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Saskatchewan

Education

BUDGET INCREASES INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION AND PROVIDES A FAIRER BALANCE FOR SCHOOL DIVISIONS

The 2012-13 Education budget provides a fairer funding balance for school divisions across Saskatchewan. This year's budget also reflects a heightened commitment to student achievement with a focus on ensuring more equitable outcomes for First Nations and Métis students.

"This year, the increased investment in education will provide for more equitable support throughout our province's education system and an increased commitment to ensuring success for all students – from early childhood to high school," Education Minister Donna Harpauer said.

The launch of the new education funding distribution model provides a long anticipated fairer balance in funding for school divisions across Saskatchewan. Government's overall funding to school divisions in 2012-13 will be \$1.74 billion, an increase of 5.0 per cent which includes an increase of \$59 million in operating funding. This includes \$10 million in transition funding to moderate the impact on school divisions most affected by shifts in funding due to the new distribution model. As a result of the new funding formula together with the funding increase, school divisions will see funding increases this year ranging from 1.7 to 14.4 per cent.

"Following our government's decision in 2009 to provide the largest reduction in the education portion of property taxes in Saskatchewan history, we needed a new way of distributing funding to school divisions," Harpauer said. "Over the past three years we have engaged in extensive consultations with school divisions and other members of the education sector to develop a new model to ensure funding is provided in an equitable manner across the province."

First Nations and Métis education also remains a priority with \$4.3 million committed to initiatives that support more equitable outcomes for these students. The government will also invest \$600,000 in new funding (\$2.7 million in total) to help school divisions assess the readiness of new immigrant students who are entering the province's educational system and to other initiatives to support children who have English as an Additional Language (EAL).

The Government of Saskatchewan's investment in education also includes an increase of \$88.7 million in capital funding (\$112 million in total) for 21 approved major capital projects (an increase of \$82.6 million over last year) and \$4.0 million for three new school capital approvals. Sustaining capital for upgrades to schools will also increase by \$10.9 million, for a total block funding commitment of \$15.9 million. Since 2007, the Government of Saskatchewan has invested approximately \$500 million in pre-k to12 and child care infrastructure, including 38 major school capital projects throughout the province.

Highlights include:

- The launch of a new provincial approach to capital shared ownership this year is evidence of government's continued commitment to supporting school divisions with the pressures they face in maintaining their capital infrastructure and accommodating growth. This year, six major school capital projects will be funded through the new provincial shared ownership model.
- Support is also being provided for child care; \$46 million in operating funding is provided this year, including an increase of \$2 million to create 500 new child care spaces and \$4 million for the capital costs related to those new spaces. The majority of these spaces will be placed in schools or post-secondary institutions to facilitate continuing education and improved outcomes for young people.
- \$1.0 million in increased operating funding (\$18.6 million total) to support the province's vulnerable three and four year-old early learners. Fifteen new pre-kindergarten programs will be developed. This initiative is also supported by \$1.0 million in capital funding.

- This brings the total number of licensed child care spaces to approximately 13,240 and the total number of designated pre-kindergarten programs to 286.
- \$500,000 is also committed to summer literacy camps. Held in 20 communities across the province, these camps work to reduce summer reading loss by engaging children aged five to 14 in camp activities rooted in literacy and numeracy.
- An increase of 1.6 per cent in funding to libraries and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) which includes child care centres.

Principled, sustainable spending is another way the Ministry of Education is committed to ensuring Saskatchewan remains a great place to live, grow and learn. The ministry will focus its efforts this year on engaging its sector partners – initially school divisions – in learning and implementing new efficiency practices, such as shared services and group purchasing.

“Well maintained, efficient school environments are the foundation for supporting the achievement and success of all students,” Harpauer said. “This is also critical to sustaining the growth and prosperity of Saskatchewan. By keeping the Saskatchewan Advantage, we will ensure our young people are prepared for continued success in their work and their lives.”

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