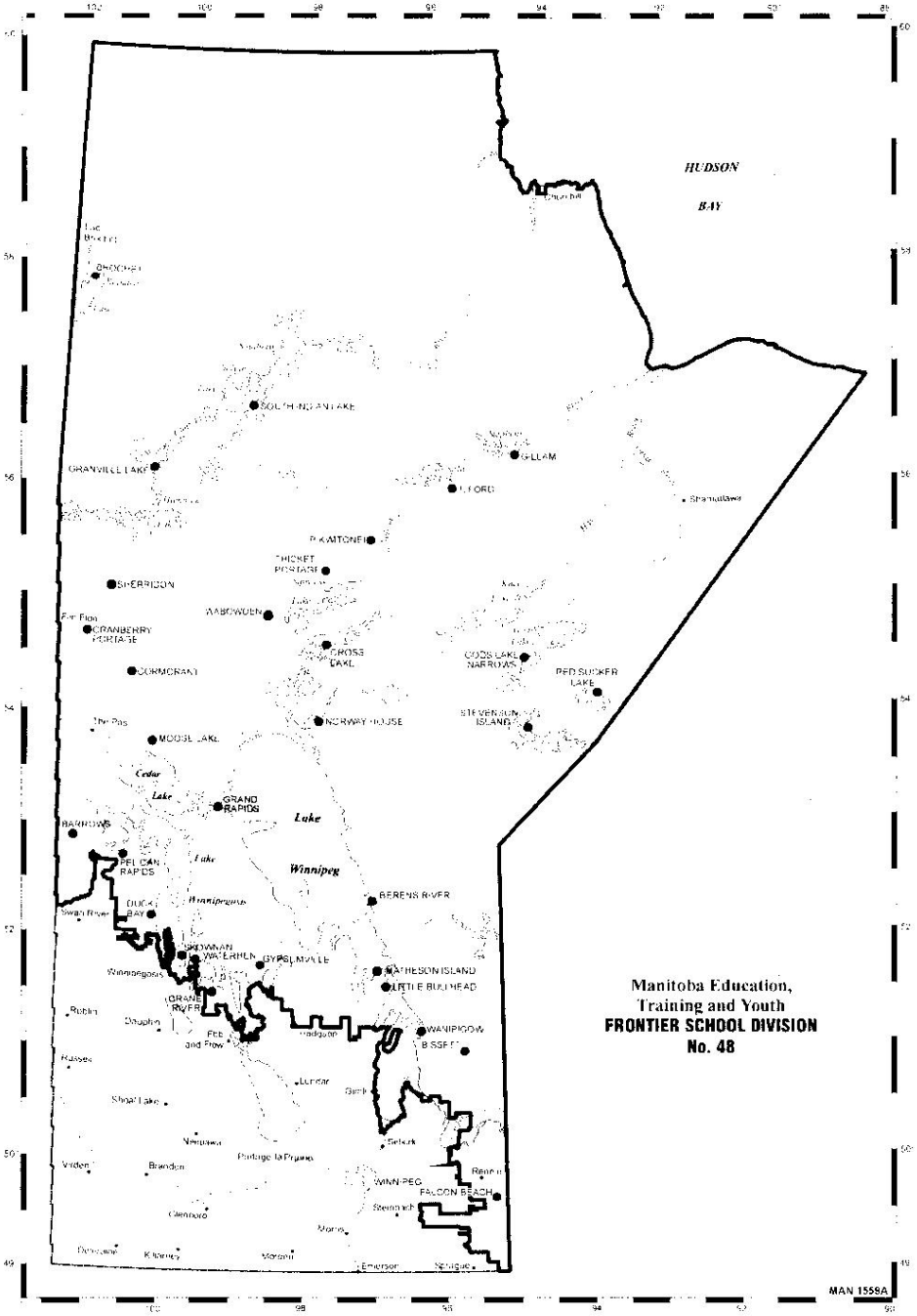
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BAY
SOUTHEND/LAKE
GRANVILLE LAKE
GILLAM
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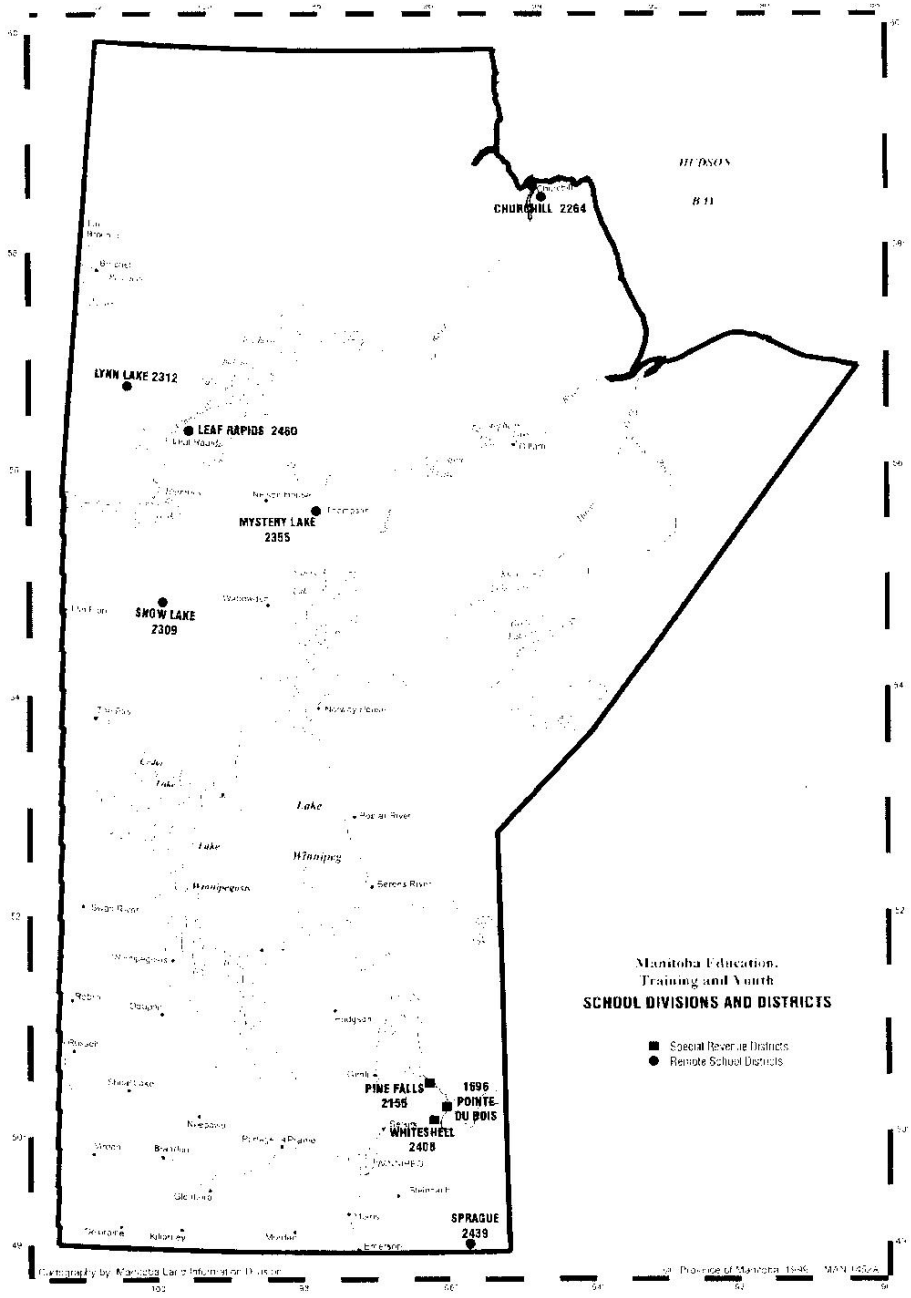
CORMORANT
GROSS LAKE
CROSS LAKE NARROWS
RED SUCKER LAKE
NORWAY HOUSE
STEVENSON ISLAND
MOOSE LAKE
Cedar Lake
GRAND RAPIDS
Lake Winnipeg
BARROWS
PELICAN RAPIDS
Lake Winnipegosis
BERENS RIVER
DUCK BAY
Swan River
BROWNAN
WATERHEN
(GYPSUMVILLE)
MATHESON ISLAND
LITTLE BULLHEAD
Winnipegosis
CRANE RIVER
Roblin
Dauphin
