



WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISION

1577 Wall St. East
Winnipeg, MB R3E 2S5
Telephone: (204) 775-0231

NEWS RELEASE

WSD Board of Trustees Condemns Quebec Bill 21

December 5, 2019 (Winnipeg, MB) – Winnipeg School Division (WSD) Board of Trustees is sending a strong message to the creators of Quebec’s Bill 21 – condemning its attack on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

“Our intention with passing this motion is to stand together with educators and all persons in positions of authority in Canada to say this is wrong, this is divisive, this goes against every belief we have as Canadian citizens, whether by birth or immigration, to our protected rights and freedoms,” said Jennifer Chen, Vice Chair, WSD Board of Trustees.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1982 is part of Canada’s Constitution. The Charter protects every Canadian’s right to be treated equally under the law. The Charter guarantees broad equality rights and other fundamental rights such as the freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of religion. Quebec passed its bill using a notwithstanding clause to override the Charter.

“If we were to allow Quebec’s Bill 21, or any and all legislation that infringes on our constitutional rights, to go without remark, that would be like accepting that it is alright to take away those rights and freedoms, and we can’t allow that to happen,” said Trustee Chen. “We join many other elected bodies in condemning Quebec’s Bill 21 and hope that our combined voices will be loud enough to convince that province to rescind their decision to ban public workers in positions of authority, which includes school principals, vice-principals and teachers, from wearing religious symbols.”

Numerous members of Winnipeg’s immigrant and refugee community attended the Board meeting to show support for the motion, brought forth to the Board by Trustee Chen. The full motion is:

- a) That the Board of Trustees of the Winnipeg School Division strongly opposes Quebec’s Bill 21 and any legislation that creates division and discrimination and risks the infringement of human rights of public servants in positions of authority, such as teachers, police officers, judges, government lawyers, prison guards, and wildlife officers from wearing religious symbols, such as the kippah, turban, hijab, or crucifixes.
- b) That the Board of Trustees reiterate our commitment to all students, parents, staff and community members from diverse backgrounds of creating and supporting an inclusive and welcoming environment in our school and community as defined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Manitoba Human Rights Code and WSD Policies.

WSD was established in 1871 and currently has 78 schools, 33,000 students and 6,000 employees. Its purpose is to provide a learning environment that fosters the growth of each student’s potential and provide equitable opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and values necessary for meaningful participation in a global and diverse society.

-30-

Media contact:

Radean Carter
Senior Information Officer, Winnipeg School Division
P (204) 789-0412 C (204) 771-5352. rcarter@wsd1.org winniepsd.ca