



Leadership in Learning and Life

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## MILL RATE INCREASE TARGETS CAPITAL EXPENDITURES

The Prairie Valley Board of Education will increase its 2008 mill rate by 1 mill to address the critical need for capital spending across the division. The rate will increase from 21.75 mills in 2007 to 22.75 mills in 2008.

Chair Rod Luhnig said, “We must address our infrastructure needs by taking a planned and sustainable approach. Even though we are in good shape on the operating side, the Board felt a modest increase in the mill rate would provide us with the funds we need to tackle some immediate concerns and plan for the future.”

School facility upgrading, improving energy efficiency and capital expansion are top priorities for the Board. “We need to maintain and enhance the learning and teaching environment in conjunction with school facility upgrading,” Luhnig said. “We are experiencing pressure of growing enrolments in some communities, buildings are aging and construction costs continue to escalate.”

The provincial budget included funding for major capital work at Balcarres School, one of several facilities which need immediate attention. Luhnig said, “We were very pleased to see the Government of Saskatchewan significantly increase its spending on K-12 capital in this year’s budget. But, we need a commitment from the Province in the very near future to allow us to proceed with the significant upgrades and expansions required at other facilities like Greenall High School in Balgonie, White City Elementary School, Vibank Regional School and Lumsden Elementary School.”

In its mill rate deliberations, Luhnig said the Board had to consider a number of operating cost pressures such as salary increases, higher fuel prices, selected program renewal and expansion costs, and tuition fees to and from other school divisions. “We are not clear yet how the St. Augustine Separate School Division that is scheduled to begin providing education services in the Milestone attendance areas in the 2008-09 school year, will affect us. We are anticipating a negative financial impact because our taxable assessment will decrease.”

Jan Chell, Director of Education for Prairie Valley School Division said, “Our 2007-08 fiscal year runs to the end of August so we will be carefully managing our current funds, while at the same time preparing our 2008-09 budget around the learning needs of our students in the 2008-09 school year. With prudent management, we will be able to continue to make progress on new program initiatives and to support the momentum of programs already in place.”

Pathways to Literacy, which rolled out last fall, is a prime example of a program that will be supported again this year. This initiative provides support to students and teachers, challenges principals and teachers to develop and achieve school-based literacy goals and provides data to track progress. Pathways to Literacy engages parents and communities in literacy activities to ensure students are reading at or above their grade levels and provides a solid foundation for future learning.

Beginning in the 2008-09 school year, the Division will work on a phased renewal of Practical and Applied Arts equipment in schools and a phased expansion of band programming. "An ongoing process of equipment replacement is necessary to the success of Practical and Applied Arts courses, like the welding curriculum," said Chell. "Students need the proper learning environment, the equipment and resources to develop the skills generated by courses such as mechanics, woodworking, food studies and fashion design."

*Prairie Valley School Division serves more than 8,000 students in 38 schools throughout south-eastern Saskatchewan. To support its vision of leadership in learning and in life, and through a commitment to shared values, the division strives to ensure a high-quality education that provides students with the tools to reach and exceed their potential.*

For more information:

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