Manitoba’s Sinking Student-Teacher Ratio

An issue of key concern to professional educators, school board administrators and parents is the ratio of students to teachers. The Manitoba Teachers’ Society favours reduced class sizes, while school boards have generally been reluctant to move in that direction. Have class sizes been increasing or declining? How has the student-teacher ratio changed over time?

Analysis
- Between 1960 and 1970, student enrolment in Manitoba’s public schools increased by 27%, while the number of teachers during that same time period increased by 47.3%.
- From 1970 to 2005, the number of students decreased by 28.9% while the number of teachers increased by 6.5%.
- The student-teacher ratio in Manitoba has plummeted from 25.4 in 1960 to 14.6 in 2005—a decrease of 42.5%.
- Since salaries make up the vast majority of education expenditures, the decreasing student-teacher ratio has meant that average per pupil spending has gone up significantly in Manitoba.
- Manitoba, with Canada’s most expensive school system when school spending as a percentage of provincial economy is measured, can not afford to reduce class size.

Conclusion
Although the Manitoba Teachers Society has argued in favour of reducing class sizes, the reality is that student-teacher ratios have already declined by 42.5% from 1960 to the present. The decline in student population in Manitoba has not been matched with a decrease in the total number of teachers in the province.

SOURCES:

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