

All Employee Email

February 29th, 2012

Dear Selkirk College Employees,

In my most recent budget update on Feb. 20th, I indicated that the challenges presented by a previously projected structural deficit of \$502,000 would be made much greater due to anticipated directions from Government to find additional savings.

With the release of the 2012-13 provincial budget on February 21st, I can confirm our projected deficit for next year is now calculated to be just over \$1 million. Developing a balanced budget under these conditions is a challenge on its own but to make matters even more difficult, addressing this increased difficulty must be completed in what is now a compressed time frame. We are required to deliver a balanced budget for 2012-2013 by the end of the current fiscal year. The plan must indicate not only how we will find the administrative and operational efficiency savings to meet recent Government directions, but also find the additional savings that attend to our structural deficit caused by successive years of flat Government grant allocations. Government has also been very clear that they intend to hold the colleges more accountable for achieving across the board institutional targets for full time equivalent (FTE) student delivery in the coming year. We are also still awaiting clarity around grants from the Industry Training Authority to deliver our Foundation and Apprentice Trades programming next year.

The main purpose of this communication is to bring you up to date with our progress on decisions regarding efficiencies, administrative and operational savings, and decisions regarding reductions to programming and course offerings.

Since the beginning of the process, the primary focus has been to find savings in areas that would not impact students, programs staff or services directly. As examples, we have found savings from:

- Paying out the balance of the sinking fund on the Castlegar Student Residence and thus eliminating annual “mortgage” payments,
- Realizing operational efficiencies from changes to the Food Services in particular much-improved control of food inventory and sales,
- Improving facility energy efficiency to save utility cost and reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions and thus lowering the remittance of provincial penalty.

Our next area of focus has been services or activities where reductions in expenditures may cause pressure on the college but that do not directly impact students or program delivery. Included in this process is the ongoing review of every posting for a vacant position that comes before for the Human Resources department to determine whether the position should be filled, whether the recruitment can be postponed, or if the work of the position can be appropriately integrated into other positions. Additional savings have been derived from either across the board requests of departments to find operational efficiency in such things as travel, reducing administrative overhead or by increased

expectations for revenue generation in the appropriate departments. Examples of this type of savings include:

- Prescribed reduction of all travel budgets across the college by 30% (this will include a greater expectation of the use of technology for such things as meetings; we will also be strengthening guidelines for travel to help administer this need),
- Savings from re-configuring administrative services, costs and overhead,
- Increased but achievable revenue targets for departments within the college that are engaged in generating non-grant revenues (for example Continuing Education).

A substantial amount of savings was derived from this process. But given the size of the deficit, and despite the analysis described above, it has become obvious that we will be unable to offset the entire amount without impacting programs. Within the last few days, meetings with representatives of the instructional unions and groups of faculty have been held or are scheduled to begin discussions around planned reductions of specific course offerings. The focus has been to maintain to every extent possible the program array at Selkirk College but reducing the range of offerings of courses especially those that have had sustained low enrolments. We have also tried to maintain sufficient contingency to continue to respond to high demand programming from which we can increase enrolment and respond to learner and community needs.

I am grateful for the professionalism of all those involved as they work together to apply the relevant processes set out in contracts and collective agreements.

One positive note from the provincial budget is the provision of new funds for addressing facilities and infrastructure maintenance deficiencies. As soon as we receive word of our allocation, we will work with staff to address prioritized needs. This will be welcome news to our maintenance department.

I will be away from the college from March 9th to 24th with my family on a community project in Nicaragua; a commitment made some time ago. However, I will be in direct communication with members of management committee, and will return to scheduled open dialogues with employees at the main campuses in early April to hear and respond to concerns and answer questions. Dates and times for those sessions will be published in the coming days. In the meantime, I urge everyone to be in touch with their direct supervisor if you have any immediate questions.

This is difficult and it is hard on people. I can confirm that not a single decision has been made without exhaustive consideration and respect for our community. Thank you for your patience and your participation in this difficult and challenging task.

Angus