Budget Understandable but Disappointing

The Government of Alberta announced its 2011 budget on Thursday, February 24\textsuperscript{th}. “The government made education a priority against the backdrop of very difficult fiscal times but it was still disappointing,” said Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools Board Chair Deanna Specht.

The 4.4\% increase to some core funding like the basic instructional grant honors the salary commitment the Government of Alberta had with teachers. Cuts to other grants results in a loss of approximately $800,000.00 of funding.

Some of the grants being cut include the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) that provided funds to encourage innovation in the classroom to improve student learning. AISI will be reduced by 50\% beginning September 1, 2011. Over the next two years the Relative Cost of Purchasing grant, Stabilization grant, Enrolment Decline grant, and Intra-Jurisdictional Distance grant will be reduced and then eliminated.

The small class size grant will be increased by 4.4\% but class size funding for grades 4, 5 and 6 will be eliminated. Class size funding will focus on K – 3 where research shows focus on the early years makes the most impact for students, and on Career Technology Studies (CTS) where student safety is important.

Schools will be hard pressed to maintain programs and services for students. “We will now begin to work with our staffs and school councils to develop the 2011 Division Budget,” said Dr. Terry Pearson, Superintendent of Schools. “Our priority is to talk with our communities and maintain the programs and services that are critical to students and their education.”

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