

Issue one  
2020—21

# the torch



## Kicking off a safe and healthy school year

It certainly has been a unique start to a new school year, one unlike any other most people have experienced. Across River East Transcona School Division, students and staff are adapting to being together—in socially distant and safe ways. Thanks to the considerable efforts by so many staff leading up to the start of the school year, the division's schools opened with safe, clean spaces and guidelines in place to protect students, staff, and the community in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Circumstances are changing, sometimes daily and the division, by working closely with Manitoba's Public Health team, is committed to fulfil our purpose—to educate students—in a safe way for everyone," said Jerry Sodomlak, board chair. "The board of trustees believes

it's important people are aware of what the division is doing to keep its students and staff safe, because that in turn protects the whole community."

Before the school year began, division staff was diligent in preparing schools for the return of students and school staff. Their efforts included deep cleaning, setting up hand sanitizing stations, placing signs for social distancing and reminders about handwashing, creating cohorts of students to minimize contacts among students and staff, and other steps to reduce the spread of disease.

Trustees also approved the purchase of seven new buses needed to allow eligible students to go to and from school on buses and follow

the Public Health directives that restricted and reduced the number of students we are allowed to put on a bus.

"We know it has not been all smooth sailing in every situation, but the division is working hard to help school administrators, staff, and students follow Public Health protocols to make our schools safe," commented board vice-chair Keith Morrison. "Keeping informed is one way we can stay safer and the community is encouraged to check the division's website for updates or go to the individual school sites for more local news."

Additional information is available through the provincial government's COVID-19 information page: <https://manitoba.ca/covid19/>







## Prince Edward School turns 100

A century ago, on October 20, 1920, Prince Edward School opened its doors for students in Grades 1 to 6. Its life began as a one-storey building, constructed at a cost of about \$60,000. Today, many of its kindergarten to Grade 5 students are among the second and third generation to attend the school.

The school community has lived through many historical times, including the current pandemic; however, since its inception Prince Edward School has focused on creating a strong sense of community among its students, staff, and families.

"Prince Edward School is more than just a building, it is a community hub that has positively shaped and empowered our students, staff, and community-at-large," said trustee Brianne Goertzen, a member of the planning committee and the mother of a current student. "Now more than ever we need to take time to recognize and celebrate this historic moment and the priceless contributions the school has made and continues to make to our community."

A centenary planning committee had worked hard to come up with many celebratory events.

Although the pandemic has meant changing many of these activities, the committee has been innovative in finding socially distant ways to mark this significant milestone. These include a virtual tour of the school, an online guest book, a commemorative plaque, and student work showcasing the school's past and present. You can buy branded 100th anniversary sweatshirts, T-shirts, and other merchandise. Keep current on these items and the centennial celebrations by visiting the school's website at <https://www.retsd.mb.ca/school/pe/> and help Prince Edward launch into its next 100 years.

# Concern Protocol

Your child's school will always try to make the learning experience a positive, safe and happy one for its students.

However, if you have a concern or an issue, please don't hesitate to let the school know. Open communication between home and school is very important to us.

For more information, visit our website: [www.retsd.mb.ca](http://www.retsd.mb.ca)

Policy KE – Concern Protocol

Policy KE-R – Concerns and Complaints Process

# 1

Talk to the person most directly involved—your child's teacher. If you must leave a message, provide a day and evening phone number where the teacher can reach you.



# 2

If talking to the teacher doesn't resolve the issue, talk to the principal.



# 3

If you've talked to the principal, but the issue has not been resolved over a period of time, call the superintendent's department at 204.667.7130 or email [communications@retsdb.ca](mailto:communications@retsdb.ca)



# 4

If you disagree with the decision of the superintendent's department, you can make an appeal in writing to the board of trustees.





## Board of trustees elect chair and vice-chair

The board of trustees holds elections at its first board meeting of the school year. On September 1, the board elected Jerry Sodomlak (Ward 1) as board chair and Keith Morrison (Ward 3) as vice-chair. Trustee Sodomlak is in his second term as a trustee and was board vice-chair for the past two years and trustee Morrison is in his first term. Both trustees are retired educators.



*The RETSD board of trustees: (back row, left to right) Michael West, Brianne Goertzen, Colleen Carswell, Jerry Sodomlak (board chair), Susan Olynik; (front row, left to right) Keith Morrison (board vice-chair), John Toews, Rod Giesbrecht, Peter Kotyk.*



## A big thank you and fond farewell to Vince Mariani

The division was sad to say goodbye to longtime secretary-treasurer Vince Mariani who retired in July after 35 years at River East Transcona School Division. Vince joined the division in 1985 as the assistant secretary-treasurer and was appointed as secretary-treasurer in 1992.

The secretary-treasurer is the division's chief financial officer, working directly with the superintendent/CEO and the board of trustees to oversee divisional accounting and records, purchasing, budgets, maintenance, caretaking, negotiations, student transportation, and information technology.

During his tenure, Vince was an integral part of the amalgamation of River East School Division No. 9 and the Transcona portion of Transcona-Springfield School Division No. 12 to become River East Transcona School Division in 2002. His vision and guidance were key to leading and advising the school boards towards a successful amalgamation.

"Vince has a vast institutional knowledge and the unqualified respect of his colleagues in the province," commented trustee Rod Giesbrecht. "When he spoke, others stopped to listen. I want to state for the record, RETSD has not petitioned to rename Google 'Vince,' but it would not be a bad choice."

Vince worked with six superintendents over the years and—just as he provided timely and sage advice to many boards of trustees—he helped them by providing continuity and contributing his incredible knowledge about the division. The board is confident that the new acting secretary-treasurer, Elise Downey, will be an invaluable addition to the division's senior administration team.

We know Vince will be thoroughly enjoying more time on the golf course. The board, his colleagues, and friends at the division will miss him and wish him a great retirement.

## Your River East Transcona School Division Trustees

### Ward 1

Colleen Carswell  
204.222.1486  
ccarswell@retsd.mb.ca  
Jerry Sodomlak (chair)  
204.999.1409  
jsodomlak@retsd.mb.ca

### Ward 2

Rod Giesbrecht  
204.661.5984  
rgiesbrecht@retsd.mb.ca  
John Toews  
204.663.0475  
jtoews@retsd.mb.ca

### Ward 3

Brianne Goertzen  
204.955.6782  
bgoertzen@retsd.mb.ca  
Keith Morrison (vice-chair)  
204.795.3357  
kmorrison@retsd.mb.ca

### Ward 4

Peter Kotyk  
204.668.4181  
pkoty@retsd.mb.ca  
Susan Olynik  
204.661.6440  
solynik@retsd.mb.ca

### Ward 5

Michael West  
204.990.3228  
mwest@retsd.mb.ca

For more information about the board of trustees, visit: [www.retsd.mb.ca/BoardofTrustees](http://www.retsd.mb.ca/BoardofTrustees)