37 Fiefdoms: Potential Political Impediments to Horizontal Equity Financing in Manitoba

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Abstract

This paper provides an analysis of current educational finance practice in Manitoba within the discussion of horizontal fiscal equity for students and the influence of politics on an organization pursuant to Gareth Morgan’s political metaphor in *Images of Organization*. A brief explanation of the Manitoba Funding of Schools’ Program is provided with detailed analysis in terms of horizontal equity of data from the 2011 – 2012 FRAME budgets. A review of scholarly work in education finance reform is examined in conjunction with the perspectives of stakeholders in context of the ongoing Manitoba property taxation debate. The argument is made that within the current finance model, political power and agendas are impeding horizontal equity despite the desire of stakeholders to provide this to students.

Keywords: education finance, politics, horizontal equity, autonomy
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The Manitoba Association of School Trustees concurs with the need for change and a significant increase in provincial operating support to school divisions. However, its membership does not support the complete elimination of school board taxing authority in this province given its critical importance in preserving local control [emphasis added] in education and in sustaining quality education programs and services for Manitoba students. (Manitoba Association of School Boards, 2005, p. 2)

A widely accepted psychological theory is that total control is an illusion. We, human beings, have some control over some things, but total control is simply not achievable. For instance, we do not have total control over our own minds. If we did, when someone tells us not to think of something, like a yellow submarine for example, we would not think of one. Yet the image appears in the mind’s eye, unsolicited, unwanted and uncontrolled (McGrath, 2011). Understanding that we are not in total control, while acknowledging we exercise some control over some things, is how to avoid unnecessary anxiety and stress according to Patrick McGrath (2011), and though this is helpful in maintaining mental health, how does it relate to education finance and horizontal fiscal equity in Manitoba?

Gareth Morgan (2006) provides insight into how perceived control over aspects of an organization will lead to a perception of power within his metaphor of Organizations as political systems (pp. 149-206). The purpose of this paper is to show how politics, and specifically the perceived need for autonomous control and potential personal agendas of school boards and trustees, are impediments to establishing horizontal equity financing for education in Manitoba using elements of Morgan’s metaphor. Prior to exploring the metaphor, we must first have a clear understanding of what horizontal equity is, how education is funded in Manitoba, test for
horizontal equity and then identify the perspectives of stakeholders and interested parties within the contentious and heated debate about education finance in Manitoba.

**What is horizontal equity?**

Horizontal equity is the principle that government will treat equals as equals (Li, 2009). By extension, and in terms of education finance, it can be stated that horizontal equity is providing equal funding for students that have equal needs. Xiaobin Li, an associate professor in the Faculty of Education at Brock University, in his articles on education finance in Canada, quotes a study by Brimley and Garfield (2005) to provide a standard of horizontal equity, stating “if the funding gap between expenditures per pupil in high-poverty districts and low-poverty districts is less than 10%, then equity is within acceptable limits” (Li, 2010, p. 219).

Interestingly, education financing by most provinces in Canada employs this foundational principle by employing a formula for education funding that is based on “enrollment, student characteristics, and school division characteristics, regardless of the difference in local wealth” (Li, 2010, p. 219). Unfortunately, since a portion of education funding in Manitoba comes from taxing real property, regional wealth does play a role in financing education (Garcea & Munroe, 2011; Henley & Young, 2008; Li, 2009 & 2010; Wallin, 2009). In order to understand how politics influence education finance in Manitoba, we must first understand how the funding formula in Manitoba works.

**Financing Education in Manitoba**

According to the Manitoba Schools’ Finance Branch (2011) the Funding of Schools Program (FSP), which was established in 2002, was intended as means to finance educational services equitably in Manitoba through shared provincial and local taxation efforts. Education funding draws from three sources: (i) direct provincial funding; (ii) indirect provincial funding;
and (iii) property taxation by local school boards. Funds are calculated according to the FSP and then reported through Financial Reporting and Accounting in Manitoba Education (FRAME) to ensure transparency and accountability for ratepayers. Image 1 provides a visual of how the different sources combine to fund education in Manitoba.

