



Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools

News Release

Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools 2006 operating budget focuses on resources for classrooms

SASKATOON – Tuesday, May 2, 2006

Today, the Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools Board of Education voted to approve an operating budget that will allow it to keep resources in the classroom where students will benefit most.

“As we work with all of our partners, our goal as a board is to deliver a top-quality Catholic education for our students in the most efficient and effective manner possible,” said Board Chair Jim Carriere.

In working toward its goal, the Board of Education received significant assistance this spring from the provincial government, which made changes to student funding rates. Urban school boards in Regina and Saskatoon now receive the same basic rate per student as all other provincial school divisions. Urban boards had pressed their case with the provincial government for several years and were pleased that the change was made this year. This change means an additional \$1.3 million of revenue for Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools in 2006.

The division’s \$70,305,906 operating budget will see individual schools receive a six per cent increase in their on-site budgets. As well, the overall budget sees the board planning responsibly for construction costs of the long-awaited Bethlehem Catholic High School by putting nearly \$700,000 into capital reserves.

In order to fund these priorities, the board has chosen to increase the property tax mill rate by 2.8 per cent. While normally this would mean an increase of almost \$30 on the tax bill for a \$100,000 home in Saskatoon, the increase will be offset by the provincial government’s Education Property Tax Credit. With the rebate, the 2006 education property taxes on that same \$100,000 home will decrease by \$55.

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To date, the provincial government has said the Education Property Tax Credit will be limited to 2005 and 2006. Carriere noted that this short-term grant program does not reduce ongoing cost pressures faced by board of education. The Board is hopeful that further changes in how school board grants are structured will build on the work the provincial government has already done to address inequities. A long-term arrangement to adequately fund education will ultimately reduce the board's reliance on the local tax base.

“We are an efficient, well-run school division that has not sacrificed our faith-based distinctiveness as we have responded to continuous fiscal pressure,” Carriere said. “We look forward to continuing our work with the provincial government on these issues.”

Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools was nonetheless disappointed to see that there was significantly reduced funding from the provincial government for renovating existing Kindergarten – Grade 12 facilities in 2006.

This is the first budget passed since amalgamation occurred on Jan. 1, 2006. The Greater Saskatoon Catholic division now includes the Catholic school divisions that previously operated separately in Saskatoon, Humboldt, Biggar and Viscount. As well, new Catholic divisions were formed last fall in rural areas just outside of Saskatoon and they too are part of Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools.

The board today approved mill rates for the additional communities it now represents. In Biggar, the mill rate will decrease seven per cent and in Humboldt it will drop five per cent. These changes are occurring as the provincial government has mandated that mill rates within amalgamated school divisions become uniform within three years.

It is important to note that the operating budget approved today covers the period from Jan. 1, 2006 to Aug. 31, 2006. A new fiscal year will begin on Sept. 1, 2006 and run until the end of August 2007. Changing the fiscal year to run from September to August better reflects the operating year for school divisions and was recently mandated by Saskatchewan Learning. The Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools board will pass a new operating budget in September for this new 2006-2007 fiscal year.

Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools has 44 schools and approximately 15,500 students in Saskatoon, Humboldt, Biggar and Viscount. The mission of the school division is to assist parents and the local Church community in the formation of students in heart, mind, body and spirit.

For more information, please contact:

Donella Hoffman
Communications Consultant
659-7077

