

Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting

June 20, 2017



Budget 2017-2018 will add staff by running deficit, dipping into surplus

Palliser Regional Schools will dip into its accumulated operating surplus to make up about a \$715,000 deficit in its 2017-2018 budget.

At its regular meeting Tuesday, the Board of Trustees passed a budget that projects revenue of nearly \$94.6 million and spending of \$95.3 million. Both numbers may change once all school fee information is collected. The provincial deadline for fee information is Sept. 15, 2017, but Palliser is working toward finalizing the fee information by June 30.

The budget is based on enrolment projections of 7,519 students in Grades 1-12 and early childhood services enrolment of 700. While the ECS projection is down by about three per cent, Grade 1-9 enrolment is expected to grow by three per cent. Enrolment is forecast to remain static in Palliser's high schools which are moving to the High School Redesign funding model. Enrolment to Palliser Beyond Borders online and outreach is generally unpredictable until the fall.

Staffing levels will rise division-wide with 487.9 full-time equivalent (FTE) teaching positions and 451 FTE non-certificated staff, both an increase compared to this year.

Some of that growth is related to the addition of Horizon Elementary School, a new faith-based alternative program set to open in southwest Calgary this fall. Increases in support staff include about \$280,000 toward educational assistants to support student needs.

In addition to staffing increases related to enrolment increases at various schools, the board voted to increase the budget by \$215,000 toward two FTE teachers, with those teaching hours to be distributed among schools with declining enrolment. The board called this "bridge funding" for one year, giving the schools an opportunity to continue to offer programming and seek innovative ways to increase student enrolment.

Trustees had offered similar budget support during the 2003 BSE crisis, which devastated southern Alberta's beef industry and led to a dramatic decrease in enrolment in several rural schools.

To offset some of the projected deficit, the budget reduces Palliser's professional development. While teacher and site-based PD allocations are unchanged,

the reduction will affect programs such as induction and mentorship and lead teacher cohort, and associated substitute teacher costs.

Average Palliser teacher compensation, which includes salary and benefits in 2017-2018, is forecast to be \$107,500.

The budget document includes several new categories to outline school fee categories. In keeping with new provincial legislation, Palliser's instructional supplies and materials fees have been eliminated. Fees charged for hot lunch, special events, student travel and other activities are outlined in the budget document.

While there are no salary increases in the new teacher agreement, Palliser was projecting "grid creep" of about \$700,000. Those are increases due to teachers and support staff as they increase in years of experience. Funding from the provincial budget does not cover grid creep.

The budget includes board-funded capital spending of \$910,000 for four new school buses, four replacement vehicles for the Palliser fleet and \$75,000 for classroom furniture and \$30,000 for technology upgrades and replacement.

The replacement of air exchange roof-top units and associated upgrades at Central Office, deferred from this year's budget, is included at a cost of \$250,000.

The board will submit a letter to Alberta Education seeking ministerial approval for the deficit budget and urging the department to rethink how education is funded. While the provincial budget included funding for enrolment growth, it did not include any increases for inflation, such as the grid creep. Trustees discussed how the use of surplus funds is not sustainable over the long term.

The budget document reflects a projected operating deficit for 2016-2017 of \$600,000, which will also be covered out of accumulated operating surplus.

At Aug. 31, 2017, Palliser expects to have an accumulated operating surplus of \$3.82 million, down from \$4.53 million a year earlier.

With the planned deficit in 2017-2018, the accumulated operating surplus will decline to \$3.12 million. That equates to the cost of operating Palliser for

about eight days.

Palliser had capital reserves of \$408,000 at Aug. 31, 2016. With planned capital purchases, such as buses, technology and school furniture, the capital reserve is expected to be about \$64,000 by Aug. 31, 2018.

The trustees also expressed concern with how onerous the province's new fee reporting requirements are on staff, with schools being expected to predict and estimate costs associated with every field or sports trip or other activity in advance. For example, if a school fails to budget for a trip to a provincial championship tournament in advance, the team won't be able to collect fees at that time for students to attend.

The budget document will be posted on [Palliser's website](#) once the school fee information is finalized.