Image 1

Manitoba Funding of Schools Program (FSP)

*Image 1. Solid lines represent direct funding. Long dash lines represent indirect funding. Short dash lines represent equalization. Long and short dash lines represent calculation influences. Source: Adapted from Manitoba Schools Finance Branch (2011).*

**Direct funding.** Direct provincial funding is pooled from two sources: the provincial treasury where all provincial taxes in Manitoba, such as sales tax and income tax, are deposited; and the Provincial Education Support Levy mill rate (the tax per dollar of the assessed value of a property where one mill is equal to one-tenth of a cent), which is imposed on all commercial and
industrial properties in Manitoba. These funds are distributed to school divisions as a per student amount (Manitoba Schools’ Finance Branch, 2011).

**Indirect funding.** Indirect funding is a less obvious source of funds paid from the provincial treasury to each school division in an amount equal to the Residential Property Tax Credit and Farmland Tax Rebate. Seven hundred dollars per residential property and 80% of farmland tax is calculated, but is either never collected from or is rebated to the ratepayers by the Province of Manitoba in each district to offset residential and farmland property taxation by school boards (Manitoba Schools’ Finance Branch, 2011).

**Special Levy funding.** The third source of funding is the Special Levy which is a second mill rate imposed by school boards on all property in a region. The Special Levy mill rate is the determining factor as both a set amount of direct taxation and as the foundation for equalization calculations. Within the FSP are two equalization calculations – equalization and additional equalization – which when accessed are intended “to recognize the varying abilities of school divisions to meet the cost of unsupported program requirements through the property tax base of the school division” (Manitoba Schools’ Finance Branch, 2011, p. 21) in an effort to eliminate the influence of a region’s wealth or poverty and create fiscal equity.

**How equalization works.** Equalization is based on enrolment wherein 62% of calculated allowable and unsupported expenses from the prior year are added together and then multiplied by the total school assessment (with exceptions for regions with mining revenue) after dividing by the greater of total resident students from the prior year, or an average of the three proceeding years. This calculation is static and based upon the same theory as equalization between provinces (Manitoba Schools’ Finance Branch, 2011).
Additional equalization is determined by two factors, property assessment per pupil and above average tax effort by the school division. Should a division with low assessment per pupil raise the Special Levy above the provincial average of 16.0 mills it will then be awarded equalization for every dollar earned through taxation above the average at a predetermined rate (Manitoba Education and Literacy, 2011).

With an understanding of how education is funded in Manitoba, we can apply Brimley and Garfield’s (2005) principle of horizontal equity (as quoted by Li, 2009 & 2010) to FRAME data to determine whether or not the intent of the funding model, as means to finance educational services equitably in Manitoba, has been achieved.

**Testing for Horizontal Equity in Manitoba**

Table 1 demonstrates current spending behaviours in Manitoba adapted from the FRAME Budget for 2011-2012 in the categories of per pupil spending, per pupil property assessment values and property tax as a percentage of total operating expense (Manitoba Education and Literacy, 2011).

After removing Frontier, Whiteshell, Winnipeg Technical College and District Scolaire Franco-Manitobaine from data due to funding that includes contributions from other divisions and the federal government, we are left with 34 school divisions in Manitoba. Applying the criteria to data we can identify high and low poverty districts using per pupil assessment amounts and then applying an arbitrary cut off of any district below the provincial average to indicate poverty. This leaves fifteen school divisions for comparison as shown in Table 1.
Table 1