Ste. Rose du Lac
WANIPIGOW
BISSETT
Russell
Shoal Lake
Lundar
Gimli
Neepawa
Portage la Prairie
Virden
Brandon
WINNIPEG
FALCON BEACH
Steinbach
Glenboro
Morris
Pilot Mound
Killarney
Morden
Emerson
Manitoba Education,
Training and Youth
FRONTIER SCHOOL DIVISION
No. 48
MAN 1559A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LYNN LAKE 2312
LEAF RAPIDS 2460
MYSTERY LAKE
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SNOW LAKE
2309
Lake
Winnipeg
PINE FALLS
2155
1696
POINTE-
DU BOIS
WHITESHELL
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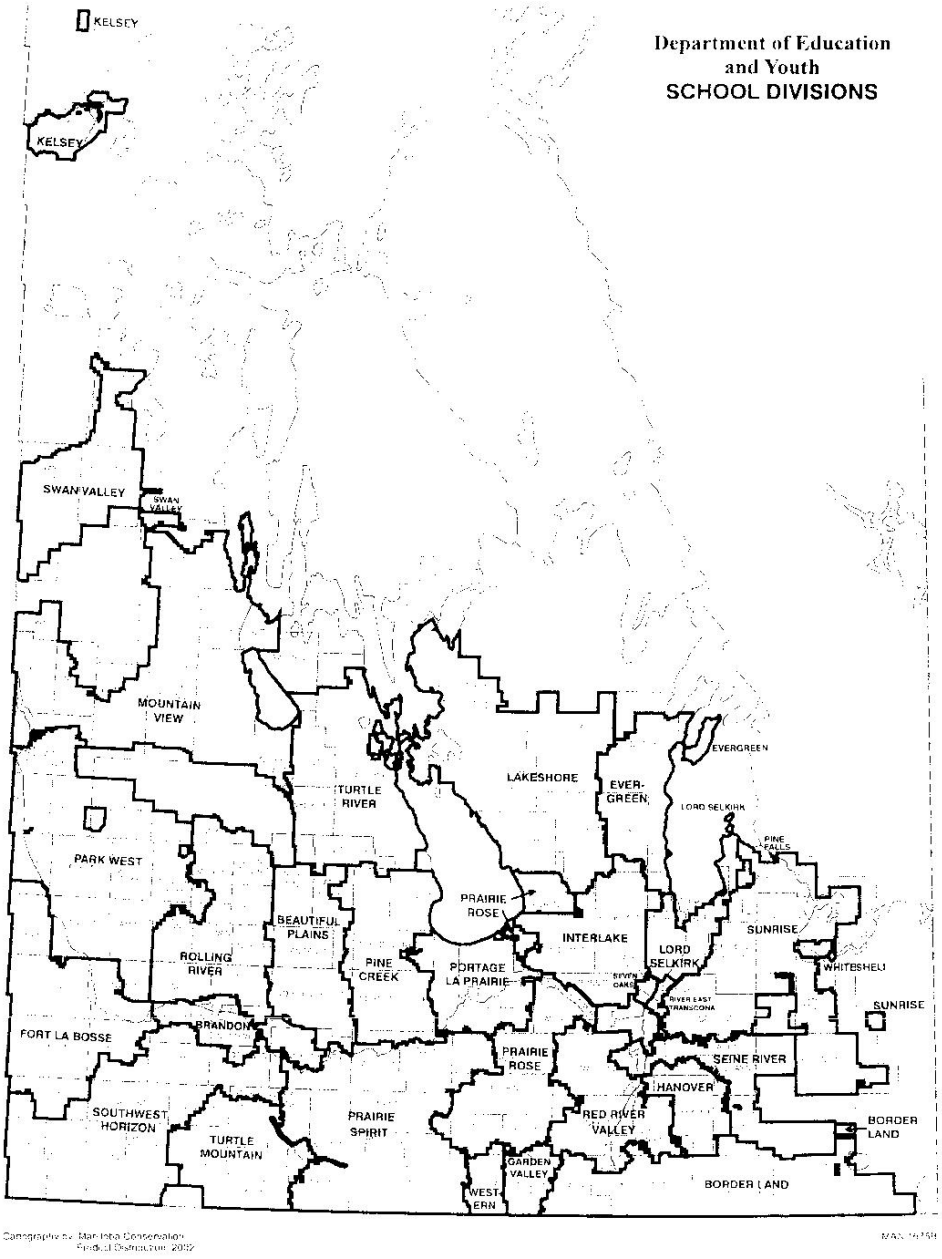
