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For Immediate Release

EICS Board Passes Difficult Budget for 2011-2012 Year

Sherwood Park, AB - Elk Island Catholic Schools' (EICS) Board of Trustees approved the 2011-2012 school year budget at its April 27, 2011 meeting. The Operating Budget for the upcoming school year will be \$56,132,050, which includes a deficit of \$694,025. In order to cover the deficit and balance next year's budget, the Division must draw upon all remaining operating reserves.

Challenging factors affecting the budget include decreases in government grants, declining enrolment due to demographics, a lack of instructional reserves and a continued lack of predictable, sustainable funding under the province's Renewed Funding Framework.

The situation was further compounded as EICS complied with Minister Hancock's May 2010 request to not lay off teachers. At that time, EICS Board and Senior Administration made the difficult decision to drain operating instructional reserves in favour of maintaining staffing levels in the 2010-2011 school year.

The Board recognizes that the Division's greatest strength is our staff – the dedicated people who serve our students and schools on a daily basis. While our people are a core value for EICS, in an effort to deliver a balanced budget next year, some staff reductions will be necessary. EICS anticipates the loss of approximately 30 teaching positions, some of which will be taken care of through attrition. In addition, school and department budgets will be reduced for 2011-2012.

"Our financial situation is dire," said Board Chair, Tony Sykora. "We have sorted through the budget, leaving no stone unturned to identify even more cost-saving opportunities. Our priority is to minimize the impact on the classroom and to maintain quality Catholic education for our students while being fiscally responsible. The dollars have been stretched as far as they can go."

"When we reviewed the provincial budget announcement in February, we knew this day would come," said Dr. Chris Diachuk, Superintendent of Schools. "We knew we could not possibly absorb a \$4.9 million projected budget shortfall and maintain programs and services at the same level as in previous years."

In spite of these changes, we will need to continue to work collaboratively and cooperatively. The Board and Senior Administration will continue their efforts to bring political attention to the inequity of the provincial Funding Framework and the negative impact it continues to have on our Division.

Trustees expressed appreciation to Senior Administration for their hard work to accomplish what they were asked to do: to present a balanced budget. The 2011-2012 Division Budget will be available on our website at www.eics.ab.ca under Division-Reports and Publications in the near future.

EICS, part of Alberta's publicly funded education system, is committed to developing educational opportunities in the context of Gospel values. EICS is dedicated to providing quality, faith-based learning environments to students of any background and faith, where their skills are nurtured and celebrated by dedicated, caring staff.

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