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For Immediate Release

### **Prairie South Board of Education Passes 2017-2018 Budget**

The Prairie South School Division Board of Education passed their operational budget for the 2017-2018 academic year at their regular meeting in Moose Jaw on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Board Chair Dr. Shawn Davidson observed, "This was the most challenging budget for the Board in recent years, and was made more complex because it was the second year in a row of reduced provincial funding despite experiencing enrolment growth." Although the school division received millions of dollars less from the provincial government than last year, Davidson expressed hope for the upcoming year. "We have amazing staff, and we are doing great things for children and families in our schools," said Davidson. "I know our staff will use the resources we have been provided carefully."

The 2017-2018 budget saw cuts in every area of the school division. In his report to the Board, Director of Education Tony Baldwin reported reductions that ranged from 4.2% in Instruction to 29% in Governance. Baldwin noted that despite significant reductions in Administration and Governance, the school division has been unable to build a budget that avoided impact on schools and classrooms. "The Board has been steadfast in its direction that staff who work directly with our students are the top priority. Unfortunately, the funding reduction this year is just too great to keep the impact entirely away from students and families." Baldwin reported that the school division would have fewer classroom teachers next fall and fewer consultants to support schools and learning. "Even with significant additional cuts in other areas, we will have to survive without as many staff in schools as we had this year."

Trustee Lew Young spoke in support of the maintained level of specialized services for children and families in the 2017-2018 budget. "Over the past several years, we have had to cut positions that have been in place to help children be successful," said Young. "I am pleased that we have been able to maintain focus in areas like speech and language, counseling, and psychologist support in spite of very limited resources from the province." Young commented on the Board's consultation process connected to budget planning. "Support for specialized services appears to be universal among our stakeholders."

More than 40 positions in the school division were affected by the budget, however Director of Education Baldwin said that as many positions as possible would be reduced through attrition. "Sadly, as has been the case every year since the establishment of the Education Sector Strategic Plan, some of our staff who have been great supporters of kids and families will lose their jobs," Baldwin said. He went on to express appreciation for the work of Prairie South staff members and Trustees during the budgeting process. "The work we have done together to balance a budget as challenging as this one is evidence of a growth mindset on the part of the Board and the staff," Baldwin said.

The provincial budget was presented on March 22<sup>nd</sup> by Finance Minister Kevin Doherty.

For additional information, please contact Board Chair Dr. Shawn Davidson at (306)741-5588.