



School District No. 67 (Okanagan Skaha)

MEDIA RELEASE

(May 2, 2006)

At a regular public meeting today, the Board of School Trustees of School District No. 67 (Okanagan Skaha) passed its 2006-07 budget at the level provided by the Ministry of Education plus local revenue. The provincial operating grant is \$49,235,207 and the total 2006-07 budget is \$52,019,502.

Our district's provincial operating grant for 2006-07 is estimated to decline by \$438,896 from 2005-06 as a result of a projected enrolment decline of 96 students. After preparing 2006-07 budget estimates required to maintain current service levels for the reduced enrolment, funding of over \$700,000 was determined to be available for enhanced services. These available funds resulted from a number of savings including a lower average teacher salary due to retirements and the completion of a multi year financial requirement to meet our financial obligations under Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).

Each year the Board of School Trustees approves a consultative process to support the budget development. Consultation for the 2006-07 budget included a public meeting and individual meetings with employee groups and the school planning councils/parents advisory councils. Recommendations received from the budget consultation exceeded \$2.5 million. The Board has also considered the introduction of Bill 33, Education (Learning Enhancement) Statutes Amendment Act, 2006 which was given first reading in the legislature on April 27, 2006. This legislation will establish new requirements to support class size and class composition services in the district. Based on information gathered at the consultation meetings, consideration of goals and initiatives of the Board, and the introduction of Bill 33, the following additions have been approved by the Board of School Trustees for the 2006-07 budget:

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| Custodial replacements and absence coverage improvements | | \$ 70,000 |
| Increase 8-month grounds position to 12 months | | 15,000 |
| Reinstate clerical hours (elementary and middle) | 0.71 FTE | 25,000 |
| PSS clerical support | | 14,000 |
| Class size and composition support | | 235,000 |
| Library services – increase at small elementary schools | 0.53 FTE | 40,280 |
| Teacher staff for grad portfolio | 1.143 FTE | 86,900 |
| Increase speech and language pathologist | 0.2 FTE | 15,200 |
| Occupational therapy/physical therapy services | | 20,000 |
| Payroll district staff – temporary increase | 0.2 FTE | 8,800 |
| Employ three FTE TOC's @ \$5,500 additional cost | | 16,500 |
| Counselling – enhance middle school to secondary ratio | 0.652 FTE | 49,552 |
| District Goals – increase numeracy (0.2) and social responsibility (0.152) | 0.352 FTE | 26,752 |
| District Goals – implement nutrition policy | | 5,000 |
| Flex funds (school funds to support school goals) | | 107,052 |
| Implementation funds (special education in-service) | | 7,000 |

The salaries and wages of school district employees are expected to increase in 2006-07 within the bargaining mandate established by the provincial government. The 2006-07 budget as approved does not provide for these contract settlement costs increases. As these contracts are settled, it is expected additional funding will be provided by the Ministry of Finance. As well, the recent award by arbitrator Vince Ready for teacher-on-call

wage increases has not been provided for in this budget. The teacher-on-call wage increases will, therefore, need to be considered for the final budget in February 2007.

Following the approval of the budget, Board Chair Connie Denesiuk indicated that she was pleased with the improvements that this budget will provide to the district. “The addition of over \$700,000 will help to improve programs and services for students and staff,” Denesiuk said. “The additions will allow us to improve class sizes, provide support for student integration, and restore some custodial and clerical service in addition to supporting the district’s goals.”

Denesiuk also commented on the district’s financial management practices. “We are a well managed district which has created efficiencies and cost savings over the years,” said Denesiuk. “Still, we know that we cannot provide for all of the added costs that are imposed on us – such as the Vince Ready award for teacher-on-call wage increases or the anticipated contract settlement increases. That funding definitely needs to come from government.”

As in previous years, the district’s funding will be adjusted to recognize September 30, 2006 actual enrolments of regular and special education students. The Ministry of Education has reserved funds for this purpose and has advised that districts will gain or lose funding in the final recalculation depending on the adequacy of this reserve and any changes in final enrolments. Our district expects our funding will be increased in this recalculation and has included \$280,000 in budget revenue in anticipation.

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Contact Persons:

Connie Denesiuk
Chair, Board of School Trustees
(250) 494-8631 (h)

Larry Little
Chair, Finance and Management Committee
(250) 492-0024 (w)

Frank Regehr
Secretary-Treasurer
(250) 770-7706 (w)

| | FAX | | FAX |
|----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|------------|
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