

RETSD trustees pass budget that puts students first

(March 2, 2016) RETSD school trustees have passed a \$182.7-million budget for 2016-17, up \$3.9 million from last year.

For local taxpayers, that translates into a 4% increase in school taxes, or about \$61 on a home valued at \$272,500.

“For several years running, we have received no additional funding or a very negligible funding increase from the province. This year, we received \$89,584,820 from the province and that represents a \$52,000 increase over last year. That doesn’t make much of a dent in our budget and so once again, we’re forced to turn to the taxpayer to make up the difference,” said board chair Colleen Carswell, following the March 1 budget meeting.

“We believe that providing a solid education to our children is the foundation of a strong society. And whether we have children in school or not, we all need to help pay for that education, because our students are our future.”

Some of the factors considered by the board when setting the budget were grade configurations and class compositions at all 42 schools, enrolment trends and projections, and the provincial 20K3 initiative, which requires schools to cap class sizes in kindergarten to Grade 3. As well, trustees looked at specialized instructional staff levels (e.g., music, resource, counselling) and the number of students with special needs who require additional supports.

The \$3.9 million in new spending primarily covers increased payroll costs to meet collective agreement requirements; payroll represents approximately 84% of the division’s budget. It also includes three additional teachers and two specialist teachers to meet the 20K3 requirements as well as support for a Phonological Literacy program.

The budget passed by RETSD trustees also includes the use of accumulated surplus to fund \$1 million of capital expenditures.

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