

the torch



March 2017 • www.retsd.mb.ca



.....
creating student success
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From Left to Right: Peter Kotyk, Michael West (vice-chair), Jerry Sodomlak, Eva Prysizney, Rod Giesbrecht, Brianne Goertzen, Brian Olynik, John Toews and Colleen Carswell (chair).

Board takes a responsible approach to 2017–18 budget

Setting a budget for the school division is always challenging, but there were no surprises in the process this year for trustees.

“We took a very responsible approach to setting the budget for the coming school year. As always, we strived to balance fiscal accountability with creating the best possible environment for student achievement and success,” says Colleen Carswell, chair of the board.

On March 7, the board passed a budget of \$187.7 million, a 2.8 per cent increase over last year. For local taxpayers, that translates into a 2.7 per cent increase in school taxes, or about \$44 more on an average house valued at \$273,300. No new initiatives were introduced, and existing programs, services and staffing levels were maintained.

The board is always looking for efficiencies in every area of the operation, not just at tax time.

The fact RETSD has the lowest per pupil spending among the city’s six school divisions demonstrates the board’s fiscal responsibility, says Mrs. Carswell.

Jerry Sodomlak, chair of the board’s finance committee, is happy with the outcome of everyone’s combined efforts. “I think as a division, we’ve always been resourceful and efficient while still being progressive and innovative in the way funds are used to support quality learning, and that’s reflected in this budget.”

Supporting quality learning is what it’s all about, says Mrs. Carswell. To reduce the budget in a major way would require significant cuts to staff. It’s something the board is not prepared to do because it would jeopardize the quality learning that is such a source of pride for RETSD.

Inflationary rises in the cost of utilities, supplies and services nudge the budget up every year.

However, the biggest impact is salary increases to meet collective agreement requirements. Salaries and benefits represent 87 per cent of the total budget.

“Taxpayers have to understand that by investing in our staff, and the programming and services they provide, they’re investing in their children’s education and their collective future. We all need to play our part,” she says.

The division will continue to focus its efforts on its priorities: numeracy, literacy, safe schools and technology-enabled learning.

As well, work will continue on specific tasks identified by the board: reviews of scheduling models for kindergarten, busing to middle years schools, delivery of middle years applied arts courses, and catchment areas for middle years schools in Transcona.

Investing in education important for us all



“Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.”

Those words, spoken by Nelson Mandela, inspire the work of the RETSD school board.

“We know the work carried out in this school division, often in partnership with community organizations, institutions and volunteers, is of vital importance,” says Colleen Carswell, chair of the board.

Indeed, quality education and health care are the bedrock of a strong society. Without them, our future is precarious. And that, says Mrs. Carswell, is why paying school taxes is so important.

“When you pay your school taxes, you’re investing not only in your children’s and grandchildren’s future, but your own future because these students will be leading our country in the years to come.”

Trustee Jerry Sodomlak, who heads up the board’s finance committee, is a retired educator. He knows first-hand how important it is to have adequate funding to carry out the work that takes place in schools.

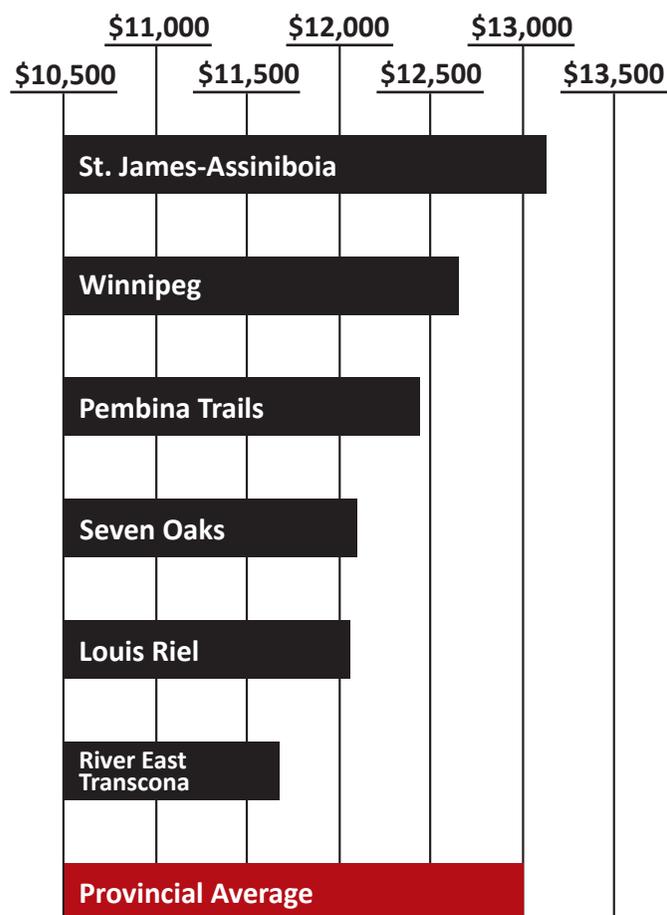
There are lots of studies that show that investing money in education, especially in the early years to give children a strong start in school, can save much more money down the line on the costs for health care, justice and an undereducated workforce, he says.

Both trustees agree there is no doubt its variety of educational programs and services, innovative approaches to teaching and learning, special initiatives to promote safe and respectful schools, and its emphasis on creating student success in a comprehensive way, puts the school division in a strong position as an educational leader in the province.

The board is proud of the education the division offers its students, and knows that providing it costs a lot of money—\$187.7 million for 2017–18. The budget will result in a 2.7 per cent increase in school taxes, or about \$44 on a home valued at \$273,300.

“We’re the second largest school division in the province, with 3,000 employees and 16,150 students and our per pupil spending is \$11,677, the lowest in Metro Winnipeg,” says Mrs. Carswell. “We feel the modest increase in school taxes is being fiscally responsible, while ensuring our students get the best education possible. It’s an investment that will benefit us all.”

EXPENDITURE PER PUPIL



Source: FRAME Report-2016/17 Budget

Fast Facts for 2017–18:

- The budget for 2017–18 is \$187,686,444.
- The mill rate for the 2017–18 budget is estimated at 13.356.
- The division receives approximately 48.6 per cent of its revenue from provincial government program support, 13.4 per cent from the provincial government property tax credit, and another 34.6 per cent from the local property tax base. The remaining 3.4 per cent comes from other revenue sources.
- Based on the 2016–17 FRAME Budget Report, RETSD’s per pupil spending, \$11,677, is the lowest in the Metro Winnipeg area. The provincial average is \$13,016.
- River East Transcona educates approximately 16,150 kindergarten to Grade 12 students in 42 schools and employs approximately 3,000 employees.

YOUR LOONIE AT WORK



Salaries & Benefits: 87¢

- 58¢: Classroom instruction
- 11¢: School counselling, resource & library services
- 7¢: School administration
- 8¢: Facility operations, maintenance & student transportation
- 2¢: Division administration
- 1¢: Other

Supplies & Services: 13¢

- 5¢: School supplies & materials
- 7¢: Facility operations, maintenance & student transportation
- 1¢: Other