Current Spending Patterns Per Pupil in Manitoba

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Division/District</th>
<th>Per Pupil Spending Budget 2011-2012</th>
<th>Per Pupil Property Assessment Values 2011-2012*</th>
<th>Total Property Tax as a % of Operating Expenditures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portage La Prairie</td>
<td>10,097</td>
<td>257,290</td>
<td>52.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>11,557</td>
<td>231,885</td>
<td>44.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven Oaks</td>
<td>10,272</td>
<td>229,601</td>
<td>38.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border Land</td>
<td>11,865</td>
<td>222,229</td>
<td>38.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>9,302</td>
<td>219,015</td>
<td>45.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seine River</td>
<td>10,477</td>
<td>207,775</td>
<td>46.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain View</td>
<td>11,632</td>
<td>200,580</td>
<td>38.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swan Valley</td>
<td>12,625</td>
<td>191,941</td>
<td>34.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakeshore</td>
<td>11,772</td>
<td>186,080</td>
<td>28.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanover</td>
<td>8,770</td>
<td>172,748</td>
<td>40.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turtle River</td>
<td>12,931</td>
<td>171,103</td>
<td>28.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden Valley</td>
<td>9,128</td>
<td>170,881</td>
<td>44.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flin Flon</td>
<td>11,872</td>
<td>145,319</td>
<td>32.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mystery Lake</td>
<td>13,353</td>
<td>142,540</td>
<td>22.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelsey</td>
<td>10,946</td>
<td>109,200</td>
<td>24.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Average</td>
<td>11,455</td>
<td>258,821</td>
<td>44.71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. Sorted according to per pupil property assessment values. Source: Adapted from Manitoba Education and Literacy FRAME budget report 2011/2012.

Once property value assessments are compared, we learn that Portage la Prairie represents the wealthiest low poverty district, and Kelsey is the poorest low poverty district. Applying the criteria of per pupil spending at this stage we can calculate there is a 7.7% difference between spending in these two divisions, which would imply horizontal equity according to the 10% measure. However, when we look at property tax as a percentage of total operating expenses, we see a difference of 27.56%, which is outside the 10% measure. Further, using only per pupil spending in impoverished regions, we see a high of $13,353 in Mystery Lake to a low of $8,770 in Hanover, demonstrating a 34.3% difference in spending and 17.06% in tax contributions. This data clearly shows that Brimley and Garfield’s (2005) measure cannot
be applied in Manitoba, due to the interference of property taxation, therefore true horizontal fiscal equity does not exist in Manitoba as defined by Brimley and Garfield’s (2005) standards, and the intent of the funding model fails. In their 2008 article, School boards and education finance in Manitoba: The politics of equity, access and local autonomy, Henley and Young assert the government is to ensure “that public education be provided fairly to all children” (p. 5) yet Manitoba continues to utilize the inequitable measure of property valuation as a benchmark for funding education. At this point, if the objective is equity for all children, we must look at what is impeding this goal.

The Issue of Equity Financing in Manitoba

Manitobans have been embroiled in a debate about how to finance education for over a decade. As more provinces have moved to a centralized funding model, the debate has intensified, resulting in a body of literature on the subject including reports, scholarly articles, op-ed pieces and media attention. As stakeholders, scholars and the public have engaged in the debate, two clear positions on the use of the Special Levy to fund education have emerged. The first position includes the perspective of MTS, the Canadian Taxpayers Association, the Winnipeg Free Press, the Frontier Centre for Public Policy (FCCP) and other stakeholders that argue for 100% provincial funding emulating other provinces in Canada. On the other hand, the government of Manitoba, scholars and MSBA believe a split of 80/20 provincial and local support would be ideal to maintain autonomy of boards and make funding more equitable.

100% funding model. The primary proponent for 100% funding as presented by Henley and Young (2008) is an interpretation of an MTS position paper released in July 2002. MTS sought, according to Henley and Young (2008), a “fully funded, basic principle of public school finance” (p. 13), through either general revenue funding or a re-allocation of existing provincial
property taxes. Essentially, MTS is seeking horizontal equity for Manitoban students and sees the current funding model as failing to provide this.

The second argument for full funding comes from the public, such as the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, the FCPP, the Winnipeg Free Press, and other media who argue that the Special Levy imposed by boards is too high and that drawing funding from general revenue would be a more equitable method for funding schools.

The FCPP, a self proclaimed right-wing conservative think-tank, has been at the forefront of educational policy debate since 1999, and is nothing if not very vocal and critical of education policy in Western Canada. Dennis Owens, a policy analyst with FCPP, writing in 2005 identifies several issues with the current funding model, the most notable being property taxes levied by local boards. Owens claims the Special Levy portion of many property tax bills in Manitoba accounts for more than half the total tax bill and that “as a result, Manitobans, and Winnipeg residents in particular, have some of the highest property taxes in the country” (p. 2). This dependency, according to Owens (2005) is not sustainable, nor is it a progressive tax form. He explains that while income tax and sales tax are proportional to consumption, property taxes are tied to assessed value of properties, which does not take into consideration a ratepayer’s actual ability to pay.

