

Parent collective calls for shredding of Bill 64

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Posted: 1:35 PM CDT Monday, Apr. 5, 2021



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More than 3,200 parents from all corners of the province have signed an open letter to Premier Brian Pallister and Education Minister Cliff Cullen in opposition to the Education Modernization Act.

Parents are panning Manitoba's plans to replace school boards with a government-appointed advisory council, citing concerns about how the reforms will offload the paid work of elected trustees onto volunteer caregivers.

More than 3,200 parents who hail from all corners of the province have signed an open letter to Premier Brian Pallister and Education Minister Cliff Cullen in opposition to Bill 64 (Education Modernization Act).

"Our government is using the current crisis as an opportunity, taking advantage of our collective pandemic-related grief, anxiety, and fatigue, to impose radical changes to our

K-12 school system," states the letter, which was put together by Parents for Public Education MB.

In the letter, the families claim the legislation will decrease accountability in the education system by eliminating elected trustees, aims to fix a system that is not broken, and increase the workload on parents with the creation of new school community councils.

School community councils, which will replace existing parent advisory councils, are to be set up in all schools to give caregivers a key advisory role in everything from making school hiring decisions to assessing student achievement data.

"As a working parent, I'm already busy. I do support my PAC but I certainly don't have time to do more and I don't necessarily think that me, as a parent or other parents I know, have the expertise that elected trustees have," said Shawna Ferris, an organizer with Parents for Public Education MB.

The province has touted the reform bill as a way to raise parent voices through school community councils, a 16-person advisory council that will be composed of one parent from each region and a trustee from the francophone division, and two seats that will be reserved for parents on the education authority board. Only the education authority board will have decision-making power.

Ferris, however, said the new system will only favour privileged parents who don't do shift work and can afford to actively volunteer at their child's school.

The parent collective is calling for Bill 64 to be ripped up.

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