

## **Inadequate funding puts education at risk as RETSD board approves 2021–22 budget**

(March 3, 2021) The River East Transcona School Division board of trustees approved a \$201.8-million budget on March 2, 2021. As a result, school taxes in River East Transcona will go down 1.6 per cent in 2021. The decrease translates into approximately \$27 less on an average home valued at \$287,500.

The result for property owners is no increase in school taxes. However, the longer term result is detrimental to the health and success of public education because government funding will not meet the needs of a growing student population in the division.

“The board met all budget cap directives set out by the provincial government,” said Jerry Sodomlak, board chair, “but the promise of additional funds to fill the gap from freezing school taxes is a funding decrease and will not meet the needs of our students.”

RETSD already operates efficiently, with the lowest per pupil spending among the six metro school divisions. The board is clear it has nowhere left to trim. Government’s funding promise is inadequate to meet the needs of students in the division and any further cuts would reduce programs including recovery supports for students impacted by the pandemic.

“Simply put the government wants us to do more with less, predicated on their inability to comprehend the local realities of our division and seek meaningful input from us,” said trustee Brienne Goertzen, finance, facilities and transportation committee chair. “As a result, we are constrained in our efforts to meet the escalating costs associated with the provision of quality public education. Cuts to public education funding is not a formula for success.”

The RETSD 2021–22 budget accommodated enrolment increases and increased student needs, resulting in part from the health crisis of the past year, with 5.1 new full-time equivalent resource teacher and clinician positions. The board and division are striving to find ways to maintain the division’s excellent programs and resources for its students while meeting increased needs of the current student population and a growing enrolment, as well as maintaining its facilities and providing safe working conditions for all staff.

The board of trustees again calls on the government to engage in meaningful dialogue to better address the local realities of RETSD and the impacts of inadequate funding on the provision of quality public education to provide a brighter future for Manitoba’s children—our collective future. The board remains committed to the division’s vision of educating students to be inspired, skilled, responsible citizens.

### **Fast facts:**

- River East Transcona is the second-largest school division in the province with over 16,700 students in 42 schools staffed by approximately 3,000 team members.
- The division receives approximately 52.8 per cent of its revenue from provincial government program support, 11.6 per cent from the provincial government property tax credit, and another 35.0 per cent from the local property tax base. The remaining 0.6 per cent comes from other revenue sources.
- Based on the 2019–20 FRAME Budget Report, RETSD’s per pupil spending—\$11,881—continues to be the lowest in the Metro Winnipeg area. The provincial average is \$13,374.

- Based on the 2019–20 FRAME Budget Report, 2.5 per cent of expenditures are spent on administration, which is below the government mandate of 2.7 per cent. RETSD has always been below the administrative cost cap. All the other metro Winnipeg area divisions were at 2.7 per cent, which is the maximum allowable. The 0.2 per cent less RETSD spends on administration compared to other metro divisions equates to \$400,000.
- Salaries and benefits represent 87 per cent of the division's total budget.

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*For additional information, please contact trustee Jerry Sodomlak, board chair, at 204.999.1409, trustee Brianne Goertzen, finance committee chair, at 204.955.6782, or Elise Downey, Secretary-Treasurer/CFO at 204.667.7130.*