Board supports use of Our School survey by any schools that want it in 2017-18

A student survey tool tested out by two Palliser schools this year provided valuable insights and a few surprises, said the principal of one of the programs.

Lloyd Boody, principal of Calgary Christian Secondary School, joined the board to share his experience using the Our School survey with his Grade 7-12 students. Formerly known as Tell Them from Me, the survey gives school staff local student results, and a comparison to national norms from years of school participation across the country.

Boody said the results affirmed much of the work the staff does at the school, and provided some "a-ha moments" that challenged assumptions about the school's strengths. As the school's new principal, the survey results "vaulted" his understanding of the student experience.

Director of Learning Jason Kupery said the response at Calgary Islamic School Akram Jomaa Campus was similar. The AJ school serves Grade 1-12, but the survey was administered only from 4-12.

The survey results can be incorporated into the Alberta Education Accountability Pillar, replacing the Alberta Education survey. One key difference, Kupery said, is the student results can be available to schools two days after administering the survey. Pillar surveys are conducted in February with results coming out in May. Our School surveys can be administered at a time of the school's choosing so student data could be available early in the school year to be acted on immediately.

Boody said the survey is only for students and a school would still need input from staff and parents. Another consideration is that the number of customized questions a school can add is limited.

The school division can add two questions as well, Kupery said.

The division's cost for the survey service would be \$600

per participating school per year, with Alberta Education covering the other \$600.

The board passed a motion to pay for the survey tool to be available to all Palliser schools that wish to use it on a one-year trial basis in 2017-2018.

Draft action plan approved toward Psychological Health and Safety standard

The board reviewed and approved a draft action plan toward improving the psychological health of Palliser staff and students.

The plan is based on work done by a committee of Palliser staff, representing a cross-section of employee groups. The committee met first in March 2017 to learn more about Canadian Standards Association's Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace standards and met again in May to discuss next steps. Palliser principals and vice-principals participated in a mini-workshop on the CSA standards June 7.

The working group identified key areas of improvement as communication, equitable opportunity for all, growth versus fear, work-life balance and central services.

In response, the plan maps out objectives over the next four years, including more consultations with staff about communications needs, more professional development activities for all employee groups, and supports for work-life balance.

Strategies include creating definitive guidelines for use of work-related email and phone calls in evenings and weekends; reducing travel time for staff, administrators and trustees; and continued use of the Guiding Minds survey tool. The survey was used as part of the organizational review.

Palliser's adoption of the CSA standard was the second recommendation in the organizational review report.

The CSA work has been led by Directors of Human Resources Ryan Brennan and Mike Nightingale and Director of Learning Jason Kupery. Brennan and Kupery have been invited to present on Palliser's CSA work so far at a Canadian Association of School System Administrators conference next month in Halifax.

Admin procedure on school fees reflects new provincial legislation

The board reviewed and approved Administrative



Procedure 502 School Fees. The procedure has been amended to reflect Bill 1: An Act to Reduce School Fees, which eliminates instructional materials and supplies fees starting in 2017-2018. The province has also introduced new reporting requirements of all remaining fees charged to parents.

Initial search for Secretary-Treasurer will be done in-house

Palliser Secretary-Treasurer Wayne Braun is transitioning to retirement. The board directed the Human Resources department to begin background work on recruiting a replacement.

Acting Superintendent Dr. Garry Andrews suggested the recruitment process start now so that a list of potential candidates could be ready for a new superintendent to review.

Braun is set to retire Sept. 1.

Locally developed courses approved

The board approved a series of courses developed by Calgary Public Schools for use in Palliser schools. The options include Design Thinking for Innovation; Instrumental Jazz; Film and Media Art; and Journalism.

Palliser Opening Day event Aug. 30

Palliser staff will come together Wednesday, Aug. 30 for an opening day celebration. New this year, the recognition of five- and 10-year employee service will occur in schools, leaving more time to honour service of 15 years or more. Instead of awarding "Lunch on Central Office" to some school staffs, the trustees plan to visit each of their schools with muffins and coffee early in the new school year.

