



May 26, 2023

Dear Chinook families and staff:

As the 2022-2023 school year comes to a close, we want to thank all parents, caregivers and staff for their work to support students across the division. We appreciate the support of local school communities for our learning initiatives and all aspects of our children's development.

We also wanted to give parents and staff a funding update to keep our school communities informed. We have met with our School Community Councils, municipal leaders and school administrators during the school year and the Board of Education has continued to advocate for provincial government funding to support the needs of all Chinook students. The Board continues to prioritize students while working through some very difficult educational funding times. Unfortunately, as we are working through our 2023-2024 budget, it continues to be apparent that we do not have the financial resources to support students as we have had previously.

Since the 2016-2017 school year, the division has had to make over \$10 million in reductions and use reserves to offset a lower level of funding from the province. To clarify the decreases in funding:

- In the 2015-2016 school year, Chinook had 5910 students in the division and received \$85 million in educational funding.
- In the 2023-2024 school year, Chinook expects to have 5964 students in the division and we have received \$82 million in educational funding. While the Government of Saskatchewan is noting record funding, this difference means we are receiving \$683 less for each student in Chinook than eight years ago.
- Over the last 8 years, according to the Government of Saskatchewan website, inflation has averaged over 2% per year, which means goods and services are approximately 20% more expensive than in 2015.
- Since 2015, the division has made \$10 million in reductions that impacted every area of the division: transportation, staffing, maintenance, student supports, administration, board governance and facilities. With that level of cuts, we cannot provide the same level of services and support for students as we did eight years ago. Any future reductions would continue to directly impact students and will not solve year after year of underfunding.
- By the end of the next school year, we will have used 65% of reserves over three years to offset the chronic underfunding by the province. Every year we have a deficit that is mainly from two areas: transportation and staffing.
- In 2013, Saskatchewan was near the top of per student funding compared to other provinces. Ten years later, we are now near the bottom, and students and staff are paying the price for the diminishing investment in education.

- Alberta and Manitoba have recently made large investments in education, hundreds of millions of dollars, in support of their students. Saskatchewan needs to prioritize investing in education to meet the present and future needs of our students.

We know that southwest parents, families and businesses, continue to support the province through your education taxes, which have increased. Unfortunately for our school communities, we're receiving millions of dollars less in funding in 2023-24 than eight years ago, even though we have more students and inflation making everything more expensive. Every southwest family has experienced the impact of inflation with increased utility rates, insurance costs, wage increases, higher food and gas prices along with record vehicle/bus prices. Our school buses are 25% more expensive to buy than one year ago.

In March, the board received \$400,000 of new funding (0.5% increase) for 2023-24 and will make the decision to use approximately \$3.5 million of reserves to once again offset the insufficient funding. We project our reserves will run out by the 2025-26 school year, so this will not be sustainable if we continue to be underfunded. Unfortunately, this could lead to even further reductions that would have an impact on every student, school and community.

While these are very challenging times for our budget, we remain committed to supporting the success, wellbeing and safety of all students in Chinook. Our Board trustees will continue to advocate for sufficient and sustainable funding, locally and provincially.

Along with this letter, we have included an infographic that gives a visual representation of the situation that our school division is currently facing. We ask that you take some time to look at the facts and figures, share with other community members and please reach out to your MLA and the Minister of Education to let them know your concerns.

Please make your voice heard and help our Board let the Government of Saskatchewan know that public education is an important and worthwhile investment that deserves sufficient and sustainable funding. Let's truly focus on growth, by reinvesting in our children.

Sincerely,



Kim Pridmore
Chair, Chinook Board of Education

Please feel free to contact the Government of Saskatchewan and local MLAs with your concerns:

Premier of Saskatchewan - Hon. Scott Moe
Minister of Education - Hon. Dustin Duncan
Swift Current MLA - Hon. Everett Hindley
Cypress Hills MLA - Mr. Doug Steele
Wood River MLA - Hon. David Marit
Lumsden-Morse - vacant

Premier@gov.sk.ca
minister.edu@gov.sk.ca
everettmla@sasktel.net
steelemla@sasktel.net
mlawoodriver@sasktel.net



THE FUNDING GAP

Budget 2023-24

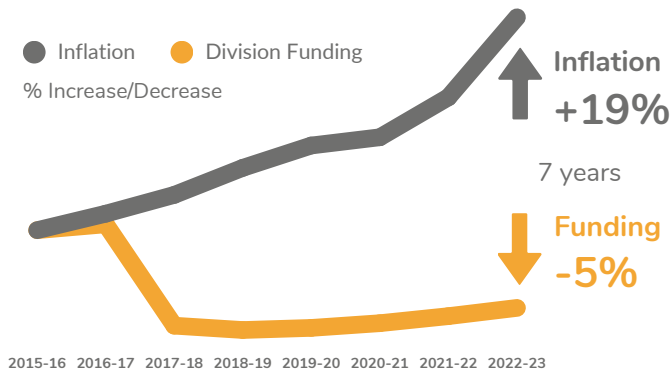


Where did your Education Taxes go?

Chinook is receiving 5% less funding over the last 7 years, despite an increase in students.

Operational Funding vs. Inflation

2015-2023



2015-16 ~~\$660~~ 2022-23
We receive ~~\$660~~ less per student than in 2015-16.

2015-16 2022-23
If funding kept pace with inflation, we would receive **\$2,620 more** per student.



Increase in operational funding **0.5%**



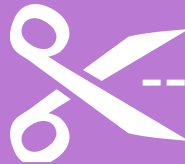
Projected budget shortfall **\$3.5 million**

Insufficient Funding

2023-2024

Division Reductions

2015-2023



- Senior Administration
- Board Governance
- Maintenance & Facilities
- Technology
- Transportation Staffing
- Student Services
- Curriculum & Instruction

\$10⁺ million in cuts since 2015



Chinook will use more than **\$10 million** from reserves to cover the annual deficit over 3 years

At this pace, by 2025-26

\$0 reserves

We'll have no reserves left to offset chronic underfunding, resulting in further reductions, including in our classrooms.

Annual Deficit

2021-2024

Rural School Division

Challenges

Chinook is funded **80¢** for every **\$1** needed to provide Transportation



Fuel cost increase since 2021



Cost to purchase a bus went up by **25%** in 1 year

In 2012:

Saskatchewan was 1st among the 10 provinces in per student funding



In 2023:

Saskatchewan is quickly falling behind other provinces in their investment in education



Provincial Funding

2012-2023