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For Immediate Release

Prairie South Board of Education Responds to Governance Report

The Prairie South School Division Board of Education responded today after a review of the *Educational Governance Review Report*, the report on school division governance announced by Minister of Education Don Morgan on November 15th, 2016. The report presents three options related to the future of school division governance in Saskatchewan. After reviewing the report, Prairie South Board Chair Dr. Shawn Davidson pointed out that, "of the options presented, we don't see much alignment with what is in the best interest of rural students and families. The options presented are not connected to improving outcomes for students." Davidson agreed with Perrins' assessment that appointed boards would diminish local voice and increase government authority. "This is concerning for Prairie South."

Trustee Giselle Wilson commented on the speed with which the government was moving on their "transformational change" agenda. "The government is making decisions that will affect a generation of children and families in a matter of weeks," said Wilson. "It sounds like the government intends to make a decision only 11 weeks after beginning the process of gathering information."

The *Educational Governance Review Report* comes almost exactly 11 years after the last round of forced amalgamations by the then NDP government that established the current 28 school divisions in Saskatchewan. Davidson noted that the process of amalgamation is multi-faceted. "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 realized what a full-service division like Prairie South looks like." Davidson went on to note that the report cited boards of education 'unanimous' support for elected governance. "Each of the options provided in today's report would reduce the effectiveness of Boards to respond to the needs of local children and families."

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, and this plan is working." McLeod noted that this work was based primarily on the *Vision 2020* document produced by the Saskatchewan Party. "I don't understand how the Education Sector Strategic Plan can be seen as anything less than transformational; we are making a difference for kids and families, and it is concerning to think that the government might risk losing the gains we have achieved."

Trustees continued to express 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."

For additional information, please contact Prairie South Schools at baldwin.tony@prairiesouth.ca.