Opening Day had been held on the Thursday before students return to classes for the past several years. The move to Wednesday is in recognition of an Eid holiday, celebrated in the Islamic faith.

Three former students will be honoured with induction to the Palliser Wall of Fame.

Early Friday dismissals made permanent in Palliser's Picture Butte schools

The board voted to approve early Friday dismissal times for Picture Butte High School and Dorothy Dalgliesh School on a permanent basis.

The schools moved to an earlier dismissal Fridays for the 2015-2016 school year following a consultation and voting process for parents.

The division's Administrative Procedure 111 School Year Calendar requires that a follow-up survey of parents be taken after a two-year pilot of shortened Fridays.

Parents were overwhelmingly in favour of continuing the schedule.

New policies approved; work part of addressing organizational review

The board approved 13 new policies following its policy review process. Another 11 were approved in principle pending review by Palliser's legal counsel for review.

The approved policies will be posted to the Palliser website once the new formatting is accommodated through the website content management system.

Approved were:

- Policy 2: Role of the Superintendent
- Policy 4: Trustee Protocol
- Policy 5: Planning Cycle Long-Term Strategic Plan
- Policy 6: Managing Board of Trustees' Annual Plan
- Policy 8: Monitoring and Evaluating the Superintendent
- Policy 10: Board Committees
- Policy 11: Appeals and Hearings Regarding Student Matters
- Policy 12: Appeals and Hearings Regarding Teacher Matters
- Policy 13: Psychological Health and Safety
- Policy 16: Safe and Caring Learning Environment
- Policy 17: Student Achievement
- Policy 18: School Year Calendar
- Policy 21: Vehicle Use Policy

Approved in principle, pending legal review were:

- Policy 1: Role of the Board of Trustees
- Policy 3: Role of the Trustee, Chair, Vice Chair
- Policy 7: Monitoring Board of Trustee Performance
- Policy 9: Board Operations
- Policy 14: Trustee Accountability
- Policy 15: Progressive Discipline
- Policy 19: Student Transportation
- Policy 20: Alcohol Purchase
- Policy 22: Off-Duty Conduct
- Policy 23: School Closures
- Policy 24: Policy Making

As part of the policy review process, some existing policies will need to be rescinded.

The policies can be found online in PDF format on the Palliser website at <https://www.pallisersd.ab.ca/board-of-trustees/policy-review>. They are labelled "first draft."

Acting Superintendent Dr. Garry Andrews referred to many of the policies in giving his monthly update of the response to the organizational review.

Additionally, Andrews shared a potential role



description for the ombudsperson (recommendation 6), based on an Edmonton Public Schools position. The board deferred discussion of the ombudsperson role to a special meeting July 6.

He said the recruitment firm facilitating the search for a superintendent concluded three open houses in Lethbridge, Vulcan and Calgary. Representatives of the firm, Boyden, will meet with the board at a special meeting July 6 to provide an update on the search.

Palliser international program gives local students cultural understanding

Director of Learning Tom Hamer presented the board an update on Palliser's growing international program.

Highlights this year include:

- A third contingent of Brazilian students visited Palliser for Semester 1, attending Noble Central School, Coalhurst High, Kate Andrews and Picture Butte high schools.
- The number of full-time students enrolled from other countries continued to grow, with the vast majority attending Palliser schools in Calgary.

- Short-term student visits ranged from one week to three months. All attended schools in Coaldale. The students were from Japan and China. Additional educational assistant time was provided to support the short-stay students in Grade 4 at Jennie Emery Elementary.
- Palliser now has a database of 80 homestay families.
- Program development continues in China, Spain, Germany and Vietnam.

Hamer, who oversees the international program, said he's noticed the impact of the program on his own children, who attend Jennie Emery Elementary School and R.I. Baker Middle School. Both schools have welcomed children from China.

As a result of the connections with students from China, his children now pay more attention to news from China and references to Chinese culture. The benefits to Palliser students are many, as they gain cultural awareness.

Families who have provided homestay have made deep connections with children, who truly become part of the family, he said.

Special meeting: July 6, 2017. Have a great summer!