Recent articles in the Winnipeg Free Press, the largest newspaper in Manitoba with a conservative bent, provide scathing criticism of the Special Levy and recently quashed Tax Incentive Grant by suggesting amalgamation of the six urban school divisions (One school board, one tax, 2012; Martin, 2012). An editorial focuses on the disparities between Winnipeg divisions, claiming both equalization and grants have failed to alleviate the fiscal inequity in Manitoba and has “laid bare the facade of the province’s attempt to say it was shouldering a
greater share of the funding maze, which defies comprehension and thwarts good accountability” (One school board, one tax, A10). Martin (2012) exposes the dramatic inequity of equalization for ratepayers stating that a $100,000 property in Flin Flon will cost $548.00 more in school taxes than one in Gimli, carrying forward the torch for 100% funding under the auspices of equity for ratepayers.

While there is a seemingly inexhaustible body of writing from media and interest groups, the point has been made, the public – who supposedly controls the government through the democratic process – no longer wants education funded through the Special Levy.

80% Provincial, 20% Local funding model. A mere year after the implementation of the FSP, John Wiens, then Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, a former superintendent of Seven Oaks School Division and former MTS President, penned a response to an editorial titled “Phase out school tax” which appeared in the August 15, 2003 edition of the Winnipeg Free Press. Wiens’ response, “School tax not simply a matter of money,” is a blunt and direct answer to the push for full provincial funding (Manitoba Association of School Boards, 2005, pp. 26-27). Wiens seeks to remind his audience of the reasons for the creation of the Special Levy in the first place, to allow a community the financial power to control local concerns, desires and ambitions in relation to the education of their children. Using the examples of centralized funding provinces of Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia, Wiens shares the laments of parents and community interest groups in those jurisdictions that their children are either “invisible” (Manitoba Association of School Boards, 2005, p. 26) or it takes months of advocacy to be noticed by those who control the purse strings in education. Essentially, without the ability to tax, the school board loses power to choose what,
how and when to implement programs, assist parents and support students (Manitoba Association of School Boards, 2005).

The 80/20 argument presented by MSBA and the province in the 2004 report of the Minister of Education’s Working Group on Education Finance as interpreted by Henley and Young (2008) provides the local authority with the power to “offer unique programs, service enhancements and options for students that reflect local needs and priorities” and that without the ability to tax, school divisions felt that their autonomy to choose and provide these local ambitions would be “seriously compromised” (p.14).

In his editorial as President of MSBA, Rivard (2011) confirms the motivation by “fear” of a loss of autonomy and authority by school divisions should the Special Levy be removed and likens full funding to playing “chicken” with our children’s futures and that until the province provides a guarantee to maintain funding at current educational standards a local board must be able to fill in the shortfall or be faced to make cuts in services.

This perception of a loss of autonomy is supported by Garcea and Munroe (2011) who in their examination of education reforms in Canada over the past decade, note that the centralization of education funding in Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan has resulted in transforming school board officials from trustees with taxation authority, to lobbyists competing for provincial funding restricting local ambitions and initiatives.

Jonathan Young, a professor with the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, further supports the need for school boards to maintain the ability to tax to ensure local influence on education policy in a recent opinion piece written for the Winnipeg Free Press. Young (2011) considers Manitoba school boards as some of the strongest in Canada, though provides no direct comparison, because funds raised locally through taxation allow “local communities to
influence and adapt provincial mandates” (p. A10) ensuring the concerns of parents and community members are engaged in decisions crucial to their children’s education.

Though quite limited, the body of writing supporting a continuation of the Special Levy, which impedes horizontal equity, tells us to consider the voices of those in centralized funding provinces, where removal of the power to tax has turned school boards into puppets, controlled by the purse strings of the provincial government.

**Discussion**

There is a certain irony in utilizing Morgan’s (2006) metaphor of *Organizations as political systems* to critique a political system. Despite the irony, Morgan’s ascertations of how individuals function within an political organization reveal the nuances of behaviour that plague the Manitoban debate and as such, are very revealing and can teach us much about why the debate has not resolved in over a decade.

