

Budget 2020-21 Questions & Answers

(Please refer to the *Budget 2019-20 Questions & Answers* and the *Budget 2018-19 Questions & Answers* for more information.)

Q: If the Province says we aren't compliant with the 15% management cut, what will we do?

A: It is our feeling that we are compliant. We eliminated an assistant superintendent in our current budget which represented a significant portion of our total management expenditure. Furthermore, we are significantly below the administrative cap set by the province. We are allowed to spend 3.38% on divisional administration this year and we are only spending 2.86%. However, if for some reason the Province determines that we are not compliant, we would work with them to identify where we might make the reduction. The Board would then decide what to do with the additional savings generated by such a reduction.

Q: What is the division doing with the budget to help prevent online bullying?

A: The division is committed to supporting students, schools, and communities to address all forms of bullying, including that which occurs online. While this is not likely an area which requires significant budget investment, it does require ongoing attention. Like all divisions, we are aware that online bullying is becoming more pervasive. It is likely occurring within our schools and in the evenings and weekends away from school. We continue to educate students, staff, and parents about online bullying, safe internet use, and digital citizenship. We respond to any online bullying quickly and take these situations very seriously. In fact, a common step in our response is notifying local law enforcement that may help with in-school response and deeper investigation into alleged incidents of bullying. We continue to refine our protocols and procedures in response to best practices for dealing with online bullying.

Q: Why are we keeping \$400,000 in surplus – shouldn't we spend this money on our students before amalgamations occur?

A: A \$400,000 accumulated surplus at the end of the current school year would represent a 2% of our annual operating budget. Divisions are permitted to go as high as 4%. A healthy surplus is needed to allow us to deal with uncertainties or unexpected expenditures. If we have additional maternity leaves, buses requiring engine replacements, or a significant extended snowfall before the end of this school year, our projected surplus could drop dramatically. If we do realize our projected surplus, it would allow us to address infrastructure items that we are deferring such as additional school buses or maintenance issues.

Q: Why does single billing result in more revenue for PWSB?

A: Typically, school divisions bill First Nation communities based upon multiple pupil counts during the year. Any variability in student numbers results in changes in funding. Having a single pupil count on September 30 removes variability and assures us consistency in funding for the full school year.

Q: Has the board of trustees considered combining or redesignating schools?

A: The Board has had general discussions over the years regarding combining or redesignating schools but never anything that has been seriously pursued. We know that discussions in 2008 regarding divisional restructuring were challenging and divisive for our communities. Also, there is the possibility that the Province may give direction regarding divisional and school restructuring as part of its Education Review. Consequently, this is not something that we want to pursue.

Q: Why are we spending money to convert to Windows 10, aren't we a Google division?

A: Our division is transitioning to an online Google environment for many of our software applications. However, it will take time before all our hardware is ready for a complete transition. We also have yet to determine if it is reasonable and appropriate to make a complete transition. We still have a healthy mix of Windows-based desktop computers, servers, laptops, and other devices and Chromebooks which run the Chrome operating system. Also, we still have several applications that require a Windows operating system. The division still uses software and third party apps which require Windows. The Chrome operating system likely will work fine for students but we need to retain the Windows operating system for teacher and divisional use. It is likely that we will require both the Windows and Chrome operating systems going forward.

Q: There is no money in the proposed budget for Edwin – does this mean our school division is not continuing the pilot?

A: We are still exploring options to sustain the Edwin project. There have been discussions with the Edwin representatives and will be additional discussion at the Board level.