

Three school board execs in line for up to \$31,500 in raises

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The Rainy River District School Board will consider an executive compensation program at a special meeting Wednesday (1 pm, Fort Frances Education Centre). If adopted, three of the top four board executives may see significant pay raises.

The program is the outgrowth of an effort started last year by the Ontario Public School Boards Assoc., which worked with Mercer (Canada) Ltd., an independent consulting firm that specializes in executive compensation, to develop a template each board can adapt to meet its unique situation.

If the board's policy committee approves the plan, it will be sent on to the Ministry of Education, which has final authority on the matter.

Under the plan the board is considering, the director of education's salary will be in the \$192,000 - \$203,000 range. In 2016, the director was paid \$179,712.

The top three executives behind her, the superintendent of business and two superintendents of education, would get a pay range of \$157,000 to \$166,000. In 2016 superintendent of business Laura

See 'School board', page 7

School board

From page 1

Mills was paid \$165,038, while the superintendents of education were paid \$149,480 each.

"Actual annual increases paid to executives may be less than the proposed maximum rate of increase and individuals may receive more or less than the proposed maximum rate of increase, considering a variety of criteria, including their tenure in the designated executive position," notes a 15-page outline.

The total increase cannot exceed five percent of the base salary for the four positions, or about \$31,500.

The province does seem to be on board with the whole program, but has put itself into an awkward position because of about five years of executive wage freezes. (Director of education Heather Campbell was paid \$177,000 in 2012.) The wage freeze is likely to mean most school boards will end up spending the full five percent maximum, or close to it, for the next several years.

That flies in the face of the province's stated intention to keep total education cost increases at about one percent per year.

Process questioned

The process the board used to consider the program has drawn criticism.

The board was required to invite public feedback to the proposal, and to report on that feedback to the province when it submits its proposed program.

The board sent memos to school councils, advisory

committees, union reps, the Student Senate, and schools about its proposed program, which it posted for review on its website. The memos, and the posting of the program outline, occurred on December 18, the Monday of the last week of school before the Christmas break. Feedback was due by January 16, the Tuesday of the second week of classes after the break.

The executive compensation program was not discussed, or reported on, at regular meetings of the board during 2017.