**Autonomous control.** In Canada we have a parliamentary democracy with elected representatives from various political parties. Government is formed by the party with the most representatives and its decisions are tested and challenged by all other elected representatives within the confines of the House of Commons to create public policy. This ability to test and challenge provides for a healthy system where “those in power should be held in check by some form of opposition” (Morgan, 2006, p. 155). This is practiced in Manitoba at the provincial level, however, school boards, though made up of elected individuals, have no opposition thereby resembling a fiefdom or autocracy “where power is held by an individual or small group and supported by control of critical resources, property or ownership rights” (Morgan, 2006, Exhibit 6.1, p. 153). School boards are comparatively small in terms of actual numbers of people and the political party structure of government and opposition, as practiced at the federal and
provincial level, are impractical. The idea of creating two opposing political forces within a
group of as few as seven individuals could be thought of as laughable and a waste of time and
resources, until you consider the potential for the creation of a fiefdom.

Robert Herbold, former COO of Microsoft with 36 years of business experience, writes
about the dangers of what he calls “The Fiefdom Syndrome” in his book of the same name
within a larger organization, such as a school board within the larger education political
structure, can use control of such things as resources, data, finances and other necessary
information to protect how performance is viewed within the organization. Fiefdoms may
develop within an organization when “people place more energy and emphasis on demonstrating
they are doing well” (para. 14) rather than examining ways to improve actual performance.
These small fiefdoms, according to Herbold (2004), are the most dangerous and common in
business today, and provides the example of the Enron bankruptcy caused by the fiefdom of its
finance team.

Morgan (2006) explores the power of control as well. A school board is a legal entity
and therefore carries formal authority pursuant to legislation, specifically the ability to impose
property taxation for local education interests. The control of scarce resources, in this case
access to funds, may create an imbalance of power resulting from dependancy by one group
upon another. Control of funds provides opportunity to curry favours, provide services, and in
the case of political organizations, be converted into patronage. Losing control of finances
threatens both the organization and the individual because most funds are connected to
operations which the organization are dependent upon, generating the potential for increased
power through increased dependency (Morgan, 2006).
The arguments presented for autonomous control appear hollow in light of these concepts. School boards worry about becoming dependent upon the province without the ability to generate their own revenue claiming provinces with centralized funding models are underfunding education, the public is unhappy and we should seek the 80/20 split in funding (Garcea & Munroe, 2011; Henley & Young, 2008; Manitoba Association of School Boards, 2005; Rivard, 2011; Young, 2011). In theory, the ability to tax should be creating horizontal equity because all school boards could collect whatever funds are required to provide the services desired in their regions. As demonstrated by Table 1, school boards in Manitoba are exercising their autonomy with a range of a high of 52.47% local tax contribution in Portage la Prairie to a low of 22.98% in Mystery Lake.

Yet despite this autonomy, Wallin (2009) has noted how some school divisions are making “innovative use of funds” (p. 32) such as using class size grants to hire literacy specialists, creating outdoor classrooms for vocational classes, podcasting or webCT courses, multi-age/multi-level classroom initiatives to provide for full time resource positions, attracting international students to fund equipment upgrades, and seeking corporate sponsorship to fund scholarships, school clothing and other unfunded expenditures. “Schools tend to rely on donations from parents, local community organizations and school based fundraisers”(p. 33) to top up funding in a community. This behaviour begs the question, if the ability to tax is supposed to equalize funding, why do divisions need to fundraise?

In their analysis of the past decade of education finance reforms in Canada Garcea & Munroe (2011) reveal three factors which influenced reforms in Saskatchewan and Alberta: (i) increased reliance on local property taxation to “top up” provincial education funding; (ii) a demand for equity funding across school districts regardless of socio-economic differences and
redistribution of funding on a per pupil basis; and (iii) questions respecting the legitimacy of school boards due to low voter participation in trustee elections. Saskatchewan has now eliminated school board taxation authority, and other than feeling like lobbyists, Saskatchewan school districts are still functioning and horizontal equity is becoming a reality.

