



Board of Trustees and community invest in RETSD students

enough priority support safe resources important kids time increase health extra basic spending provide eas money math supplies teach help child funding technology education mental children learning staff special

This tax increase will cost \$4.41 a month (after provincial rebate) for the average assessed home. This investment in public education is necessary to provide the best for our students.

On March 11, 2024, the River East Transcona School Division Board of Trustees approved a \$251.1 million status quo budget for the 2024–25 school year.

This decision follows an extensive consultation process with the community including, but not limited to, a ThoughtExchange survey, an education forum, two virtual budget town halls, emails, and phone conversations. Throughout the consultation process, the community was consistent in vocalizing their support for strengthening what currently exists in the division, and opposed any cuts to programs, programming, and services.

"Education is the foundation of our community, and we owe it to our students to put them in the best possible position to succeed. With

this budget, the Board of Trustees can move forward and continue to strengthen the education offered in our division," said Trustee Colleen Carswell, Board Chair. "If we did not come to our community with a tax increase and a status quo budget, we would be here today discussing cuts that would have a detrimental impact on classrooms, students, and staff. The choice was clear; we needed to support and fund education in RETSD, and the community feedback reinforced that."

The status quo budget will result in a property tax increase of 6.4 per cent or \$105.89 (before provincial rebate) on the average home in our community assessed at \$330,200. The property tax increase maintains the division's mill rate at the second lowest in

the city, moving it from 11.14 to 11.815-still not at its 2018 level of 13.436.

While the board was able to maintain programs, programming, and services with a slight tax increase, the only way to resolve the longstanding underfunding of RETSD is through a new equitable funding formula. At every opportunity, the Board has clearly communicated the need for the provincial government to create a new equitable funding formula. They have met with several MLAs and ministers of education in recent years about the continual and cumulative effects of underfunding and reductions to **RETSD** because of the existing funding formula.

"The Board of Trustees will continue to advocate for an equitable funding model that properly funds quality public education," said Trustee Brianne Goertzen, Chair of the Finance, Facilities, Transportation, and Technology Committee.

"Without a new equitable funding formula, RETSD will continue to face an unpredictable and precarious financial situation. This is unfair to our community, and it is our expectation that the provincial government will recognize the inequity in provision of funding in northeast Winnipeg and share our vision for a fair and equitable funding model for quality public education."

What does a status quo budget mean?

A status quo budget maintains current levels of programs, programming, and services for students and staff, while accommodating the anticipated rise in student enrolment for the 2024-25 school year. Additionally, the budget accommodates fixed cost increases, such as insurance, utilities, school buses, fuel, technology, and paper supplies, among others.

The majority of the budget increase is allocated to schoolbased staff, including teachers, educational assistants, and clerks. This allocation is expected to decrease the current pupil-toteacher ratio.

"Our Board of Trustees did a tremendous job by passing this budget. Maintaining our programs and services, while increasing staff based on our exploding student enrolment, is good news for our division and community," said Sandra Herbst, Superintendent/CEO.

"RETSD staff are deeply committed to providing the quality education our students deserve; this budget supports schools and classrooms in the important work of creating student success."

creating student success 🛛 www.retsd.mb.ca 📑 💥 😤 torch



Fixed costs have increased

- Insurance
- Utilities
- Technology
- · Paper supplies
- School buses
- Fuel

"The rise in inflation has been felt by everyone in the community, and RETSD is no different. There are fixed cost items that have gone up significantly in recent years," said Elise Downey, Secretary-Treasurer/CFO. "However, there is no negotiating these costs. We must pay our insurance, heat our schools, turn on the lights, and order paper and other necessary supplies for schools. As the prices of these items increase, so does the amount we must allocate in the budget for them."

Community makes their voices heard

The Board of Trustees held two virtual budget town halls to provide information on the budget, answer budget-related questions, and solicit feedback from community members. The first town hall was held on January 25, 2024, and focused on budgeting principles, process, and the next steps of budget deliberations for the board. A followup town hall was held on February 29, providing more specific details on the budget and the financial status of RETSD and seeking feedback on the two options being considered.

- 1. A budget with no tax increase would have left the division down \$15.6 million, which is equivalent to about 150 staff.
- 2. The 6.4 per cent tax increase that raises taxes \$105.89 on the average house in our community.

In the spirit of open, transparent, and honest communication with our public, you can find the questions and responses from both town halls on our website. To the right, you will find one question from each town hall.

January 25 Virtual Budget Town Hall

Q: Why do expensive projects, like building additions and elevators, continue when the division says it is broke?

A: There is a difference between operational funding and capital funding. When it comes to projects such as renovations and additions, the monies come directly from the province as part of capital funding. The board submits a five-year capital plan every year, and the province decides which projects to fund. Capital funding is separate from the operating budget and is approved and paid for entirely by the province.

February 29 Virtual Budget Town Hall

Q: How have administrative costs been reduced?

A: Administrative costs include the superintendent's department, finance, human resources, information technology, and the trustees. As indicated in the FRAME report on the province's website, RETSD's admin costs have gone down. For at least five years, the province has had a limit on school divisions over 5,000 students of 2.7 per cent for administrative costs and RETSD has never been above that 2.7 per cent. The most recent FRAME information (2022–23), specifically page 68, shows RETSD at 2.52 per cent for administrative costs.

To view the Q&A or **PowerPoint from either** town hall, scan the QR codes below. **January 25 Town Hall** February 29 Town Hall

RETSD growing rapidly

Since its establishment in 2002, RETSD has never encountered such significant growth in student enrolment, creating an unprecedented situation. We are currently anticipating over 500 additional students for the 2024–25 school year, with our projected enrolment to reach 18,769. Moreover, RETSD has welcomed a substantial number of newcomer students; last year alone we welcomed almost 1,400 and are at 539 so far this year. Despite the increased enrolment, RETSD remains committed to delivering exemplary educational experiences and support to all students.

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The Board of Trustees meets the first and third Tuesday of each month. You are welcome to attend, either in person or online. For more information about the Board of Trustees, visit: www.retsd.mb.ca > Your RETSD > Board of Trustees

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