



Rainy River District School Board Passes Balanced Budget More funds to be released by Province

(June 21, 2004) – The Rainy River District School Board has approved a 2004-2005 Balanced Budget based on the 70% of the provincial education funding released. The remaining 30% is focused funding for Special Education, Good Places to Learn, Literacy and Numeracy, and Success for Students. Once the balance of funding is released, additional staffing and supports will be put in place for the 2004-2005 school year.

New for 2004-2005 is the Primary Class Size Reduction Grant, the Transportation Formula, the energy retrofit initiative and all benchmarks in the funding formula have been increased by 2%. The Board is estimating to receive \$96,000 for the primary class size reduction grant. These funds will be used to address class size in our elementary schools. The average class size of the board's elementary primary classes for the 2003-2004 school year was 19.31. Projected class size for the 2004-2005 school year is 18.9 students. The Energy Retrofit grant of \$100,000 will assist in projects the Board has planned for upgrades to Rainy River High School, Huffman School and Robert Moore School.

Special Education is a major budget concern for the 2004-2005 school year for the Board. The Board has put their trust in the Ministry of Education to follow through with support for students with special needs. As of today, special education funding in the amount of \$980,000 has not been released. This budget does not reflect any of the supports that would be provided when the funding is released.

The Board is appreciative of the new transportation model that has been introduced. However, the model is being phased in and the Rainy River District School Board will not receive its full \$850,000 in funding. The 2004-2005 school year will continue to see a \$400,000 deficit in transportation as the funding increase was capped at the maximum 12% or \$200,000.

“I would like to thank the stakeholders who submitted letters of input into the budget,” commented Laura Mills, Superintendent of Business. “All letters contained very real concerns, some of which have been addressed in the budget by continuation of programming. Unfortunately, not all could be addressed this year, but will be kept for future discussions.”

Although the Board was faced with budget challenges this year, a few of the programs to improve student success which have continued are: Reading Recovery, Speech Language Program, Four Living and Learning Classrooms, Staff Development, Appointment of two new teaching vice-principals, anti-bullying programs, mentoring programs, and supports for small schools continue.

Warren Hoshizaki, Director, states, “ We appreciate the fact this government is working together with school boards in partnership to ensure success of students. However, we need to address several funding issues unique to North Western Ontario and look forward to continued discussions with the Minister.