

Real transparency needed for our new school

As taxpayers, we all deserve to know the true cost of projects, especially when it comes to building new schools and infrastructure. The government's proposed new school in Brandon being built as a Public-Private Partnership, otherwise known as a P3 school, is one such case where there is more to the story than is being told.

CUPE 737, representing school support staff here in Brandon has been the only voice raising concern over these projects, and we hope you'll add your voice to ours.

The Pallister government recently passed legislation to repeal the province's Public-Private Partnerships (P3s) Transparency & Accountability Act, claiming it was "red tape" for private corporations to access public dollars. This means public oversight and transparency for the new school project is already limited.

The Premier also claimed that P3 schools across Canada were widely successful. But that's just not the cast. Nova Scotia is paying out \$50 million to a developer to buy back ten P3 schools, their government was quoted as saying it will be a substantial savings compared to renewing the lease for the next 30 years under the traditional model, rather than under a P3.

The new P3 schools opening in Saskatchewan under 30-year contracts are already facing criticism, with the "private partner" insisting that windows cannot be opened for the first year, and teachers need permission to put posters on the walls.

When Provincial Auditor Generals have reviewed P3 school projects in other provinces, they find that P3 are more expensive than traditional ways of building schools, with less public control.

Hampton's school in Calgary, a P3 school leased to the Calgary Board of Education, found that the company cuts cost during construction, so within three years the Calgary Board of Education had spent more than \$100,000 more in maintenance and upgrades to the roof.

These are just some of the experiences with P3 schools in Canada.

Some schools in Manitoba are still being built the traditional way (Winkler, Niverville, the expansion on Neepawa collegiate shop, classrooms at Garden City) despite the government insisting that the new P3 schools will be built faster, cheaper, and better. So why the double standard?

CUPE 737 encourages the Brandon taxpayer to reach out to their MLA for an honest discussion around these Public-Private Partnerships. Why is this government pursuing P3 schools when there are so many red flags already being raised?

Please be informed as a Taxpayer

CUPE 737.