

## Province holds 'serious concerns' over future schools in Waverley West: Letter

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Manitoba's education minister is blaming a Winnipeg building permit cap for undermining plans to construct a new elementary school.

But others believe the cap is the only bargaining chip the city has to ensure a school is actually built.

A Dec. 11 letter from Education Minister Ian Wishart to Tim Johnson of the Pembina Trails School Division states the province has "serious concerns about the future development of additional K-8 schools in the Waverley West area," thanks to a Winnipeg development agreement that limits housing starts in the Bridgwater Trails and Bridgwater Centre area.

"Maintaining (a city) building permit cap will restrict development in the area and prevent the neighbourhood from reaching the necessary size for the consideration of an additional K-8 school," wrote Wishart, in a follow-up email to the Winnipeg Sun.

The building permit cap was approved by city council in 2012 and dictates that only 750 single-family and 300 multi-family building permits be issued for the area until certain conditions are met, including that an area elementary school be built.

On Thursday, the province declined to confirm the exact number of potential students required to build a new school.

A July city report notes the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation, the area's developer, reported new multi-family applications had already been put on hold due to the cap by May 31, when agreements were also in place for 595 single family lots.

But Winnipeg council's Riel Community Committee twice voted to postpone action on a public service report calling to remove the cap. Janice Lukes (South Winnipeg-St. Norbert), a Riel committee member and the area's city councillor, said she would support the change if the province confirmed the minimum number of students required for a new school and committed to actually build one.

"We would really need to see a commitment of some kind that a school be announced," said Lukes. "Right now, there are 20 portables put on schools in the neighbouring vicinity. All those students are being shipped out."

"(Waverley West) is a community the size of Brandon. Brandon has upwards of 20 schools in it," she added.

Andrea Chow, chair of the Bridgwater Trails Neighbourhood Association, fears lifting the permit cap would reduce pressure on the province to build a school.

"It's our ... only leverage to try and force a school going into the area," said Chow. "We think a school is an integral part of the community."

But Jeremy Davis, a spokesman for Winnipeg Mayor Brian Bowman, said the mayor agrees the cap should be lifted.

"The mayor has always been supportive of securing a school in the area and has been disappointed to see the delays at community committee, which have prevented the needed growth to support a school," wrote Davis.

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