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**Grand Opening for New Northwest School Division Board Office      October 6, 2010**

A ribbon cutting ceremony was held last week to mark the grand opening of the new Northwest School Division office building in Meadow Lake. Board Chairperson Faith Graham cut through the ribbon held by Director Duane Hauk and Meadow Lake Mayor Darwin Obrigewitsch.

The new state of the art office was designed by the Rajani Blaser Mannix Architecture Inc. of North Battleford and Saskatoon. “We designed it to house all of the people required, with avenues for future expansion,” said architect Jeff Mannix. “The building was designed for maximum efficiency. All of the offices were located on the perimeter to maximize natural lighting, and by placing meeting areas in the core we avoided having to construct a long, narrow building – which would have taken up a bigger site and been less environmentally friendly. We used a modern, well built and high efficiency heating system, and the building itself is tough and durable and will be a low cost structure to maintain.”

“The planning process itself was very consultative,” Mannix went on. “We went through several plans for the building as we gathered input from all the people who would be using it. The result was generous, well used and well thought out spaces.”

The cost of construction for the new board office was \$3,000,000, which included \$200,000 for a new computer server and related hardware. “The cost was financed out of the reserves established by the Board of Education,” said Secretary-Treasurer Greg Gerwing, “and also the reserves carried forward by the three legacy Boards: Turtleford, Battle River and Meadow Lake. It was money accumulated over the years, and the result is that there will be no debt whatsoever.”

Moreover the old board office, (the former Father Cochin School), will be used by the Transition Place Education Centre. Ministry approval to build a facility for Transition Place (which was housed in several rented facilities) was not approved. The cost of renovating the former office for the school (\$50,000) was \$20,000 less than the annual rent, and a far cry from the three million dollars required for a new school.

The board began to consider a new office in 2006 and came to the decision to build after much prudent and careful thought about how best to meet the needs of the new division. “This just made so much sense,” said Gerwing. “In reality the old office was just far too small for the number of people working in it, and we needed to put the right people together in the office in the right way. Payroll and Human Resources, for example, needed to be in the same building to facilitate communication.”

With the completion of the new office the reorganization of the Division’s offices are complete. Transportation, maintenance, and records are based in Turtleford, along with a second Transition School, and the Lloydminster office includes two superintendencies, student services, as well as

educational psychology, information technology and speech pathology specialists serving the southern half of the division.

The Northwest School Division has over 800 permanent and 150 part time employees serving the educational needs of 4700 students in 24 schools based in 17 communities.

