

**7:40PM**

**HON. RALPH EICHER, MLA FOR LAKESIDE  
BILL 64 Q&A WITH BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

CHAIRPERSON CAMPBELL OPENED WITH INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS AND THANKED MR. EICHLER FOR MEETING WITH THE BOARD TONIGHT AS A FOLLOW UP TO THE DISCUSSION HELD ON FEBRUARY 22, 2021, BEFORE BILL 64 WAS PUBLICLY RELEASED.

**CHAIRPERSON CAMPBELL ASKED MR. EICHLER TO PROVIDE A RATIONALE FOR HIS SUPPORT OF THE ELIMINATION OF BOARDS AND DISSOLUTION OF SCHOOL DIVISIONS WITH BILL 64.**

MR. EICHLER:

- RECOGNIZED THAT TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT THIS LEGISLATION, AND THAT SOME ARE FOR IT AND SOME ARE AGAINST.
- DOESN'T REMEMBER A TIME SINCE HE WAS AN ADMINISTRATOR IN 1967 WHEN DIVISIONS WERE FORMED, WHEN PEOPLE WERE TALKING THIS MUCH ABOUT EDUCATION. HE DREW A COMPARISON TO THE RATE OF SCHOOL TRUSTEE ACCLAMATIONS AT THAT TIME COMPARED TO NOW.
- NOTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT DOESN'T HAVE A STRONG DIALOGUE WITH THE 'TEACHERS ASSOCIATION' AND SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION, AND IT IS HIS INTENT TO LISTEN TO THE ONGOING FEEDBACK AND HEAR WHAT COMMITTEE HAS TO SAY.

CHAIRPERSON CAMPBELL:

- POINTED OUT THAT THE ACCLAMATION ARGUMENT WAS PART OF THE RATIONALE THAT THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT USED WHEN THEY FORCED THE AMALGAMATION OF MUNICIPALITIES IN THE LAST TEN YEARS, AND THAT IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT IN MANY COMMUNITIES, INCLUDING STONEWALL, THE LOCAL TRUSTEES GET MORE VOTES THAN THE LOCAL MAYORS AND COUNCILLORS.
- CONTENDED THAT THE BEST WAY TO BUILD BRIDGES WITH MTS AND MSBA IS LIKELY NOT TO REMOVE PRINCIPALS FROM MTS AND ELIMINATE MSBA AND ITS MEMBERSHIP.
- REMINDED THE MINISTER THAT MANY THOUSANDS OF MANITOBANS PARTICIPATED IN THE K-12 REVIEW CONSULTATIONS, WHICH WERE IGNORED.

**TRUSTEE SCHINDLE PROVIDED A SUMMARY OF EXAMPLES WHERE COMMUNITIES RALLIED AGAINST THE CLOSURE OF THEIR SMALL RURAL SCHOOLS, AND THE BOARD LISTENED TO THEM. SHE CITED BRANT-ARGYLE SCHOOL AS AN EXAMPLE OF A STRONG COMMUNITY SCHOOL WHICH HAS BEEN REVITALIZED BECAUSE OF SUPPORT FROM THE BOARD.**

**TRUSTEE SCHINDLE ASKED MR. EICHLER TO OUTLINE THE IMPACT OF BILL 64 ON THE MORATORIUM ON SCHOOL CLOSURES AND THE LIMIT ON BUS RIDE TIMES. SHE ALSO ASKED HIM WHAT HE CAN DO AS OUR LOCAL MLA TO ENSURE THE INTEGRITY OF LEGISLATION WHICH PROVIDES LOCAL VOICE.**

MR. EICHLER:

- NOTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS BUILDING 20 NEW SCHOOLS AND HAS NO CURRENT PLANS TO CLOSE ANY SCHOOLS.
- OFFERED HIS UNDERSTANDING THAT THE SCHOOL CLOSURE PROTOCOLS AND THE BUS RIDE TIME LIMITS IN BILL 64 ARE THE SAME AS THEY ARE IN THE CURRENT PUBLIC SCHOOLS ACT, AS HE HASN'T SEEN ANYTHING TO SAY OTHERWISE.
- STATED HIS UNDERSTANDING THAT ONE PERSON WILL BE APPOINTED FROM EACH REGION FOR LOCAL VOICE, INSTEAD OF AN ELECTED SCHOOL BOARD.

