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GOVERNMENT INVESTS \$34 MILLION IN SASKATCHEWAN CHILDREN AND YOUTH AGENDA

With the first ever Saskatchewan Children and Youth Agenda budget, the province is investing more than \$34 million in a new, cross-government approach to the complex issues facing Saskatchewan children, youth and families.

The Children and Youth Agenda identifies funding and programs across several ministries that address common problems facing children and families at risk, such as lower education levels, unemployment and substance abuse. The cross-government agenda will allow for a comprehensive, targeted approach to these challenges.

"The Saskatchewan Child Welfare Review Panel made a number of recommendations to address the needs of at-risk children, and our government is committed to responding to those needs," Social Services Minister June Draude said. "This budget puts plans and dollars behind that commitment and signals a new direction for our province."

The Cabinet Committee on Children and Youth, formed in December 2010 in response to the Saskatchewan Child Welfare Review Panel's report, led the development of the "Saskatchewan Children and Youth Agenda" multi-ministry budget proposal. The proposal incorporates provincial strategies dealing with child welfare, First Nations and Métis education and employment, and Autism and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). An additional strategy, the Saskatchewan Police and Partners Strategy to Reduce Crime and Violence, will continue consultation and planning in the year ahead.

Funding initiatives announced in the new budget include:

- \$1.5 million to help First Nations Child and Family Service Agencies provide better case management for children in care who are placed on-reserve;
- \$1 million to develop a 24/7 intensive family support model to prevent children from coming into care;
- \$2 million to establish a Task Force on First Nations and Métis Education and Employment to provide recommendations aimed at eliminating the education and employment gaps;
- \$7 million for Adult Basic Education and Provincial Training Allowance targeted to First Nations and Métis students;
- \$2.9 million to increase high school completion rates and improve achievement for First Nations and Métis students;
- \$900,000 to enhance rehabilitation therapies and/or frontline services for individuals with Autism; and
- \$300,000 to assist in the provision of family support and mentorship services, as well as life skills programming for individuals with FASD.

"The investment the province is making today in the Children and Youth Agenda recognizes that we need to address the common issues experienced by Saskatchewan children and families, and that we need to work with our First Nations, Métis and community partners toward real and meaningful change," First Nations and Métis Relations Minister and Cabinet Committee Co-Chair Ken Cheveldayoff said.

Further details of the province's response to the Child Welfare Review will be announced later this spring.

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