

Unprecedented and Unsustainable: Louis Riel School Division Taps into Accumulated Surplus to Bridge Budget Gap

March 15, 2023, Winnipeg, MB – At a special meeting on Tuesday, March 14, the Louis Riel School Division (LRSD) Board of Trustees approved a \$224,776,978 budget for the 2023-2024 school year. [View a snapshot of the budget.](#)

“Education Minister Wayne Ewasko labelled the 2023-2024 funding commitment as ‘astronomical,’” said Sandy Nemeth, LRSD Board Chair. “This is not only misleading but suggests LRSD has suddenly been afforded the ability to look after the needs of all learners fully and completely. The realities suggest otherwise as we continue to address pandemic related pressures and funding that for several years has not kept up to inflation, enrolment, and growing needs.”

The budget includes additional classroom staff, bringing the total to 640 full-time equivalent (FTE) educational assistants and 1,206 (FTE) teachers, including principals and vice-principals.

These additional staff will support:

- The ongoing impacts of the pandemic on learning outcomes;
- The declining mental health exacerbated by the pandemic;
- The growing enrolment that would result in growing class size if we didn't address that growth.

“The biggest challenge in designing the budget for 2023-2024 has been the enduring challenge of the last few years; balancing our response to the pressures we face with our ability to pay the cost of meeting those needs,” said Jamie Rudnicki, Secretary Treasurer.

“Louis Riel School Division continues to be progressive, innovative, and future oriented in ensuring all students remain engaged in their learning and want to be in school,” said Nemeth. “A budget that would eliminate teachers, staff, programs, and supports, especially with the additional needs coming out of a global pandemic, was not an option for the board.”

Given that the expenditures exceed the funding LRSD has received, the budget includes the use of \$2,460,697 from the division's accumulated surplus to make up for the funding shortfall in 2023-2024. Since its inception in 2002, LRSD has not been in a position where surplus funds have needed to be used to balance the budget. Unprecedented times and pressures require an unprecedented response.

“This use of accumulated surplus to make up for a shortfall in our annual funding is not sustainable and very concerning,” said Christian Michalik, Superintendent. “We appreciate the funding this year is more predictable, in that the Manitoba government is making the one-time funding provided to school divisions in the last two years permanent. However, given the impacts of the chronic underfunding that preceded the pandemic and the spiraling of pressures and needs, it is still insufficient.”

LRSD was established in 2002 after the amalgamation of the St. Boniface and St. Vital School Divisions. LRSD is in the southeast quadrant of Winnipeg and serves close to 16,600 students across 40 schools with a staff of more than 2,200 dedicated employees. The LRSD's mission is to provide a safe, inclusive, and engaging environment, where personal and collective learning are valued, and each one of us reaches our full potential.

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