

June 2019

the torch



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

2018–19 Board priorities

There are changes on the horizon for two of the language programs in River East Transcona, as the RETSD board of trustees addresses a growing population and the community’s evolving needs.

French Immersion Program

In September 2019, Munroe Junior High School will introduce an early French immersion track, and French immersion students from Salisbury Morse Place and Neil Campbell Schools (who live in the new catchment area) will now go to Munroe for their middle years French immersion starting in Grade 6. As well, the board has completed a review of middle years French immersion enrolment and

related catchment areas west of Lagimodiere. The review was identified as a priority in the 2017–18 school year.

“Our division is growing in terms of new enrolments and we’ve seen an increased demand for French immersion programming,” says Colleen Carswell, board chair. “This is having an impact at John Henderson Junior High School, which is at capacity, so we needed to assess the situation.”

As a result of the review, adjustments to the boundaries were deemed necessary for both John Henderson and Munroe, which will impact students coming from Neil Campbell and Salisbury

Morse Place schools.

French milieu schools in Transcona—also in growing demand—were the topic of discussion in April, as the board met with parents from École Centrale, École Margaret-Underhill and École Regent Park. The group went over preliminary short- and long-term plans to address the rapid residential growth and increasing demand for French programming.

English-Ukrainian Bilingual Program

Changes are also ahead for the early years English-Ukrainian Bilingual Programs at Bernie Wolfe Community School and Springfield

Heights School. The two programs will be united at one location in September 2020—Prince Edward School.

This relocation will impact current K–3 Ukrainian program students at Bernie Wolfe and Springfield Heights, as well as new Ukrainian program students entering kindergarten this September.

The board is proud to offer this unique language program in our division, and by uniting our Ukrainian students, we believe we can create a stronger program through increased peer-to-peer interactions.

RETSD board passes budget that puts students first

The River East Transcona School Division board of trustees approved a \$196.6-million budget on March 12.

As a result, residents in River East Transcona will see an average increase of .25 per cent in their school taxes in 2019. The increase translates into approximately \$4 more on an average home valued at \$278,600.

“We have continued to demonstrate our fiscal responsibility,” said Colleen Carswell, chair of the board.

“Ensuring our students have the programs and services they need to be successful while meeting the government directives was a challenge, but I’m very pleased of the work we’ve done.”

The budget meets all budget cap directives set out by the government while maintaining current programs and services. The 2019–20 budget also includes 17.5 new full-time equivalent teaching positions to accommodate continued enrolment increases.

“We have ensured the budget

meets the needs of our growing student population,” said Brianne Goertzen, chair of the board’s finance committee. “We have demonstrated resourcefulness to ensure we put students first while addressing the increased costs associated with the provision of quality public education.”

RETSD has the lowest per pupil spending amount of the city’s six school divisions, while still maintaining a high level of educational programming and services that supports student

success across the division.

Supporting quality learning means supporting the programs, services, and excellent staff, which comes at a cost, said Colleen Carswell. When it comes to per pupil spending, she explained, the reason RETSD comes in lower than anyone else is that the board looks for efficiencies year-round, not just at budget time. The division does more with less, offering programming and services to students that are in line with every other urban area school division.

Budget 2019–20 fast facts

- River East Transcona is the second largest school division in the province with over 16,500 students in 42 schools staffed by approximately 3,000 team members.
- Salaries and benefits represent 86 per cent of the division’s total budget.
- The division receives approximately 49.3 per cent of its revenue from provincial government program support, 12.2 per cent from the provincial government property tax credit, and another 34.6 per cent from the local property tax base. The remaining 3.9 per cent comes from other revenue sources.
- Based on the 2018–19 FRAME Budget Report, RETSD’s per pupil spending—\$11,788—continues to be the lowest in the Metro Winnipeg area. The provincial average is \$13,284.

YOUR LOONIE AT WORK



Salaries & Benefits: 86¢

- 58¢: Classroom instruction
- 10¢: School counselling, resource and library services
- 7¢: School administration
- 8¢: Facility operations, maintenance, and student transportation
- 2¢: Divisional administration
- 1¢: Other

Supplies & Services: 14¢

- 5¢: School supplies and materials
- 7¢: Facility operations, maintenance, and student transportation
- 2¢: Other

Rapid growth brings more students and teachers for 2019–20

This year the board had many considerations when setting the budget. Enrolment has been steadily increasing, due in part to the division booming with new housing developments.

“We’ve seen an increase in enrolment due to the rapid residential development, particularly in the area behind Costco in Transcona,” says Brianne Goertzen, chair of the board’s finance committee. “To support this growing enrolment, we’ve

included the hiring of 17.5 new full-time equivalent teachers into the 2019–20 budget.”

RETSD works closely with local developers and government officials to meet the educational needs of students moving into these new communities.

Additional staff is not the only factor the board looked at when addressing increased enrolment. Adjusting existing boundary lines is also a consideration.

The board reviews boundary lines routinely and over the last year has made some adjustments to ease enrolment at some schools. The division has also met with parents in the Transcona area to discuss long-term and short-term plans for three French milieu schools east of Lagimodiere.

“The division is growing almost as fast as the interest in French immersion programming,” says Colleen Carswell, chair of the board. “Some plans are well

underway, and other plans—such as the possible expansion of École Regent Park—are waiting until provincial funding has been secured.”

While there are no immediate plans to add a new school to the division, trustees are watching the numbers carefully and have recommended to the province a new school as part of their long-term plan.

The RETSD board of trustees would like to congratulate the graduating class of 2019, and wish them the best in the next stage of their lives.

