

November 25, 2019

PRESS RELEASE RE: HORIZON FALL 2019 BUDGET UPDATE

The Board is supportive of the government's commitment to maintaining education funding during these difficult financial times and appreciative of the government's acknowledgement that school boards are in the best position to determine how local resources are deployed. While the provincial budget had no reduction in the base instruction rate, the Board is cognizant that the maintained funding translates into less funding per student given that Alberta's K-12 education system has annual student enrollment growth of 15,000 students.

On November 25, 2019, the Board approved the fall 2019 budget update. The decrease in the jurisdiction's 2019/2020 operating budget is primarily due to decreases in student enrollment, the elimination of three provincial grants, and an increase in insurance premiums of more than \$500,000.

As system leadership prepared the fall 2019 budget update, the priority was maintaining front line staff in schools (both teachers and assistants for high need students). Approximately \$190,000 worth of reductions have been made at the system level, including the elimination of one senior leadership position effective January 1, 2020. System leadership roles and responsibilities have been redistributed with Robbie Charlebois taking on the majority of the Human Services duties and Terri Duncan transitioning to Inclusive Learning.

Of the \$967,458 deficit in the fall 2019 budget update, \$567,841 is coming out of board reserves to maintain school staff for the school year, while the remaining \$399,617 is due to schools opting to expend reserve dollars to enhance additional instructional supports for students.

Although Horizon provides some of the best class size averages in the province (25 teachers more than are required to meet class size), we agree with the province that “the class size grant’s targeted funding may be better put to use to support other priorities to improve student learning... and that classroom complexity and teacher quality... are more cost-effective strategies for improving education standards.” (AB ED, 2019)

The Board remains committed to our small rural schools and the teachers and support staff that ensure our students are successful. A sincere thank you for all you do for Horizon’s students. We know that Horizon's student success is a result of staff efforts to deliver the best possible outcomes for our children. Together, we will continue to ensure our students get the best possible education within the new fiscal reality.

For more information on Horizon’s budget, visit www.horizon.ab.ca/board.php



Marie Logan
Board Chair