TRUSTEE SCHINDLE:

- ADDED THAT THE ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP REGULATION #5496 FROM 1996 IS ALMOST IDENTICAL WORDING AS WHAT IS FOUND IN BILL 64, AND IT HASN'T WORKED OR ACTUALLY MET FOR THE LAST 25 YEARS.

CHAIRPERSON CAMPBELL CLARIFIED FOR MR. EICHLER THAT:

- BILL 64 ELIMINATES THE MORATORIUM ON SCHOOL CLOSURES.
- THE PROCESS FOR SCHOOL CLOSURES WILL NOT BE THE SAME, BECAUSE THE CURRENT CONSULTATION PROCESS IS DEFINED AND EXECUTED BY THE LOCALLY ELECTED SCHOOL BOARD, WHICH WILL BE ELIMINATED UNDER BILL 64.

MR. EICHLER REITERATED THAT IN HIS SPEAKING NOTES, BILL 64 CARRIES OUT THE SAME SCHOOL CLOSURE PROCESS AS THE PSA AND ASKED IF HIS NOTES ARE INCORRECT.

CHAIRPERSON CAMPBELL CONFIRMED FOR MR. EICHLER THAT HIS SPEAKING NOTES ARE INCORRECT. WITHOUT A LOCAL BOARD, THE LOCAL CONSULTATION PROCESS IS GONE.

**TRUSTEE FREDERICKSON NOTED THAT BILL 64 HAS ONLY PASSED FIRST READING AND WAS INTRODUCED AS A BLANK DOCUMENT. SHE FURTHER NOTED THE RECORD 460 PEOPLE REGISTERED TO SPEAK AT THE COMMITTEE IN OCTOBER.**

**SHE FURTHER NOTED THAT IN SPITE OF THIS, THE GOVERNMENT IS PUSHING AHEAD WITH IMPLEMENTATION PLANS FOR BILL 64 AND ASKED IF THIS GOVERNMENT REALLY VALUES INPUT FROM MANITOBANS WHEN THEY'RE MAKING CHANGES BEFORE THE LEGISLATION HAS EVEN PASSED.**

MR. EICHLER:

- POINTED TO HIS 18 YEARS IN OFFICE AND HIS TRACK RECORD FOR CONSULTATION, EVEN WHILE IN OPPOSITION.
- STATED: "HAVE WE DONE A GOOD JOB ON THIS? PROBABLY NOT.... I GURANTEE THAT I'LL BE LISTENING [TO THE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE]"

TRUSTEE FREDERICKSON:

- NOTED THAT MR. EICHLER'S COLLEAGUES ALSO NEED TO LISTEN AND GIVEN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SEEMS TO BE PUSHING AHEAD WITH IMPLEMENTATION, CAN HE SPEAK TO THAT.

MR. EICHLER:

- STATED THAT HE CAN'T SPEAK EXACTLY TO WHAT MINISTER CULLEN IS DOING IN REGARDS TO THE MEETINGS THAT HE'S HAVING AND HE KNOWS THAT IT'S RUFFLED SOME FEATHERS, BUT CERTAINLY HE CAN SAY THAT HE THINKS IT'S A GOOD THING THAT HE'S HAVING THESE CONVERSATIONS.
- OFFERED HIS PERSPECTIVE THAT IF THERE ARE TWEAKS TO BE MADE, NOW IS THE TIME TO DO IT AS OPPOSED TO WAITING UNTIL AFTER THE BILL PASSES.
- STATED THAT HE DOESN'T THINK THAT IMPLEMENTATION HAS STARTED AND THAT HE HASN'T BEEN TOLD THAT GOVERNMENT IS IMPLEMENTING ANYTHING AT THIS POINT.

CHAIRPERSON CAMPBELL:

- OFFERED THE FOLLOWING CLARIFICATIONS FOR MR. EICHLER:
  - THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN SPECIFICALLY ASKED BY DIVISION ADMINISTRATORS, WHAT HAPPENS TO THIS TRANSFORMATION PROCESS IF THE LEGISLATION IS AMENDED OR DOESN'T PASS. DEPARTMENT STAFF HAVE

STATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS A MAJORITY, SO THEY'RE PUSHING AHEAD.