With this in mind, some tough questions need to be answered. Who are the “unhappy public” in other jurisdictions? Are they the parents of average students, or are they parents of students with special needs who do not factor into horizontal equity and have their own funding? Will horizontal equity be achieved or will there remain a staggering gap of 34.3% spending between impoverished districts for the same programming in Manitoba? If school boards are already manipulating provincial funds and begging for donations from local citizenry, have they not already lost financial autonomy?

**Potential personal agendas.** It is important to acknowledge the influence of how a lack of an opposition may also lead to a practice of consensus decision making, allowing for the potential of groupthink, where even though a trustee may not agree, in the interests of presenting a unified position to the public, he or she may self-censor or cave in to direct pressure from other trustees (Morgan, 2006). As previously determined, school boards in Manitoba have the power to impose the Special Levy, without being directly challenged, yet they still engage in fundraising to cover costs, making them subject to influence by special interest groups (Farmer, 2009).

According to Morgan (2006), there exists three types of influence within a political organization: i) task interest; ii) career interest; and iii) extramural interest. Image 2 is a representation of how these interests combine within a political organization.
Task interests. These influences are related to the work at hand, in this case, providing equitable education opportunities for children. There is no doubt that school boards in Manitoba are focussed on providing the best educational services they can, so task interests are not in question.

Career interests. These influences are related to the ambitions and aspirations of the individual trustees. An example of this influence is the desire to maintain autonomy influencing the decision makers, for to overtax ratepayers is political career suicide (Garcea & Munroe, 2011). Further, some trustees aspire to hold higher political office, as demonstrated by Nancy Allen, Manitoba’s current Minister of Education, who started her political career as a trustee. The personal ambitions of a trustee factor into the decisions he or she supports and may be used
to push innovative or contentious issues that could get the trustee noticed for future campaigns, but have little to do with the needs of the division (Morgan, 2006).

**Extramural interests.** These are private attitudes, beliefs, values and commitments from outside influences. Special interest and lobby groups contributing through taxation and donation represent extramural interests and attempt to influence education finance. Patronage is not uncommon and far easier to do with a neighbour in the local grocery store than with an MLA, and the louder a group is, the more attention they get. Ignoring the potential for feelings of obligation to influence the decision making process “can exert considerable influence on the decision that emerges from discussion” (Morgan G., 2006, p. 174).

The power of one person is limited, but within a small organization can be significant. A charismatic indivual could successfully influence one or two decisions, experience the flush of success, associate that with the power of making decisions and the perception of being in power could lead to more power. Communities and organizations can be transformed by this kind of evolution, focussing on the demonstration of progress and potential and losing sight of issues and needs (Herbold, 2004; Morgan, 2006;).

Again, there are questions we need ask. If a trustee’s primary concern is equity for students, why does it matter if the board can tax the public? Could a school board not provide equitable programming by continuing to manipulate funding provided by the province? Might there be improvements in educational services provided if trustees are focussed on education and not taxation?

**Conclusion**

Politics play a significant role in education funding in Manitoba because education finance is controlled by politicians at both the provincial and school board level. The ongoing
debate in Manitoba over taxation and how the politics at the school board level can impede horizontal equity are issues that need to be addressed.

In the current economic climate, and considering a strenuous and contentious ongoing debate, education finance reform is long overdue. We have learned that horizontal equity financing does not exist in Manitoban education finance, though it is something all stakeholders desire. We have been reminded of the risks associated with allowing politics to influence education, that the desire for power, control and personal agendas, influences how school boards perceive their role and may lose focus on the task of providing equitable programming. Finally, we have learned that other finance models exist in Canada that Manitoba can pull from to develop policy changes and perhaps level the financial playing field for students.

Whether we like it or not, 37 fiefdoms exist in the Province of Manitoba, some with benevolent lords, others with tyrants. Many districts are underfunded and struggling, dreaming of the day true fiscal equity will be established and educational services for students will provide equitable opportunities. All divisions have power and control over our most precious resource – the education of our children. And so we wait with baited breath for the debate to resolve. Will the Province take control and centralize funding? Will the power of the school boards be restricted with minimal taxation authority? Will the status quo continue, rejecting the ideals of horizontal equity and fair opportunities for all students? It is clear reform is needed, and regardless of what those changes are, they need to be made soon, before the serfs lose patience and there is an uprising.
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