



**ANSWERS to Emails received at information@7oaks.org
Regarding the Seven Oaks School Division Public Budget Meeting
on February 27, 2023**

- Q:** Hi there, I virtually attended the SOSD 2023-2024 budget meeting last night. I have heard that the reason why our division was not given the budget increase that was requested this year is because our division has not properly accounted for predicted wage increases. Is this true?
- A:** The division was given an increase of 2.1% by the province. This is not enough to support enrollment growth and cost pressures due to inflation (including wages) without significant cuts or tax increases.
- Q:** Will more money be allocated to visiting artists?
- A:** This will continue to be a school budget decision. Unfortunately, school budgets have not kept up with rising costs.
- Q:** If after-school programs are cut, what are examples of those programs?
- A:** After-school programs include things like open gym, Tech Hub and Wayfinders. The division will not cut these programs this budget.
- Q:** Can the division increase funding for immigrants?
- A:** The division provides comprehensive service to immigrants through Seven Oaks Settlement Services. These services are funded by the Government of Canada.
- Q:** Admin costs are high (principals and senior management), are there any ways to reduce that?
- A:** Seven Oaks admin costs are lower than other school divisions. Seven Oaks allocates a greater percentage of its budget to the classroom than any other Winnipeg school division. That said, the division is always exploring ways to find efficiencies.
- Q:** Are there reasonable budget reduction options?
- A:** Yes. The division is always exploring ways to improve programming and find efficiencies but the current pressures of enrollment increases and cost increases are a real challenge. In prior years the division has reduced staff and frozen budgets. At this point further reductions will have a significant negative effect on service to our children.
- Q:** Is the projected fairness in % due to SOSD not charging parents for some of the programs they provide and the cost associated to them?
- A:** Some have argued that Seven Oaks should charge parents. The Board of Trustees continues to view those costs as a barrier to participation, and a benefit to parents. The unfairness in funding this year appears to stem from the way equalization funds have been distributed. Seven Oaks isn't the only division affected.

Q: I was interested to see that there was no information provided on the cost of the non-French bilingual programs. The division is providing these services at no cost for select groups. Please advise the total cost of these programs and please provide English literacy proficiency scores for those in these bilingual programs. I am not opposed to bilingual programs which are funded by parents - not by the taxpayer. You have explained why we in this area are subject to the highest property taxes in Winnipeg. Is that fair? As a taxpayer I find this to be unfair to me as a resident in this area. Perhaps if C-94 had gone ahead there may have been a more equal distribution of monies.

A: Seven Oaks operates three bilingual programs: Ukrainian, Filipino and Ojibwe. The division is planning to offer a Punjabi bilingual program at Amber Trails Community School next year, if there is sufficient enrollment. All of the bilingual programs operate with the same or similar class sizes as English and French Immersion so there isn't an additional cost to operate them. Both the Filipino and Ojibway programs have received additional grants from outside funding sources to assist with the development of materials. There is substantial evidence that acquiring an additional language helps children succeed academically.

Re: Taxes: The division has lobbied consistently for greater fairness in education funding. This will continue to be a priority.

Q: Is there not a way to report this to the auditor general of Manitoba to seek recourse for the miscalculation?

A: This is not an avenue we've considered but it may be worth exploring.