



## A Message from the Prairie Spirit Board of Education

The Prairie Spirit Board of Education is joining with other school divisions and the Saskatchewan School Boards Association to highlight how proposed changes to education legislation (Bill 63) may impact our education system. We want to ensure that we are providing the best possible learning opportunities for your children, our students.

This document also provides an update regarding Prairie Spirit's budget and the potential school division boundary changes that may affect Prairie Spirit.

Prairie Spirit's Board of Education is grateful for the dedicated staff in Prairie Spirit who demonstrate their passion and commitment to student learning every day.

### Education funding for 2017/18

With a reduction in provincial funding, inflationary costs, and other factors, Prairie Spirit is estimating a budget shortfall of **\$4.5 million** for 2017/18.

Overall, provincial education funding has been reduced by approximately \$55 million for the 2017/18 school year, a reduction of almost \$500 per student on average.

Prairie Spirit will balance its budget for 2017/18 with a commitment to avoid reductions that directly impact the classroom, recognizing that any reductions will diminish classrooms supports. This commitment was established by the Board of Education in October. The Board is very pleased to confirm that there will be no overall reductions throughout the Division to the staff assigned to schools.

The 2017/18 budget will be balanced through staff reductions in the Facilities, Human Resources, Finance and Transportation departments.

In addition to these reductions, every budget line has been carefully reviewed and analyzed, resulting in limited flexibility in all budget areas, including staffing needs that may arise.

The Transportation department will implement new economies and methods that will reduce costs. In the Facilities department, preventative maintenance and renewal costs and funding will be aligned with current accounting practices to ensure the benefit of the expenditure extends over the useful life of each project (this is referred to as capitalization in accounting terms).

Prairie Spirit has had to make difficult budget decisions over the past several years. Reductions of over \$5 million in administration were made in 2015; teacher and educational associate staffing reductions totaling \$3 million were made in 2016. Staffing levels in all areas of the school division have been reduced over the past several years. The Board of Education directed the use of \$5.5 million in reserve funds to balance the budgets over the past three years.

School boards are currently seeking clarity regarding the provincial government directive to cut compensation costs by 3.5%. This anticipated compensation reduction, along with reductions in many other areas, will further burden educational staff.

Despite these challenges, Prairie Spirit is regarded as a highly effective and efficient school division, with strong student achievement results. The Board is committed to ensuring ongoing student success in Prairie Spirit School Division.

The Board will submit its 2017/18 budget to the Ministry of Education by June 30.

### Changes to education legislation: Bill 63

We have heard from our parents and school communities that community voice and locally-elected boards are important for public education. However, the provincial government has recently introduced changes to provincial legislation that will limit school board autonomy and the board's ability to make decisions for education in our communities.

The proposed Bill 63, *The Education Amendment Act, 2017*, will allow the provincial government to make day to day decisions in the operation of school divisions. However, Boards of Education are better positioned to understand and listen to local concerns and make decisions to reflect local needs.



Please help us send a strong message to the Government of Saskatchewan in support of publicly-funded education and locally elected Boards as decision makers in our school division. Contacting your local MLA is one way to show your support for our strong public education system in Saskatchewan.

A list of MLAs can be found at the following [link](#).

### School division boundaries

Following the Educational Governance Review undertaken by the Ministry of Education earlier this year, the Minister of Education has directed the creation of four provincial committees to investigate possible governance and business changes for school divisions.

Although the Minister announced in March that there would be no major school division boundary changes, the province has initiated discussions to review school division boundaries for Saskatoon and area, Regina and area and the north.

It is unclear what these changes might be and how they would impact Prairie Spirit communities. The government has tentatively announced that changes will be presented by May 31.

We will share information with our learning communities as it is available.

The Board appreciates the dedication of the many school division leaders, including the Prairie Spirit Director of Education and the Division's Chief Financial Officer, who are involved in this important provincial committee work.