

PRESS RELEASE FEBRUARY 20, 2009

PRELIMINARY 2009/2010 BUDGET

The Board of Trustees of the Portage la Prairie School Division has approved a preliminary budget for 2009/2010. The Board will be consulting with school advisory councils as well as seeking public input. The budget will then be reviewed and finalized before the March 15, 2009 deadline.

The preliminary budget is set at \$31,001,290, which represents an increase of \$1,070,714 (3.6%) over 2008/2009. This includes program enhancements in a number of areas, allowances for fixed cost increases and salaries. There is allowance for the purchase of a new school bus, increases to the technology budget, upgrades to fire alarm systems and a reduction in student fees. There will be no draw from the Division's accumulated reserve which will remain at an estimated \$875,000 (2.9% of expenditures).

Provincial support payments will fund 65% of the Portage School Division's revenues (72% in 1992) with most of the balance being raised through the Special Levy. Provincial support includes the Education Property Tax Credit and the Tax Incentive Grant, both of which reduce the local tax levy.

The proposed budget will maintain the tax rate at 20.26 mills. The 2008 mill rate was well below the provincial average of 24.0, and out of 35 divisions, only seven have a lower mill rate. The proposed 2009 mill rate would continue to be one of the lowest in the province.

The division is awaiting arbitration hearings with the Portage Teachers' Association whose collective agreement expired in June 2006. The CUPE collective agreement expires in December 2009. Salaries and benefits account for approximately 83% of the division's operating expenditures.

The Board will meet with representatives of the School Advisory Councils and members of the public on the evening of February 24. The meeting will

be held in the multi-purpose room at the Prince Charles Building of PCI starting at 7:30 P.M.

As well, the Board invites public response to the preliminary budget, either in written form or by presentation at the February 26, 2009 regular Board meeting.

Individuals or groups wishing to make a budget related presentation to the Board on February 26 must contact the School Division Office no later than noon on February 26, and an appointment time will be set. Each presentation will be limited to a maximum of 10 minutes.