

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 53 (OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN)
BOARD OF EDUCATION

NEWS RELEASE

The following is a brief summary of Provincial Government financial decisions that will impact School District No. 53 (Okanagan Similkameen) during the 2009-10 school year.

The Annual Facility Grant (AFG) has historically been provided to school districts to maintain as well as make modest changes to building structures. The district had been receiving \$571,000 annually to repair or replace roofs, HVAC, boilers and other mechanical systems in addition to supporting small renovation projects. After the government's fiscal year end on March 31, 2009 AFG payments to districts were suspended, therefore no AFG funds have been received since that time. Government then announced in August that the discontinuation of funding would be for one fiscal year. It is unclear when and if funding will recommence in the future. This lack of funding will hamper the district's ability to move forward carbon neutral and green initiatives to meet the 2010 provincial deadline. Of greater concern is the ability to continue the ongoing maintenance and repairs for the district's building facilities. School District No. 53 hires only short-term, temporary project employees with AFG funds. Therefore, no CUPE employees will be laid off as a result of this funding change.

The basic per pupil education grant has remained the same for 2009-10. However, even with lower enrollment, increased expenses present budgetary challenges for the Board. One such example is the recent increase in MSP premiums, and another is staff contractual increase requirements. The move to HST may also have a negative impact as many education-related items were previously exempt from Provincial Sales Tax. Although the government has indicated they will attempt to mitigate this issue, no announcement has been made as to what form this might take.

Transportation (bussing) funding has not been adjusted for many years resulting in changes to the district's bussing routes and schedules as it is impossible to maintain previous levels of service given the current economic reality the district is facing.

With all these changes, the Board of Education was pleased to be able to effect reductions while presenting a balanced budget for its 2009-10 school year, while ensuring support for students and teachers in the classroom remains at a high level.

June Harrington, Chair
School District No. 53 (Okanagan Similkameen)

September 16, 2009