



# PRESS RELEASE

**The Seven Oaks School Board has renewed its appeal to the Province of Manitoba for increase equalization support in school funding in a letter to the Education Minister Peter Bjornson, Premier Gary Doer and area MLA's.**

The Seven Oaks School Board is facing a draft budget with a 7% spending increase. Even though it has controlled expenses and has the lowest cost per pupil in Winnipeg Seven Oaks has the second highest mill rate due to its limited commercial tax base.

“Unless the province can provide greater fairness in its funding formula this budget will severely impact our tax payers this year and next” said Seven Oaks Board chair Bill McGowan. Seven Oaks \$8,648. cost per pupil is the lowest in Winnipeg, well below the provincial average expenditure of \$9,401. yet its mill rate is 26.8 mills compared to the average provincial mill rate of 23.6 mills. Seven Oaks trustees have actively lobbied the provincial government for changes to the funding formula to benefit divisions like Seven Oaks that have limited commercial assessment.

The 7% expenditure increase is driven by:

- costs associated with opening the new West Kildonan Collegiate and reopening Edmund Partridge Community School as a middle school.
- cost associated with growing enrolment.
- 15 additional teaching positions devoted to class size reduction in the early years and the new high school physical education credits.
- 15 additional education assistant positions to serve special needs students.
- rising fuel, utilities and maintenance costs.
- a \$40 per pupil increase in school budgets to reduce the cost to parents of their children's participation in school programs.

“We need to provide our students with the educational opportunities they need to succeed in the twenty first century” said Bill McGowan.

Last year Seven Oaks received an increase in provincial funding of 5.2% enabling it to add teaching positions, respond to increased enrolment and still limit its tax increase to less than 2%. Without further improvements to the funding formula Seven Oaks tax payers could see a tax increase of .7 mills this year and 1.4 mills next year. “We could end up in the awful position of having the highest tax rate in Winnipeg even though we have the lowest expenditure per pupil” said McGowan. “That just isn't fair.”