We would also like to thank everyone in our school division who helped these students reach this milestone. Well done, everyone!



Students net medals at Skills Canada

River East Transcona has no shortage of talented students in its vocational programs, and that was clear when 25 of them were awarded medals at the Skills Manitoba Competition, held April 11 at Red River College. The eight gold-medal winners were invited to attend the national Skills Canada competition, May 28–29 in Halifax, N.S. Two RETSD students took home medals at Skills Canada: Cailia Pacle from Kildonan-East Collegiate, who won gold for Baking and Josef Weiss from Murdoch MacKay Collegiate, who won silver for Precision Machining. Congratulates to all the following Skills Manitoba medal winners from our division on their success!

KILDONAN-EAST COLLEGIATE

Gold—Cailia Pacle—Baking (Skills Canada Gold)
Gold—Conner Lavineway—3D Digital Game Art
Gold—Gerardo Rondinone—Refrigeration & Air Conditioning
Silver—Myles Hitra—Refrigeration & Air Conditioning
Bronze—Chad Besner—3D Character Computer Animation
Bronze—Shane Luff—Refrigeration & Air Conditioning
Bronze—Gabriel Miller—3D Character Computer Animation
Bronze—Favour Uzoh—Photography

MILES MACDONELL COLLEGIATE

Silver—Alistair Smith—3D Character Computer Animation
Silver—Abigail Yates—3D Character Computer Animation
Bronze—Rebecca Papadopoulous—2D Character Computer Animation
Bronze—Iris Talledo—2D Character Computer Animation

MURDOCH MACKAY COLLEGIATE

Gold—Josef Weiss—Precision Machining (Skills Canada Silver)
Gold—Samantha Cruz—2D Character Computer Animation
Gold—Alliyah Kowalson—Job Skill Demonstration
Gold—Karah Lacson—Fashion Technology
Gold—Jesse Medrano-Ramos—2D Character Computer Animation
Silver—Hannah Belec—Job Search
Silver—Elilse Hrizai—Public Speaking
Silver—Daniel Kister—Welding
Silver—Nhat Anh Nguyen—Fashion Technology
Silver—Charles Yackoboski—Workplace Safety
Bronze—Nathan Gusowski—Automobile Technology
Bronze—Aija Miller—Fashion Technology
Bronze—Grace Minsky—Public Speaking

Digital citizenship

The safety of our students is—and always will be—as important as providing them with the best education possible.

With that in mind, it's important for us to highlight our ongoing efforts to address responsible social media behaviour and digital citizenship as it relates to keeping our students, staff, and schools safe.

Earlier this year, two schools in our division were involved in police investigations surrounding social media threats. Social media threats are real threats, and we—as well as the Winnipeg Police Service—

will treat them as such.

The police have urged parents to speak to their children about the consequences of posting threatening messages online.

“Our schools are teaching students about responsible online behaviour,” says board chair Colleen Carswell. “But if we're to make an impact, it's important for the schools to work with parents to ensure this discussion continues at home.”

The consequences of making threats online toward schools, students, or staff not only include

serious criminal consequences, but educational consequences, as well, up to and including expulsion from the school or division.

We all need to consider our digital footprint before posting anything online—everything we post can be searched, copied, shared, and broadcast. Posts are permanent and nothing online is anonymous. Even when we think something has been deleted, it is impossible to completely erase it from the Internet.

What we post, comment on, like, or share can affect not only our digital reputation, but our offline

reputation, as well. This message is especially important for students to know, as the police indicated the youths involved in the threat-making behaviour did not fully understand the seriousness and impact of their actions.

“Every threat must be taken seriously and that results in a lot of resources being used, both for the police and our division,” says Ms. Carswell. “But most importantly, threat-makers face arrest and serious educational consequences, and we want a better future than that for our students.”



Trustee John Toews (seated left), Sam Fiorella (seated right), and RETSD students at the #YellowIsForHello event in January.

#YellowIsForHello

Mental health is a subject that has received a lot of attention in recent years—especially efforts to educate on the topic and reduce stigma.

River East Transcona has made progress in both areas thanks to the establishment of a Mental

Health Team, and we recently held a free event in January focused on building student resiliency and positive mental health.

Despite blizzard conditions, there was an impressive turnout, and guest speaker Sam Fiorella kept the crowd thoroughly engaged.

In 2014, Mr. Fiorella’s son Lucas took his own life after suffering from depression in silence.

Afterward, he discovered Lucas had been a great support to friends who suffered from anxiety and depression, reaching out to them when they needed help,

starting each conversation with a simple “hello.”

Mr. Fiorella decided to continue his son’s legacy and co-founded The Friendship Bench, the not-for-profit organization behind the #YellowIsForHello hashtag and the bright yellow benches that have been appearing in schools nationwide with URLs printed on them that link students to local mental health resources.

“The ‘Yellow is for Hello’ campaign is designed to encourage students to talk to each other,” says Mr. Fiorella. “Take a minute out of your day, sit, say hello, and that one hello can start a conversation that could save a life.”

River East Transcona is the first division in Winnipeg to get these yellow benches at all of its high schools. Mr. Fiorella helped the division’s Mental Health Team launch this initiative, and trustee John Toews was on hand to show the board’s support.

“We want to encourage conversations about mental health, and most importantly provide resources to students who may be struggling,” says Mr. Toews. “We hope the placement of these benches at our high schools will help to initiate some of those conversations.”

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For more information about the board of trustees, visit: www.retsd.mb.ca/BoardofTrustees