- DEPARTMENT STAFF ARE MEETING WITH THE PRINCIPALS OF INTERLAKE SD SCHOOLS AND LORD SELKIRK SD SCHOOLS, AS THOUGH THEY ARE ALREADY PART OF THE SAME REGION DICTATED BY BILL 64. ON THE FRONT-LINES, THIS IS CONSIDERED IMPLEMENTATION.

**CHAIRPERSON CAMPBELL ASKED MR. EICHLER, AS THE MLA FOR LAKESIDE WHERE HUNDREDS IF NOT THOUSANDS OF CONSTITUENTS ARE OPPOSED TO BILL 64, WHAT IT WILL TAKE FOR HIM TO BREAK WITH PARTY LINES AND OPPOSE THE LEGISLATION OR CALL FOR ITS WITHDRAWAL BEFORE SECOND READING ON OCTOBER 7.**

MR. EICHLER:

- STATED THAT UNTIL HE HEARS ALL THE VOICES HE'S NOT GOING TO MAKE A COMMITMENT TO CHANGE OR SUPPORT BILL 64.
- INFORMED THE BOARD THAT HE HAS RECEIVED HUNDREDS OF LETTERS ON IT, BUT NOT EVERYONE IS TALKING ABOUT IT, AND THOSE THAT ARE SEEM BE SPLIT, WITHOUT A MAJORITY IN FAVOUR OR OPPOSED.
- NOTED THAT ISD AND MSBA HAVE DONE A FANTASTIC JOB OF ADVOCATING AND THAT MSBA HAS A CRITICAL ROLE TO PLAY PROVINCIALY.
- THINKS AND HOPES THAT GOVERNMENT IS SMART ENOUGH TO LISTEN.
- STATED THAT HE HAS TOO MUCH INVESTED IN THIS LEGISLATION TO STATE A POSITION TONIGHT.
- INTENDS TO CONTINUE FOCUSING ON OUTCOMES AND WHAT'S BEST FOR STUDENTS.
- EXPRESSED HIS PERSPECTIVE THAT INTERLAKE SD IS THE ENVY OF MANY OTHER DIVISIONS WITH OUR TAX BASE AND OUR ENERGIZED PEOPLE, AND THAT THERE ARE MANY OTHER DIVISIONS WHO ARE ASKING GOVERNMENT TO PUSH AHEAD WITH BILL 64 BECAUSE THEY CAN'T COMPETE.
- STATED THAT THIS ISN'T ABOUT PARTY LINES AT ALL. THIS IS ABOUT MAKING SURE WE GET THE BEST RESULTS FOR OUR STUDENTS IN MANITOBA.

CHAIRPERSON CAMPBELL:

- THANKED MR. EICHLER FOR HIS COMMENTS ABOUT WHAT'S BEST FOR STUDENTS, BECAUSE THAT'S ONE OF THE FEW THINGS WE AGREE ON.
- REMINDED MR. EICHLER OF THE FOLLOWING:
  - THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT ELIMINATING BOARDS WILL HELP STUDENTS
  - THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT DISSOLVING DIVISIONS WILL HELP STUDENTS
  - THERE ARE SEVERAL CANADIAN EXAMPLES WHERE ELIMINATION OF BOARDS AND DISSOLUTION OF DIVISIONS HAS ACTUALLY HURT PUBLIC EDUCATION.
  - DESPITE THE GOVERNMENT'S CLAIMS ABOUT POOR ACADEMIC OUTCOMES, 8 OF 10 MANITOBA STUDENTS MEET OR EXCEED STANDARDS IN MATH, READING AND SCIENCE, WHICH IS THE SAME AS EVERY OTHER PROVINCE.
  - DISCUSSIONS ABOUT ACADEMIC OUTCOMES MUST ALSO BE CONTEXTUALIZED WITH MANITOBA'S HIGHEST RATES OF CHILD POVERTY AND CHILDREN IN CARE.
- COMMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD, TO CONTINUE CONSULTING WITH MR. EICHLER IN THE LEAD UP TO SECOND READING OF BILL 64 IN OCTOBER.

MR. EICHLER THANKED THE BOARD FOR THE DIALOGUE AND REITERATED THAT HE NEEDED TO CHANGE HIS SCHEDULE TO ACCOMMODATE, BUT RECOGNIZES HOW IMPORTANT THE DISCUSSION IS.