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## **Chinook Board meets with Area MLA's to Discuss Education Finance**

Members of the Chinook School Division Board met on February 9 with Southwest MLA's Lyle Stewart and Wayne Elhard to discuss concerns about the possible impact of the upcoming provincial budget on education.

Previously, the Board had responded publicly to indications that there may be reductions or no increases to funding for Government Ministries. In Chinook, the largest percentage of costs is with people. If, for example, government were to provide the same revenue to Chinook as in 2009-2010, this could result in a \$2.2 million revenue shortfall. In human terms, this could mean a loss of 25 staff positions. A reduction in services and options for our students and in our communities would be the inevitable result.

The meeting on February 9 offered MLA's and Board members a chance to share their respective views. MLA's Elhard and Stewart are both members of Treasury Board, a key financial committee. They explained the rigorous process involved with reviewing budget proposals submitted by all ministries and agencies, including Education. While recognizing that a well supported education system is an important social responsibility, they stressed that government is dealing with a potential 20% decrease in provincial revenues.

MLA's Stewart and Elhard agreed that Southwest Saskatchewan has unique issues arising from the wide dispersion of schools and therefore experiences extraordinary costs involved with providing transportation and services.

Both groups agreed that the meeting had been productive and committed to meeting on a regular basis in the future. Chinook Trustees reaffirmed, regardless of budget outcomes, their commitment to supporting teachers and staff to provide quality educational opportunities for their students.

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