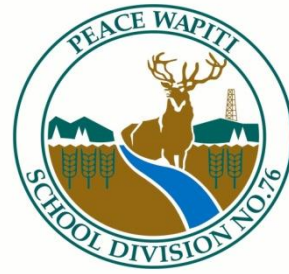


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PRESS RELEASE

Deficit Budget Necessary to Maintain Quality Programming in PWS Schools

Grande Prairie, Alberta, May 20, 2010 –

The Peace Wapiti Public School Board, as recommended by Minister Dave Hancock, has made decisions so that recent shortfalls in funding from Alberta Education will not impact programming decisions for next year. Peace Wapiti Public School Board Chair, Stacey Pelland states, "The Board and central administration worked through the budget process with the goal of maintaining the staff and site budget allocation models that were in place for the 2009-2010 school year. Our objective was to maintain school staffing levels based on the existing staffing allocation models. While we have been successful in achieving the goal, the result is an instructional operating deficit of \$400,000 and a total operating deficit of \$1,125,000. Although we are uncomfortable with an operating deficit, we felt it was necessary to maintain the level of programming and support currently provided to our students."

Peace Wapiti will continue to provide quality programming at our schools and will continue to meet the Alberta Commission of Learning guidelines and staff K-3 at 17:1, 4-6 at 23:1 and 7-12 at 25:1. Peace Wapiti will continue to maintain the current staffing levels for certificated staff. There will be changes, but they will be driven by changes in student enrollment and distribution, not budget decisions. These actions support the Minister's request to Boards to maintain staffing levels while he works through the issues caused by the current economic downturn.

The total operating deficit of \$1,125,000 is in the area of Transportation (\$500,000) and Instruction (\$400,000). The Budget will be balanced by using operating reserves to cover the operating deficit; however Peace Wapiti will not be able to continue with this practice, as the majority of their operating reserves will be depleted. Mr. Rowe, Superintendent of Schools, noted, "This is the first time in the history of Peace Wapiti School Division that we face a decline in funding." The decline is a result of a loss of enrollment of about 2.4% and shortfalls in funding from Alberta Education.

Ends