



February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Betty Edel  
School Trustee Board Chairperson  
Winnipeg School Division  
Winnipeg, MB

VIA EMAIL: [bedel@wsd1.org](mailto:bedel@wsd1.org)

Re.: School Resource Officers

Dear Ms. Edel,

The Police Accountability Coalition (PAC) was established to give voice to the need for concrete actions to address long standing community concerns about police accountability and the allocation of resources. The coalition includes Black and Indigenous-led organizations, as well as allies. Our policy brief titled [Community-Based Organizations Call for Police Accountability and the Reallocation of Resources](#) has been endorsed by over 100 organizations. Our recent submissions to the Executive Policy Committee of the City of Winnipeg, the Winnipeg Police Board and the Winnipeg School Division can be found [here](#).

One of the recommendations in our brief is to end the School Resource Officer program. We recognize that a full and fair evaluation of its effectiveness could be necessary prior to taking this step. However, any evaluation must ensure that those most impacted by negative interactions with members of the Winnipeg Police Service, namely racialized students and their families, be prioritized. Other jurisdictions such as Toronto and Hamilton have ended these programs with no discernable negative consequences.

Given the pandemic, we understand that meaningful community engagement such as in person focus groups, with translation, that promote cultural safety, are accessible etc... are not possible. However, we are concerned that budget delegations, discussions and decisions are proceeding without any facts or data to base them on. This is a multi-year contract renewal year for the program and we are unaware of any evaluation plans in your school division. The WSD 1 did send a survey to their staff and families, however, it was flawed as it did not employ an equity lens, the notice was much too short and the survey questions were skewed to favour a positive response to the program.

PAC's recommendation to end the presence of police in schools is based on:

- The dissonance between student experiences of police officers in school corridors and the profiling and harassment they or friends and/or family members experience moving about the community, particularly if they are from Black, Indigenous, People of Color and/or Newcomer communities,

- Students who come from over-policed communities experiencing/witnessing negative interactions with police which may influence their ability to feel safe in a school with an SRO presence
- That the SRO program may in fact actively discourage youth from attending school where there is a history of policing and/or military abuse in their country/community of origin
- Resources funding the SRO program could be better spent on urgently needed supports to the student body.

We are looking for clarity on just what your division will be basing its support of the SRO program on. The 100 plus community based PAC organizations routinely must provide proof of funded outcomes for that funding to continue. Accordingly, we are requesting a meeting to discuss the program, your reasons for supporting it (or not) and alternative approaches such as more resources for food programs, intercultural support workers, education assistants, guidance counselors and trained community based restorative justice practitioners.

We look forward to your response and can be reached at [kkebler@spcw.mb.ca](mailto:kkebler@spcw.mb.ca) or 204-590-8932.

Sincerely,



Kate Kehler,  
On behalf of PAC

cc.: Pauline Clarke (Chief Superintendent) and School Board Trustees – Linda Schatkowsky, Chris Broughton, Jamie Dumont, Cindy Murdoch, Yijie (Jennifer) Chen, Arlene Reid