



February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Betty Adel  
School Trustee Board Chairperson  
Winnipeg School Division 1

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

Re.: School Resource Officers and WSD 1 Budget Allocation

Dear Ms. Adele:

We are writing to follow-up on the concerns the Police Accountability Coalition (PAC) raised at various WSD 1 Board of Trustees meetings in 2020 regarding the School Resource Officer program. We asked that the program be suspended pending the outcome of an evaluation the board intended to implement. We went on to recommend that 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. We highlighted concerns that language/translation and the technical divide will act as barriers to participation to these same students and their families.

We were disappointed then that the main evaluation tool the WSD 1 used seems to have been an electronic survey. While we note that some translation was offered in paper versions in Arabic, Punjabi, Somali, Russian and Tigrigna, we also note that no Indigenous languages were offered nor was Tagalog given Winnipeg's large Indigenous and Filipino populations. In order for parents and guardians who do struggle with English to even know that some paper translations of the survey were available though, they had to have been able to receive and understand the initial email.

Given the pandemic, we understand that in person focus groups, with translation, that promoted cultural safety etc... were not possible. However, the fact that parents were only given two weeks' notice of the survey is just unacceptable. We understand that the timing of the budget discussions, deliberations and decisions creates some difficulties, however, as this was also to be a multi-year contract renewal year for the program, we are perplexed that a more fulsome evaluation had not been planned and then adapted accordingly to the pandemic. As mentioned in one of our presentations, the 100 not-for-profit members of PAC must routinely report on outcomes of program funding in order for that funding to continue.

We also have concerns with the survey itself. The preamble informed participants of the tasks of SROs and the many benefits of this program without also articulating the problematic nature of police in schools. Our 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,
- The high percentage of WSD 1 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.

The survey itself was worded in such a way as to present an overly positive picture of the benefits of the SRO program. The questions were not neutral but skewed toward affirming an SRO presence. There is not one question on the survey that asks specifically for input regarding the problematic nature of the SRO program. Nor is there any direct encouragement to raise issues of concern other than checking the circle Disagree or Strongly Disagree. There are two opportunities to add any commentary but again, no context had been provided.

We did note that some demographic information was asked in the survey. For this information to be of use, will the WSD 1 compare the data on those who completed the survey to the total population demographics in the school division? It is unfortunate that the WSD 1 has not collected demographic data on suspensions and expulsions. We understand that SROs are not involved in all disciplinary matters but this information would be helpful in developing a data driven evaluation of who is subject to the more damaging disciplinary measures in the division. Tracking demographic data on those who stop attending school would also provide additional information that should help in decision making over all.

Finally, we note that the February 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the board will be for budget delegations. We appreciate the transparency the board has demonstrated by releasing to media what programs, one of which is SROs, that will potentially be cut as you struggle to meet the provincial cut to your funding. Will the SRO survey results and any other evaluation reports or information, if in existence, be made available so that the public has time to review and provide comment on the 22<sup>nd</sup>? We look forward to your response and can be reached at [kkeehler@spcw.mb.ca](mailto:kkeehler@spcw.mb.ca) or 204-590-8932.

Sincerely,



Kate Kehler,  
On behalf of PAC

cc.: Trustees Jamie Dumont, Chris Broughton, Cindy Murdoch, Yijie (Jennifer) Chen,  
Arlene Reid, Linda Shatkowsky and Chief Superintendent Pauline Clark