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School boards receive \$40 million more for school maintenance

New funding formula focuses on student needs

Edmonton... School boards will receive an annual increase of \$40.3 million in plant operations and maintenance funding as part of a new funding formula based on a per-pupil allocation.

"This boost in funding will go a long way to helping school boards cover their utility costs and making sure schools are well maintained and in good working order," said Dr. Lyle Oberg, Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

School boards will receive \$23.5 million in new funding from September 1, 2005 to March 31, 2006, which translates into a \$40.3-million increase annually. With this \$40.3 million increase, school boards will receive a total of \$391 million annually for school maintenance.

"This is great news," said Maureen Kubinec, President of the Alberta School Boards Association. "We flagged the need for additional funding to the Minister and we're delighted he's responded. These additional resources will greatly assist school boards in ensuring our school facilities meet the needs of our students."

The funding boost complements the introduction of a new formula for allocating plant operations and maintenance dollars that will be based mainly on the number of pupils and less on factors such as space utilization. Funding previously was based on a utilization formula that did not recognize the diversity of school facilities in the system. Refinements to the new formula may be made based on consultation with school boards over the coming year. Under this new formula, all school boards will receive an increase of at least five per cent, with most receiving more.

"Per-pupil funding puts all school boards on a level playing field by focusing on the needs of students. It is fair, simple and straight-forward," said Oberg.

Plant operations and maintenance funding is calculated based on the following rates:

Number of Kindergarten-Grade 6 students	x	\$696
Number of Grade 7-9 students	x	\$658
Number of Grade 10-12 students	x	\$661

The formula incorporates the class size recommendations from the Alberta Commission on Learning. As such, the highest per-pupil funding rate is for the Kindergarten to Grade 6 category, where class sizes are typically smaller.

The formula includes flexibility for all grades, allowing additional space that is needed for mild and moderate special needs students. The number of students with severe special needs are multiplied by a

factor of three to account for the additional space requirements.

Over and above the base per-pupil funding, similar to the original formula, supplemental funding has been provided to boards facing great sparsity and distance between their facilities. In an effort to offset low enrolment levels, additional funding has also been provided to eligible small schools by necessity.

School boards will receive details of their plant operations and maintenance funding in the coming week.

- 30 -

Media enquiries may be directed to:

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Backgrounder

The new formula

Per-pupil funding

School boards will receive a specific amount of funding per-pupil, as follows:

- Kindergarten to Grade 6 \$696 per-pupil
- Grade 7 to Grade 9 \$658 per-pupil
- Grade 10 to Grade 12 \$661 per-pupil

The per-pupil rate takes into consideration the specific facility needs of particular grades, as well as the class-size guidelines from the Alberta Commission on Learning.

Severe special needs

School boards will receive three times the per-pupil grant for each student with severe special needs. This recognizes the fact that additional space is required for smaller classes to meet the needs of students with severe special needs.

Sparsity/Distance/Travel

Additional funding is provided to school boards that are a certain distance from a major urban centre, recognizing the additional costs of business for remote boards and the additional travel time required by maintenance staff.

Small Schools by Necessity

Additional funding is provided for small schools by necessity in area where no alternative schools are available with the same programming. Small schools by necessity receive funding based on an assumed population equal to 85 per cent of the school's capacity. For example, a school in this category with a capacity of 300 but an actual enrollment of 100 would receive funding as if the enrollment were 255.

Total funding under the new formula will increase to \$391 million in 2006-07.

The old formula

The old formula provided funding according to the following four factors:

- The area of school space operated by a school board
- Utilization rate - school boards with a utilization rate over 66 per cent received additional funding based on their utilization rate
- Sparsity and distance for remote school boards
- Travel time for school boards with remote facilities

Total funding under the old formula for this year was budgeted at \$351 million.

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