

ISD Public Budget Input: Question & Answer Summary Document March, 2021

A record of questions submitted to the ISD email account in advance of the Public Budget Meeting on March 10 as well as those submitted via the chat function during the meeting is included in this document along with an answer to each question. Please note that similar questions have been consolidated and re-phrased and that questions answered during the [online presentation](#) are **not** included in this document.

This document has been organized into the following sections:

1. Budget Background: Questions about the funding model and budget structure
2. Enrolment: Questions about student enrolment and budgetary impact
3. Programming & Services: Questions about programs and services
4. Personnel: Questions about staffing allocations and compensation
5. Operations: Questions about maintenance, transportation, and facilities

Note: This document will be updated and re-posted as questions are received up to the March 15 deadline.

Section 1: Budget Background – Questions about the funding model and budget structure.

1. Who creates the funding model?
 - a. Answer: The funding model has been created by the provincial government's Schools Finance Branch.
2. What contributes to 'Other Revenue' and 'Other Provincial Revenue' received by ISD?
 - a. Answer: *Other Revenue* (\$341,513) includes Continuing Education, Manitoba Teachers Society President release, insurance rebates, dividend rebates, out-of-division school of choice income, and interest income. *Other Provincial Revenue* (\$945,565) includes payroll tax rebate, Early Years Enhancement Grant, Technology Education Equipment Replacement Grant, Career Development Grant, Healthy Schools Grant, and the Learn to Age 18 Grant.
3. Why has the Province capped the Education Tax levy?
 - a. Answer: Capping the education tax levy is part of the elected government's commitment to phase out education property tax over a ten-year period.

4. If property assessments continue to increase and more tax dollars are collected, will ISD have access to these funds?
 - a. Answer: No.
5. Is the Property Tax Offset Grant included in the revenue numbers presented in the proposed budget?
 - a. Answer: Yes.
6. Does ISD have an active surplus/reserve account? If so, what is the account balance?
 - a. Answer: Yes. School divisions in Manitoba are permitted to accumulate a surplus equivalent to 4% of annual budgets. As of June 30, 2020, ISD's operational surplus was approximately 3.6% or \$1,100,000. Of this amount, \$933,000 has been designated for COVID-related expenditures.
7. Does the school division have reserve or surplus funds to purchase things like school buses?
 - a. Answer: Yes. ISD maintains a School Bus Reserve account. This account is fully depleted after school bus purchases were made for the 2020-2021 school year.
8. How do expenses by each program area compare to prior years?
 - a. Answer: Expenditures in each program area increase or decrease from year-to-year depending on finalized budget decisions. Year-to-year comparison by program area will be published upon approval of the 2021-2022 budget.
9. Which program area is Continuing Education found in?
 - a. Answer: Continuing Education is found within program area 400: *Other Education*.
10. Are there proposed reductions to professional development funds in the upcoming school year?
 - a. Answer: No.
11. Has ISD deficit-budgeted in recent years or has the budget been balanced each year?
 - a. Answer: The Board of Trustees pursues a balanced budget each year. Use of surplus funds were approved in the 2020-2021 budget to accommodate a one-year extension to the lease of space for TIP programming.

12. Will items be removed from the list of budget considerations as the total possible savings exceeds the total shortfall?

a. Answer: Yes. The finalized budget will address the \$700,000 shortfall in full.

13. What steps has ISD undertaken in an attempt to secure the funds required to cover the budget shortfall? Has Government been asked to address the shortfall?

a. Answer: Yes, advocacy with government is ongoing at the local level (ISD), and the provincial level through the Manitoba School Boards Association (MSBA), the Manitoba Teachers Society (MTS), and the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS). We also encourage community members to contact government representatives directly to voice concern.

Section 2: Enrolment – Questions about student enrolment and budgetary impact.

14. Why is provincial funding going down when enrolment is essentially flat and total funding to education has increased? Why is ISD facing a reduction?

a. Answer: Though the provincial government has increased overall funding throughout the province, not all school divisions received a funding increase. And, annual expenses continue to increase beyond the pace of funding allocations.

15. What is the historical accuracy of enrolment projections at budget time compared to actual enrolment in September?

a. Answer: Enrolment projections used during the budget planning process have proven very accurate over time. And, Manitoba Education adjusts funding accordingly after attendance counts are completed on September 30 of each school year.

16. Are Pupil:Teacher ratios published with school-specific data in addition to divisional data?

a. Answer: No. Divisional PTR data is publicly available, but school-based PTR is not. However, this data is used in developing the staffing model each year to ensure equity throughout ISD.

17. When a family self-identifies their child(ren) as Indigenous, how are the funds ISD receives from the province's Indigenous Academic Achievement (IAA) Grant allocated and spent?
- a. Answer: Funds are distributed directly to school-based budgets each year based on enrolment and are for local expenditures aligned with the criteria of the grant. A small portion of the funds are retained centrally for divisional initiatives.
18. How many students access alternative education programming at TIP? Is this number consistent from year-to-year?
- a. Answer: Enrollment at TIP typically ranges between 10-15 students per year. Teaching Staff was increased for the 2020-2021 school year (from one Teacher to two) and there are currently 35 students enrolled in partial or full-time programming. This includes 18 students learning on-site and 17 students engaged in remote learning due to COVID-related medical accommodations.
19. Why is there such a difference between French Immersion enrolment numbers at high school compared to K-8?
- a. Answer: The current enrolment at high school represents the first few cohorts of ISD's French Immersion Program, which were very small in size. In fact, our first cohort of FI students will graduate from SCI in June, 2021. Enrolment has increased over time to a more stable and predictable number and is monitored closely to address program needs and student retention.
20. Will there be additional French Immersion Teachers hired at the high school level to address the increase in student enrolment? Will this allow for additional elective course offerings at high school?
- a. Answer: Yes, additional FI Teachers will be hired as needed dependent on enrolment. Additional staffing does not guarantee an increase to elective course offerings at high school.

