

Media Release



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RE: Rocky View Schools 2010/11 budget focuses on preserving classroom services

Despite having to increase teacher salaries by 2.92 percent in a budget year when provincial grants have been frozen, Rocky View Schools (RVS) will not need to make major cuts to staffing or services at the school level for the 2010/11 school year.

Presented to the Board of Trustees, May 20, 2010, RVS' 2010/11 budget will reach an estimated \$150.3 million. Seventy-two point five percent (72.5) will be allocated to schools in 2009/2010. The cost for administration represents 3.5 percent of the budget, down from 3.7 the previous year, while 7.7 percent will be directed towards Student Transportation and 11 percent for Plant Operations and Maintenance.

“Our primary goal during this round of budget deliberations was to save jobs, maintain services at the school level, and approve a balanced budget,” said RVS' Board Chair Sylvia Eggerer. “We were able to achieve these goals primarily through the infusion of \$1.1 million in a retroactive grant secured by the Minister of Education this spring for salaries owed to teachers for 2009/10 school year, and by wage freezes for all uncertificated staff.”

Eggerer explained that during the 2009/10 school year, school administrators were asked to budget for a 5.99 percent salary increase for their teachers, in anticipation that an arbitrator would find Alberta's average weekly earnings index higher than the 4.82 percent the government announced through its grant increases. Given this move, monies allocated to school boards this spring to make up for the government's initial shortfall were reserved and reallocated to schools in 2010/11.

“We anticipate that this infusion, along with a rollback to Senior Executive salaries and a zero percent salary increase for Trustees and all support staff, will help us maintain the quality education our residents have come to expect and keep people employed,” says Eggerer. “The 2011/12 school year may be a different story.”

According to Darrell Couture, RVS' Associate Superintendent of Business and Operations, monies for teachers' retroactive pay is only a one-time infusion. If the jurisdiction continues to receive zero percent in grant increases deeper cuts will be unavoidable as the jurisdiction lacks reserves to fall back on.

“This year's budget is basically status quo,” he said. “If revenues are not increased in the near future, RVS may well be forced to make deep cuts. Thus far, strong fiscal planning has allowed us to remain in a balanced position,” he explained.

Couture said to balance the budget, schools and RVS' Education Centre were asked to make, on average, a .49 percent reduction in services for the 2010/11 school year. For the average school, this equates to cuts of approximately \$11,000.