



NEWS RELEASE

Winnipeg School Division final budget enhances programs and services

March 11, 2015 (Winnipeg, MB) – The Winnipeg School Division (WSD) Board of Trustees has approved a final budget for the 2015/2016 school year. Taxpayers within WSD boundaries will see an average 3.2 percent increase, or \$38, on their property taxes based on an average residential home valued at \$171,130.

Redirecting supports to students, schools and services

- Expanding all-day kindergarten pilot by five schools for a total of nine schools (locations to be determined).
- Reducing administration costs with reduction of one superintendent position.
- Introducing universal playground access building fund.
- Strengthening Indigenous Education support with addition of a division-wide Aboriginal Elder position.

Enrichment and science

- Expansion of International Baccalaureate program.
- Three additional science laboratory assistants.
- Additional support for STEAM Enrichment Centre classrooms.
- Additional support for Sistema music partnership with Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra.

Maintaining and enhancing special needs programming and mental health support

- More education assistants for Emotionally Behaviour Disordered students.
- Anxiety program for Junior and Senior High students.
- Additional support for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder program at Senior High level.
- Additional support for Autism Spectrum Disorder program at Junior High level.

Investing in technology

- Enhanced wireless internet service in all schools.
- Live streaming Board of Trustees' meetings.

Enhancing safe schools

- Upgrading closed circuit television.
- Continued funding for school resource officers and adult crossing guards.

"Our communities spoke out in favour of expanding education through the services and programs currently being offered by Winnipeg School Division - many of which aren't available anywhere else in Manitoba," said Board Chair Mark Wasyliv. "We've committed funds to increase the full-day kindergarten pilot to nine schools, something parents have asked for and we, as a Board, support."

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The final budget approved by the Board of Trustees includes expenditures of \$387,505,400 for the fiscal period July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016. Instructional expenditures account for 81 percent of the total budget. Administration costs equal 2.8 percent of the total budget compared to the 2014 provincial average of 3.5 percent.

WSD continues to benefit from being one of the first schools divisions in Manitoba to establish a division-wide private fiber network in 2009. WSD ratepayers continue to benefit from this long term strategy as the WSD private fiber network eliminated all telecommunication service costs while at the same time enabling WSD to meet the ever-increasing bandwidth requirements associated with current instructional practices and student learning.

“Winnipeg School Division is a leader in technology and innovation in Manitoba,” said Sherri Rollins, Trustee and Chair of the Finance/Personnel Committee. “The Board recognizes that investing in technology is a top priority for both sustainable education and governance. We are pleased to continue to do so through investment from reserve funds.”

The WSD reserve fund is used for one-time expenditures without requiring additional revenues from property taxation. In the 2015/2016 budget, WSD is using reserve funds for technology upgrades and data storage, washroom renovations in four schools and renovations to accommodate Clinical Support Services.

"I'm proud of this budget and feel it reflects the uniqueness of this Board and our vision to strengthen communities, schools and partnerships," said Rollins. "The 2015/2016 budget supports our commitment to excellence in education from the early years through to graduation to prepare WSD students for successful lives."

Trustees extend their gratitude to the schools, parents, residents and community stakeholders who have met with trustees in the past couple of months to discuss the draft budget.

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