

April 17, 2003

The Regina Board of Education, at a special meeting held April 17, 2003, approved its 2003 budget totalling \$137,411,816, representing an increase in expenditures of approximately \$7.35 million or 5.65% over 2002 (GST adjusted) budget levels. Following upon a 1.4% decrease in the mill rate in 2001 and a modest mill rate increase of 1% in 2002, this budget was subscribed without a mill rate increase.

In considering its options, the Board referred to its draft Strategic Plan that identifies the following priority areas:

1. Student Achievement / School Improvement;
2. Accountability / Communication;
3. School^{PLUS};
4. First Nations and Métis Education ; and
5. Facilities.

As in the past, the Board determined to adopt a sustainable, long-term planning approach to expenditure enhancements. With these guides in mind, the major expenditure areas impacted in the 2003 Budget include:

- salary and benefit increases, including teacher salary adjustments negotiated at the provincial level effective Fall 2002 (and a provision for teacher salary adjustments effective 2003-2004 school opening) and provision for support staff salary increases currently under negotiation;
- a reduction of 26.075 full-time classroom teaching equivalents and one Speech-Language Pathologist in Fall 2003 in response to enrolment decline projections;
- discontinuation of the half-time Structured Learning Classroom at Argyle School;
- elimination of one Trades position through attrition;
- the full-year costs for 15.4 itinerants put in place in Fall 2002 to provide an additional 30 minutes per week of preparation time for elementary teachers;
- incorporation of all staffing costs associated with three associate schools;
- a .3 increase in Vice-Principal allocation effective Fall 2003;
- the addition of a high school Learning Assistance Teacher;
- the addition of 5.5 Special Education Inclusionary Assistants and one Alternate Education Assistant;
- staffing and resources for Re-entry and Quiet High Programs to be opened in Fall 2003;
- staffing and resources associated with two additional Pre-Kindergarten classrooms;

- staffing and resources associated with one additional Community School designation;
- expansion of "First Steps", a Language Arts resource for Grades 1-8 that links instruction, evaluation and reporting to parents and the broader public;
- continuation of "Learning Through The Arts", a program that brings artists into classrooms linking the arts and other curricula;
- allocations of \$350,000 for the enhancement of School^{PLUS} initiatives and \$473,600 for implementation of Shared Services initiatives within the division;
- an increase in Help Desk and Computer Repair Technician support;
- continued funding for classroom and administrative computer systems, including electronic communication, supervised Internet access, and employee in-service;
- recognition of project and program expenses not previously reflected in the budget, including those associated with the Urban First Nations/Métis partnership;
- increased staffing costs associated with a reorganization of the Communications Department effective Fall 2003;
- continuation of the positions of Internal Auditor and Disability Management Coordinator;
- increased funding for continuing improvements in school facilities;
- an increase of approximately \$376,000 in pupil transportation costs due to cost-of-living increases and full-year costs of enhanced service provision levels for Kindergarten and Grade 1 students;
- a reduction of approximately \$87,000 in debt charges;
- an increase of approximately \$154,000 in utility costs attributable to rate increases, notwithstanding existing energy conservation measures and fixed contract pricing for natural gas;
- an increase of approximately \$119,000 in insurance premium costs due to tightening market conditions; and
- an increase of approximately \$434,000 in contributions to capital for future Board-approved capital projects.

The Board is confident that this budget reflects both the priority placed on the provision of quality education and the fiscal realities of the Regina community. On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank all staff members for the excellent service provided to children in our schools.

Bob Brown,
Director of Education