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For Immediate Release

Prairie South Board of Education Weighs in on “Transformational Change”

The Prairie South School Division Board of Education expressed concern today after Deputy Premier Don Morgan announced a process to study school divisions and efficiencies, the next step in the Government of Saskatchewan’s process of “transformational change.” After reviewing the announcement, Board Chair Dr. Shawn Davidson observed, “This looks like it may be the initial step towards further amalgamation of school divisions in Saskatchewan. If that is the case, it isn’t going to be good for kids, and it isn’t going to be accepted by the communities who have just managed the last round of forced amalgamations.” Davidson noted that Prairie South has just celebrated its tenth anniversary. “Bringing portions of 7 school divisions into one amalgamated division has been a decade of work for our staff and Board. It is only recently that children and families have begun to reap the advantages that a full-service division like Prairie South has to offer.”

Davidson sympathized with Minister Morgan to a degree. “I understand that the current economy is very challenging for the government,” Davidson said, “however, school divisions have been managing very challenging budgets for several years, including the current year when Prairie South is receiving less funding than last year in spite of a significant increase in students.”

Trustee Brian Swanson encouraged the Minister to examine costs and gains before proceeding with any changes to school division boundaries. “There were no savings associated with the last round of amalgamations, and further amalgamation would only increase the distance between families and those who make decisions about schools.”

Board Vice Chair Tim McLeod expanded on the theme of transformational change. “Three years ago, the education sector embarked on a collaborative plan to change student outcomes in Saskatchewan for the better. Since that time, school divisions have provided staff to do provincial work in the spirit of making Saskatchewan a better place to live.” McLeod noted that this work was based primarily on the *Vision 2020* document produced by the Saskatchewan Party. “I don’t understand how the ESSP can be seen as anything less than transformational; we are making a difference for kids and families, and changing the course now risks all of the gains we have achieved.”

Trustees expressed dismay about the prospects of moving decisions about rural schools away from rural communities. “I would think that the Saskatchewan Party would understand the importance of local voice in education,” Davidson observed. “As rural people, we are proud of our schools and of our school division, and we have absolutely no data to show that further amalgamation would be good for students or families.”

The current 28 school divisions in Saskatchewan have existed since the NDP government of the day reduced the number of divisions from 81 in 2006.

For additional information, please contact Director of Education Tony Baldwin at (306)694-1200.