



SUPERIOR-GREENSTONE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Superior-Greenstone DSB Passes Balanced but Unsustainable Budget

MARATHON, Ontario – In spite of a substantial reduction in expected funding from the Ministry of Education, the Superior-Greenstone District School Board (SGDSB) has approved a budget for 2006-2007. The reduction in ministry funding required the board to draw \$242, 328 from the Working Funds Reserve.

The Superior-Greenstone District School Board anticipated that the declining enrolment in all 10 of the communities they serve would have an impact and made \$1.5 million in cuts prior to the release of the ministry funding formula in late June. The board was shocked to learn that in addition to the \$1.5 million in cuts they had already made, they would have to find an additional \$1.5 million in savings! Due to the late release of the funding formula, the board was forced to cut 15% from school and department budgets.

What was unexpected in 2006-2007 was the ministry's realignment of funding to provide new School Foundation grants and salary funding enhancements. These changes were financed by "notational adjustments" to reduce the geographic circumstances grant and the demographic component of the learning opportunity grant. The Northern Boards receive a higher portion of their funding from such grants and as a result saw more significant reductions than other boards.

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The impact of the additional funding cuts will be felt in the areas of professional development for staff, limited travel, reduced face to face meetings which are critical to reduce isolation in such a geographically vast board. Other areas of curtailment include the cancellation of the Tutors in the Classroom program, reduction in the availability of resources for schools and students and a severely limited computer budget.

The board budget was passed just days prior to another devastating announcement, that is, Norampac Inc, Red Rock Division will be laying off approximately 300 employees. Clearly the declining enrolment will continue to be an issue as almost every other community in the board has faced a similar shut down/closure in the past year. The senior administration team is already planning for next year and if there are no changes to the funding formula they will have to consider further staffing cuts, the elimination of the full-day Senior Kindergarten program, reductions in administration, the elimination of French instruction in the Early Years, the elimination of the Literacy Lead teachers, the elimination of the Early Intervention program. It may also have a huge impact on the ability of the board to support the extra staffing required at the secondary panel in order to provide pathways to graduation for students.

Director of Education Patti Pella states, "We realize that in a declining enrolment situation we need to do things differently but we cannot lose sight of students. Equal opportunities for a quality education are the right of every student in Ontario and we are finding it increasingly difficult with the changes in the funding formula to maintain the excellent programs and services that we have had in the past."