



News Release

RDCRS staff impacted by a \$1.3 million reduction

For immediate release – April 2, 2020

On Saturday, March 28, the Minister of Education announced a funding reduction to school jurisdictions by a total of \$128 million, which will be redirected to support the province's COVID-19 pandemic response. Due to the unprecedented situation related to COVID-19 and reduced service requirements needed for at-home learning, Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools (RDCRS) will see temporary funding adjustments in transportation, as well as a reduction in the base educational grant.

On Tuesday, March 31, the Deputy Minister of Education notified our division that funding has been reduced by \$1.3 million for this school year.

The Board of Trustees and Senior Administration spent the first part of this week working to determine where the reductions would have the least impact on student learning and how to best protect our employees during these times.

"We are disappointed that the government has dictated that we lay off these valuable staff members, who are directly involved in supporting student learning, even in this new temporary model of online classrooms. We worked hard to keep these staff employed as long as possible, but we really wish we had not been forced into taking this action," said Board Chair, Anne Marie Watson with Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools.

To best support at-home learning of over 10,480 students and meet the budget reduction realities, the division formulated a three-phase layoff process. Yesterday, the division informed staff of the following layoffs:

- Phase 1: 60 school bus drivers laid off, effective March 31.

News Release

- Phase 2: 35 support staff whose responsibilities have been reduced in the new model of at-home delivery of learning, to be laid off effective April 30.
- Phase 3: 250 support staff to be laid off effective June 1. We anticipate that educational assistants and librarians will be temporarily laid-off in this third phase. With the changing variables that seem to be happening daily, we are unable to be more specific at this time.

In order to ensure the largest number of staff are able to continue educating and supporting students for a longer period of time, our division looked into other areas to meet the unexpected budget reduction. These measures included eliminating substitute teacher bookings and implementing a spending freeze on school budgets.

“This was disappointing news to us because two weeks ago Alberta Education initially promised that funding would continue as status quo for the rest of the school year. We developed an innovative approach to student learning involving all staff, such as educational assistants reading or supporting students with online assignments,” said Interim Superintendent of Schools, Kathleen Finnigan at Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools.

“This remains a very difficult process as we know that each person affected by temporary layoffs is a valued member of our school division. We know the level of caring and commitment they have for our students. We want to emphasize that these reductions in no way diminish the work that they do, the connections they have made with our students and the support that they offer to our families and school communities.”

Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools serves over 10,480 students in 21 schools in Red Deer, Blackfalds, Sylvan Lake, Rocky Mountain House, Innisfail, and Olds. It also supports the learning of over 600 students in a Home Education Program. The Division is committed to serving children and parents with a complete offering of learning opportunities delivered within the context of Catholic teachings and within the means of the Division.

News Release

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