

# Prairie Spirit faces \$7 million funding shortfall for 2015/16

## Budget Facts

Prairie Spirit School Division is facing a funding shortfall of approximately **\$7 million** (or 6% of the overall budget) for the 2015/16 school year.

**The shortfall is the amount of funding from the province compared to the cost of maintaining our current levels of programming and services for Prairie Spirit students.**

The shortfall is greater than the amount predicted and foreshadowed in the information letter sent to parents prior to the release of the provincial budget.

Prairie Spirit's 2015/16 funding increase of \$3.6 million covers the cost of the provincially-negotiated teacher salaries, leaving the school division with the same funding as last year. New costs, such as increased enrolment, contractual obligations and inflationary costs, are not covered with additional funding.

Prairie Spirit's funding shortfall and inequities began in **2012** when the new provincial education funding model came into effect. The complex formula does not recognize some of Prairie Spirit's operating costs, while providing funding to other school divisions that is not available to Prairie Spirit.

Prairie Spirit is funded significantly lower per student when compared to other similar school divisions. The highest funded school division in the province receives \$4,000 per student more than Prairie Spirit. In fact, Prairie Spirit is one of the lowest funded school divisions in the province.

It is understandable that school divisions are funded differently based on a variety of factors. As a result, the funding amount per student will vary from school division to school division. However, the current funding variance between Prairie Spirit and other similar school divisions is too great and this is not right.

## Capital Funding

It is important to distinguish between one-time capital funding and operational funding:

- Capital funding is used to build new schools, to renovate and expand existing buildings and to accommodate our growing student population.
- Operational funding is provided directly for student learning.

**Capital costs are not associated with Prairie Spirit's \$7 million funding shortfall.**

## Prairie Spirit Reality

Prairie Spirit's operational practices, staffing practices and expenditures are similar and often below those of other school divisions in the province. With a funding shortfall of \$7 million, Prairie Spirit is funded well below other school divisions.

Over the past two years, Prairie Spirit has made staffing and programming cuts totaling more than \$2 million.

The Board of Education used \$3 million of limited reserve funds to balance last year's budget, with the assurance that the funding model would be adjusted to address significant inequities.

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## Advocating for Our Students

The Prairie Spirit Board of Education has consulted with the Minister of Education, Ministry officials and our local MLAs over the past three years to advocate for equitable funding for our students.

Despite this extensive advocacy for our students, no changes have been made to address the inequities in Prairie Spirit's funding.

It is both disheartening and disappointing that our local MLAs paid for full-page advertising to support the government rather than advocate for our students to receive equitable funding.

## Impact on Our Students

Last fall, the Board of Education identified its priorities for preparing the budget. The priorities include: maintaining a strong focus on improving student and adult learning, retaining staff and maintaining current class sizes.

The \$7 million funding shortfall will challenge Prairie Spirit to maintain our graduation rates, literacy and math achievement results and the success of our First Nations and Métis students, all of which are among the highest in the province.

If you are concerned about Prairie Spirit's funding shortfall, you may wish to voice your concern to your local MLA, or to:

[Brad Wall](#)

**Premier of Saskatchewan**

premier@gov.sk.ca or 306-787-9433

[Don Morgan](#)

**Minister of Education**

minister.edu@gov.sk.ca or 306-787-0613

*For more details, please visit Prairie Spirit's budget website:*

[budget.spiritsd.ca](http://budget.spiritsd.ca)