



NEWS RELEASE

Wednesday, December 6, 2006

Budget focuses on opportunities for students

SASKATOON, Dec. 6, 2006 – The Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools Board of Education is moving forward with a financial plan to ensure students continue to have the opportunities and resources they need to achieve academic excellence.

This year the division's \$115-million operating budget focuses on delivering new tools for learning to students and teachers, accounts for increases in staff salaries and allows for rising day-to-day operating costs.

"Our board remains firm in its goal to provide a comprehensive Catholic education for our students," said board chair Jim Carriere. "We are mindful that this must be done as efficiently and effectively as possible."

In this year's operating budget, resources are provided to enhance student learning in two key areas. The math program for elementary school students has been enhanced, emphasizing professional development of teachers and new classroom teaching tools. As well, this budget allows the division to continue its focus on excellent early literacy practices, as teachers continue to explore and implement the best strategies to teach children to read.

To support this work, the board voted at its regular meeting on Monday, Dec. 4 to increase Saskatoon's property tax mill rate by 2.8 per cent. This means that the tax bill of a \$100,000 home will increase approximately \$2.46 per month, or \$29.55 annually. The rate takes effect Jan. 1, 2007, with taxes payable in June.

The operating budget, passed in September, covers a fiscal year that began Sept. 1, 2006 and will conclude Aug. 31, 2007. Structuring the fiscal year in this way better reflects the operating year for school divisions and was mandated by Saskatchewan Learning. This year marks a transition to the new budget timeline. In future, Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools will set its operating budget and mill rate in June for the upcoming fiscal year.

On Monday, the board also approved mill rates for the Humboldt, Biggar and Saskatoon Rural communities. In Biggar and Humboldt, the mill rate in each community decreases 5.2 per cent as the division works toward the goal of a uniform mill rate. The Saskatoon Rural mill rate remains unchanged. The provincial government requires that newly amalgamated school divisions must have a uniform mill rate for all communities by Jan. 1, 2008.

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Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools has 44 schools and approximately 15,200 students in Saskatoon, Humboldt, Biggar and Viscount. The school division strives to educate the whole child, with students growing academically and spiritually.

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