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BUDGET REDUCES PROPERTY TAX, INCREASES INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION

The new education budget fulfils the government's commitment to reduce education property tax while making important investments in school capital projects, student achievement, improving educational outcomes for our First Nations and Métis students and a continued commitment to child care and Pre-kindergarten.

"We want to ensure that Saskatchewan children are given every opportunity to succeed in the new Saskatchewan," Education Minister Donna Harpauer said. "Our government will continue to invest in the future of our province by preparing students for success in both school and life."

The overall funding for school divisions will increase by \$36 million or 2.3 per cent in 2011-12. The government has also committed to cover the increased cost of the Teachers' Collective Bargaining Agreement when a new agreement is reached.

The budget includes \$19.9 million for capital projects including \$13.9 million for school capital, \$4 million for school based child care capital and \$2 million for Pre-kindergarten capital funding. This 2011-12 capital investment is in addition to the more than \$402.6 million the Government of Saskatchewan has committed since November 2007 for 29 major school capital projects and about 580 additional smaller school capital projects across the province.

The government is also continuing the commitment made in the 2010 Throne Speech to increase the number of licensed child care spaces and Pre-kindergarten programs. This budget provides \$2.1 million for 500 additional child care spaces. In addition there will be 40 new Pre-kindergarten programs for vulnerable 3 and 4 year-olds.

The Education budget includes \$2.9 million for initiatives that are part of a broader government commitment to work with First Nations and Métis stakeholders and the federal government to close education and employment gaps for First Nations and Métis people.

The 2011-12 Budget fulfils the second phase of the government education property tax reduction plan - reducing education taxes by a further \$55.6 million. Education taxes have been reduced by approximately 20 per cent on residential properties and by approximately 80 per cent on farmland.

"Our government is making life more affordable by reducing taxes for homeowners and farm families," Harpauer said. "That's an important part of the Saskatchewan advantage."

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