



Media Release

For Immediate Release: April 28, 2015

Provincial Budget Devastating for WRPS

The Government of Alberta announced its 2015 budget on Thursday, March 26th. The Board of Trustees reviewed the impact of the budget on students and staff and identified a number of critical concerns.

In 2014-2015 the Board's operating deficit is projected to be 2.6 million. As a result of the funding cuts WRPS is projecting a 3.87 million dollar budget **deficit** for 2015-2016 school year. Our 2015-2016 budget problem became more devastating when we were informed that we are unable to access our reserves without the express approval of the Minister. The Minister directed that school boards must submit balanced budgets. The Board must, therefore, cut \$3.87 million dollars from the budget. To lessen the negative impact on students the Board must use its accumulated surplus to submit a balance budget.

The Provincial Budget, however, stripped school boards of their authority to manage their accumulated surplus. "As locally elected officials, we work hard to be fiscally responsible and accountable to our communities. The Board needs the flexibility to manage that surplus to protect students and classrooms from the ups and downs in the economy. Due to the imposed funding cuts and the freezing of school surpluses, students in our classrooms are now at risk of losing programs, supports and services," stated Deanna Specht, Board Chair.

The Board of Trustees is asking the Alberta Government to remove all restrictions placed on school and division surpluses.

School boards are entrusted with the authority and responsibility to manage public funds. They are required to set priorities and budget their resources which include provincial funding, fees and other revenue. A school board's authority includes the ability to manage short and long term needs of schools through the establishment of reserves (funds saved and set aside for specific purposes).

Reserves are important to WRPS as they are used to:

- Equip staff to meet the ever-changing and complex needs of students
- Adjust resources distributed to schools due to enrolment changes from year-to-year
- Lessen the impact of funding cuts on the classroom
- Create smaller class sizes in core subjects
- Minimize cuts to staffing
- Provide current technology in schools and the infrastructure to support it
- Subsidize small schools



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To submit a balanced budget to the Minister the Board is anticipating it will have to do the following:

- Terminate 15.64 full-time equivalent Teaching Assistants
- Reduce 5 full-time equivalent Learning Support Teachers
- Reduce expenditures on services, contracts and fees by \$570,092
- Reduce Career Technology Studies funding by \$108,000
- Reduce French Immersion subsidy by \$71,165
- Reduce Counselling services by 0.45 full-time equivalent saving \$36,000
- Reduce First Nations, Metis & Inuit funding by \$120,000
- Use \$1,128,360 of reserves (must seek Minister's approval)

If the Minister does not approve the use of the \$1,128,360 in reserves the Board would have to consider cutting approximately 25 more full-time equivalent teaching assistant positions from the budget.

Without the ability to manage reserves, deeper cuts will be necessary to programs, services and supports for students and staff.

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