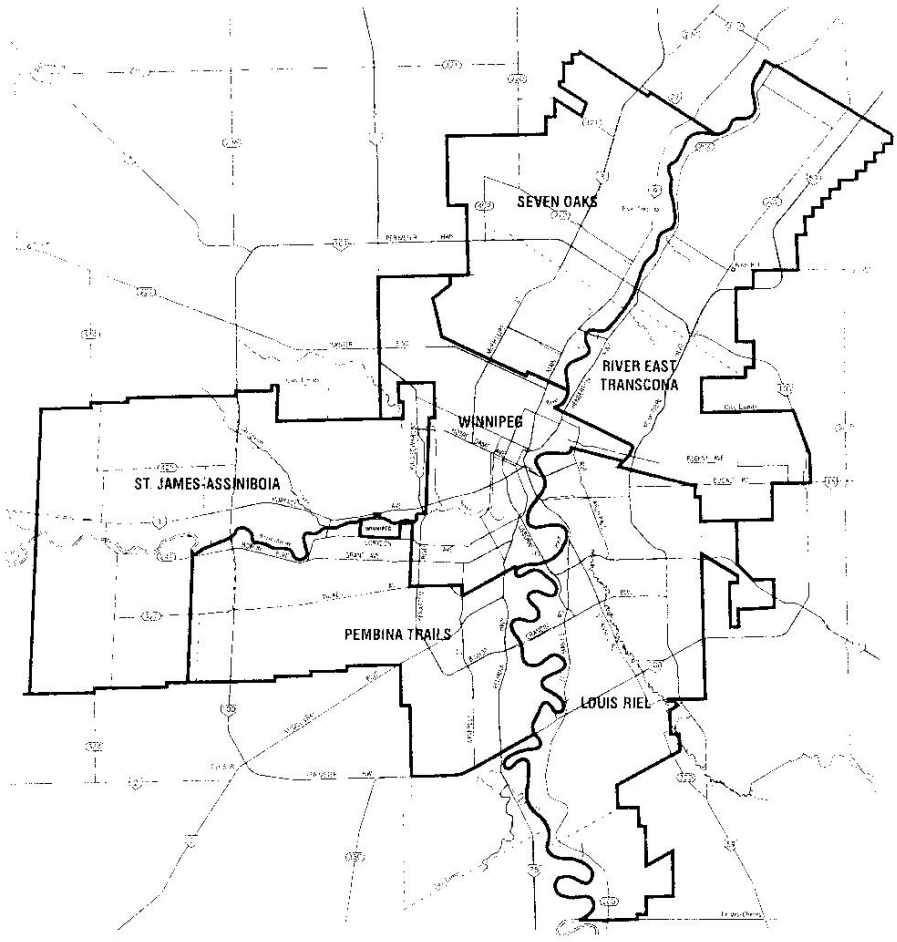
SPRAGUE
2439
Manitoba Education,
Training and Youth
SCHOOL DIVISIONS AND DISTRICTS
Special Revenue Districts
Remote School Districts

APPENDIX 12


KELSEY
KELSEY
Department of Education
and Youth
SCHOOL DIVISIONS
SWAN VALLEY
SWAN VALLEY
MOUNTAIN VIEW
TURTLE RIVER
LAKESHORE
EVER-GREEN
EVERGREEN
LORD SELKIRK
PINE FALLS
PARK WEST
PRAIRIE ROSE
BEAUTIFUL PLAINS
INTERLAKE
SUNRISE
LORD SELKIRK
ROLLING RIVER
PINE CREEK
PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE
WHITESHELL
SUNRISE
FORT LA BOSSE
BRANDON
PRAIRIE ROSE
SEINE RIVER
HANOVER
SOUTHWEST HORIZON
PRAIRIE SPIRIT
RED RIVER VALLEY
BORDER LAND
TURTLE MOUNTAIN
GARDEN VALLEY
WESTERN
BORDER LAND

Department of Education
and Youth
WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISIONS



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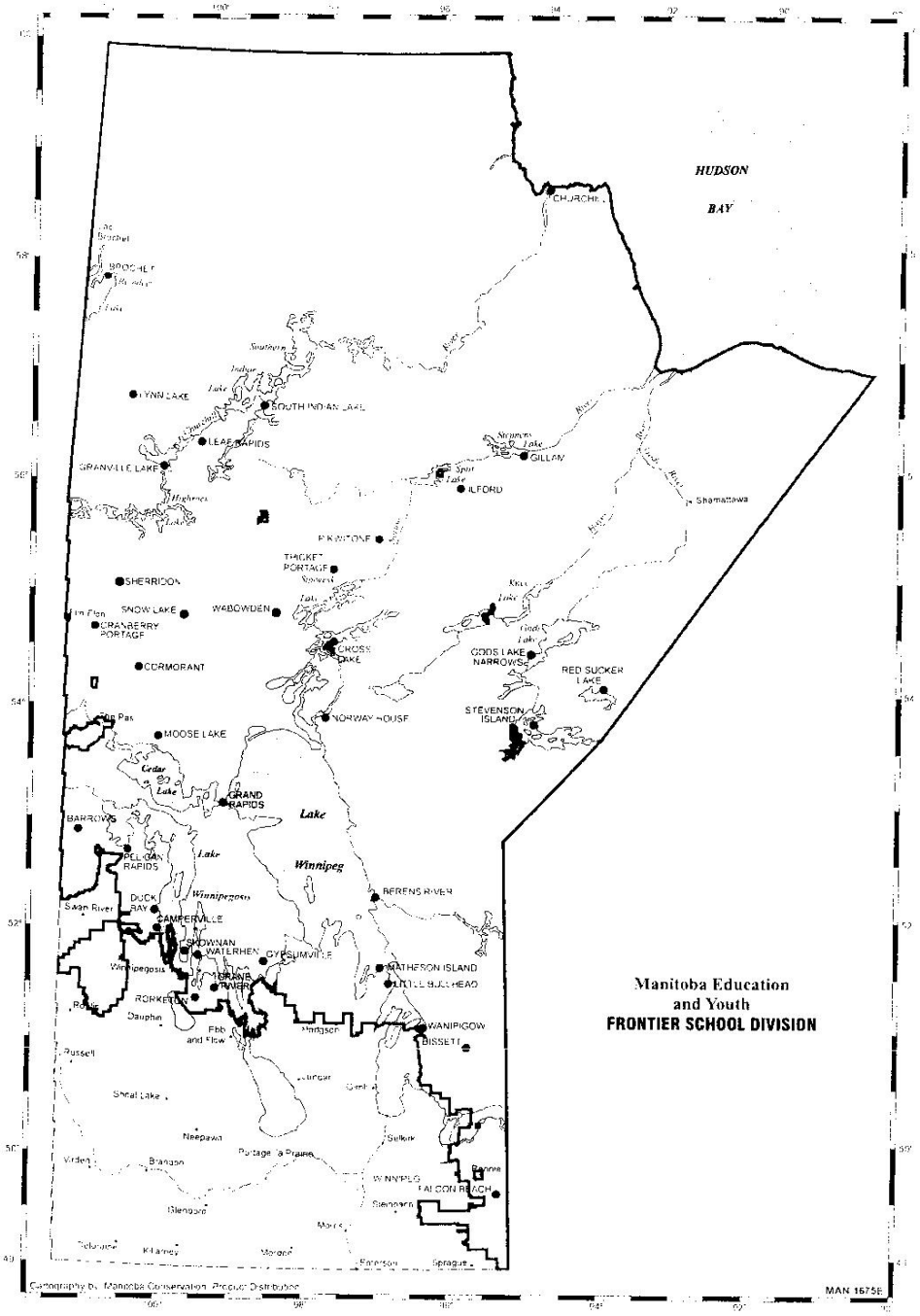
HUDSON
BAY
CHURCHILL
BROCHET
LYNN LAKE
SOUTH INDIAN LAKE
LEAF RAPIDS
GRANVILLE LAKE
GILLAM
ILFORD
PUKATAWAGAN
THICKET PORTAGE
SHERRIDON
SNOW LAKE
WABOWDEN
CRANBERRY PORTAGE
CROSS LAKE
GODS LAKE NARROWS
RED SUCKER LAKE
CORMORANT
NORWAY HOUSE
STEVENSON ISLAND
MOOSE LAKE
GRAND RAPIDS
BARROWS
PELICAN RAPIDS
DUCK BAY
CAMPERVILLE
SWAN RIVER
SHOAL LAKE
WATERHEN
GYPSUMVILLE
MATHESON ISLAND
LITTLE BULLHEAD
ROBLIN
ROSSER
DAUPHIN
WANIPIGOW
BISSETT
RUSSELL
NEEPAWA
PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE
BRANDON
VIRDEN
WINNIPEG
FALCON BEACH
BENITO
KILLARNEY
MORRIS
EMERSON
SPRAGUE
Lake Winnipeg
Manitoba Education
and Youth
FRONTIER SCHOOL DIVISION
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