

# the torch



## RETSD Board of Trustees Approves 2025–26 Budget

The River East Transcona School Division Board of Trustees unanimously approved a \$268.3 million budget for the 2025–26 school year on March 11, 2025. The funding increase from the province was \$4 million less than last year’s increase.

Last year, the Board passed a status quo budget that maintained the level of programs, programming, and services for students and staff that was based on an estimated increase in student enrolment for the 2024–25 school year. This year’s budget goes beyond the status quo, as the Board refuses to make cuts that would be felt directly in the classroom.

The 2025–26 budget enables RETSD to expand classroom resources by adding 34.8 FTE (full-time equivalent) teaching positions, including classroom teachers, resource and inclusion teachers, a substance use counsellor, teacher librarians, and clinicians. Additionally, 44 FTE

educational assistants will be hired, along with more support staff, such as library technicians and clerical personnel, to support growing enrolment. The budget also includes the purchase of eight new school buses to replenish an aging fleet and transport an increased number of students.

“Our students are at the forefront of every decision the Board makes, and we must balance that with what taxpayers can afford during tough economic times,” said Trustee Colleen Carswell, Board Chair.

“We have a responsibility to provide the very best education to students, and that will remain our focus as we continue advocating to the province for increased funding, new schools, and other much-needed capital projects.”

The recently approved budget will result in a property tax increase of \$19.83 a month (before rebate) on the average home in the City of

Winnipeg portion of the division assessed at \$360,600 and the mill rate will increase 3.8 per cent. East St. Paul homeowners will see a higher mill rate increase of approximately 2.5 per cent as the assessed values in the RM increased by 22.7 per cent, on average.

For 2025, the province announced the Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit (HATC) that is applied directly to the property tax statement, up to a maximum of \$1,500, and will only apply to a taxpayer’s principal residence.

“In absence of the provincial government properly funding public education and introducing an equitable funding model, we must unfortunately turn to our community to address the needs of our growing division,” said Trustee Brianne Goertzen, Chair of the Finance, Facilities, Transportation, and Technology Committee.

## Impact of taxes on homes in the City of Winnipeg portion of RETSD



• The average homeowner, with a home valued at \$360,600, will see an increase in taxes of \$238 annually, before the Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit (HATC) rebate. Last

year, a homeowner with an average home valued at \$330,200 would have paid \$542 in education property taxes after rebates. This year, the average homeowner pays \$522; a decrease of \$20.

- For a principal residence valued under \$267,500, the taxes payable will be zero after the HATC rebate.
- For a principal residence valued at \$500,000, the taxes payable will be \$1,303.50 after the HATC rebate. This is approximately \$109 monthly.
- For a principal residence valued at \$1,000,000, the taxes payable will be \$4,107.00 after the HATC rebate. This is approximately \$342 monthly.

### Did you know the mill rate in RETSD is the second lowest in Winnipeg?

Seven Oaks	15.785
Winnipeg	14.630
Louis Riel	13.323
St. James-Assiniboia	12.720
River East Transcona	12.460
Pembina Trails	10.812

# Keeping community informed

The Board of Trustees held two virtual Budget Town Halls to provide information on the budget, to answer budget-related questions and solicit feedback from community members. The first meeting was held on January 29, 2025, and focused on the budget process, and next steps of budget deliberations for the Board of Trustees. The second follow-up meeting was held on March 10, 2025. This meeting provided more specific details on the budget and its impact on ratepayers.

In the spirit of open, transparent, and honest communication with our community, you can find the questions and responses from both meetings on our website. Below you will find one question from each meeting.

## January 29 Virtual Budget Meeting

**Q:** Given the financial situation the division has been in the last few years, what type of innovations have you been able to accomplish?

**A:** Innovation can also occur when programming is examined during more difficult financial times. Below are some examples of the new, innovative programming offered in RETSD:

- In all six of our senior years schools, students have access to Advanced Placement (AP). AP gives our students an opportunity to pursue university-level studies while still in high school, as well as an excellent means to prepare students for the rigours of university and college life. The AP Program enables students to receive credits, advanced placement, or both, from the universities participating in the program.

- Last year, RETSD and St. Boniface Hospital collaborated to offer a meaningful experience for Indigenous students. A newly developed internship program allowed 12 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students in Grades 11 and 12 to explore careers related to health care. Students spent one day a week at the hospital for 17 weeks and were supported by an RETSD divisional support teacher and the St. Boniface Hospital reconciliation specialist.

- Another example worth sharing is Project LIFE, where students with additional needs can develop skills to increase their success in finding competitive employment and transitioning to adult independence. It combines both classroom and life skills instruction with authentic work experiences to prepare students for a future as confident, capable citizens.

## March 10 Virtual Budget Meeting

**Q:** What was the impact of a two per cent cap on budget increases over the last number of years?

**A:** During the six years of the two per cent cap on school division budgets, RETSD had to engage in years of successive reductions. After years of these reductions, to reduce RETSD budgets anymore would have devastating and permanent impacts, including increased class sizes and reduction in classroom teachers and educational assistants.

To view the Q&A or PowerPoint from either meeting, scan the QR code.



## Fixed costs have increased

- Insurance
- Utilities
- Technology
- Paper Supplies
- School Buses
- Fuel

“There are fixed cost items that can’t be negotiated, and with the current threat of tariffs, many costs are going up,” said Elise Downey, secretary treasurer/CFO. “Our division is growing, and we received \$4 million less this budget than last year from government. Increasing enrolment requires additional teachers, more support staff, extra buses, more supplies, and additional resources overall.”

School divisions are now being asked to do more with less funding. Education dollars are being used in areas that should be funded through departments such as health, justice, or families.

## Enrolment numbers increasing

River East Transcona is the second-largest school division in the province with nearly 19,000 students in 42 schools staffed by over 3,600 team members. The school division expects enrolment numbers to continue increasing for the foreseeable future. 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](http://www.retsd.mb.ca) > Your RETSD > Board of Trustees