Section 3: Programs and Services – Questions about programs and services.

21. Is there anything in the proposed budget to support the learning needs of students who have been impacted by changes to programming due to COVID?
- a. Answer: Not specifically. However, the primary focus in budget planning is the preservation of programs and services directly connected to Kindergarten – Grade 12 classrooms.

22. Why can't parents pay extra for classes that require an extra cost (e.g. Woods, Home Economics)?
- a. Answer: ISD's Board of Trustees feels strongly that all students should have access to all courses offered in schools without a cost to families.
23. How are mental health services provided within ISD's clinical services?
- a. Answer: ISD has school-based and divisional staff who provide support at the local level and also facilitate referral to community-based supports as needed.
24. Is providing mental health supports in schools a duplication of service already available in the community?
- a. Answer: The supports available at the local level are complementary to community-based supports. As needs extend beyond the capacity of school-based and divisional staff, referral to community-based mental health supports occurs.
25. Can alternative programming be offered remotely, thus eliminating the need for a rental space for TIP?
- a. Answer: Remote learning is, and can be, a component of alternative programming. Direct interaction between students and staff is required, which results in a continued need for space at the community or school level.
26. Can participant fees be raised for continuing education courses to ensure the programming is cost neutral?
- a. Answer: Yes, participant fees could be raised in the pursuit of cost neutral status. And, program enrolment (inclusive of increased participant fees) would need to be sustained over time.
27. Can towns or municipalities help with funding continuing education?
- a. Answer: ISD is not in a position to speak for towns or municipalities regarding funding, but we are aware that continuing education programming is facilitated by organizations other than school divisions in some parts of Manitoba.

28. If Continuing Education programming is removed, will school buildings be accessible for community use events and bookings?

- a. Answer: Yes. As public health restrictions allow, access to school buildings will resume consistent with ISD's *Community Use of Schools* protocol.

Section 4: Personnel – Questions about staffing allocations and compensation.

29. Is the rate of pay for divisional administration in line with the budget given less provincial funding?

- a. Answer: Yes. All school divisions in Manitoba completed a 15% management reduction exercise in response to a directive from government prior to the 2020-2021 school year. Rates of pay for divisional administration are in line with provincial numbers and subject to Bill 28.

30. Was there a salary increase budgeted for staff this year compared to last year?

- a. Answer: Yes. All salary increases are in accordance with Bill 28 as directed by government. Over a four-year sustainability period, this includes a 0% increase in year one, a 0% increase in year two, a 0.75% increase in year three, and a 1% increase in year four. Each employee group's collective agreement is subject to Bill 28.

31. Is the possible reduction to Admin Assistant Allocations spread out divisionally or does it impact only some schools?

- a. Answer: The possible reduction to Admin Assistant Allocations includes 1.5 full-time equivalent school-based staff from three of ISD's schools as well as 0.57 full-time equivalent division-based staff from the Maintenance and Transportation Departments.

32. How will the needs of students and families be met if there is a reduction of social workers in ISD?

- a. Answer: Fewer social workers is the result of a reorganization of Student Services staffing, which yields a neutral staffing complement. Student and family needs will first be addressed through school-based supports. Divisional and community-based supports will be accessed dependent on the need.

33. How will ISD's libraries and Library Clerks be supported with one half-time Library Technician?
- a. Answer: A half-time divisional Library Technician will more accurately address current and future needs. Upcoming revisions to library software and efficiency in cataloguing library materials will result in reduced need for Library Technician specialization.
34. How does reducing two social workers have no impact on the budget? The \$40,000 referenced as possible savings only accounts for the removal of AFM services.
- a. Answer: The possible reduction in expenses is directly connected to the removal of AFM services. The reorganization of student services staffing, social workers, in particular, results in a neutral staffing complement and has no budgetary implication.

Section 5: Operations – Questions about maintenance, transportation, and facilities

35. Is it possible to reduce debt for servicing and maintenance by consolidating non-school buildings?
- a. Answer: ISD currently owns two non-school buildings and leases one. ISD-owned buildings include the Transportation/Maintenance/Technology (TMT) Building and the ISD Office. Both buildings currently operate at full capacity. The property currently leased by ISD houses the TIP Program and is an item being considered for reduction in the 2021-2022 budget.
36. How many non-eligible students pay a fee to be transported in ISD? And, what is the ridership fee?
- a. Answer: Applications for bus ridership are accepted annually from families of non-eligible students and reviewed by the Transportation Department. If space is available on **existing** bus routes, non-eligible students may be approved for transportation. In recent years, ISD has provided service to an average of 150 non-eligible students per year. The fee for ridership is \$100 per student per year.
37. Can transportation costs be reduced by cutting back on transporting students who live in town?
- a. Answer: As our communities grow in size and space, many students who live in town are eligible for transportation based on the distance they live from the school. Ridership for non-eligible students is reviewed annually as described in the previous question.

***The deadline for input on ISD's proposed 2021-2022 budget is Monday, March 15 at 12:00 pm.**

***Please direct input via email to: isd@isd21.mb.ca**