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| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Saskatchewan | 24e | 4e | Discours sur l’éducation | 28 avril 2003 | Judy Junor | Minister of Learning | Saskatchewan New Democratic Party |

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees. On my right is the deputy minister of Learning, Dr. Craig Dotson. On my further right is Don Sangster, and Don is the executive director of school finance. Behind Don is Dr. Michael Littlewood, and Michael is the executive director of legislation and school administration. Next to Michael is Dr. Margaret Lipp, and Dr. Lipp is the executive director of Saskatchewan Learning. Behind us is Dr. Wayne McElree, and Dr. McElree is assistant deputy minister of Learning. Directly behind me is Gillian McCreary, and Gillian is the executive director of Saskatchewan Learning. And behind Wayne is Kevin Hoyt, and Kevin is the director of corporate services.

Behind the bar we have Dr. John Biss, and Dr. Biss is the executive director of university services. We have Glenda Eden, she is the manager of financial planning; Norma Knuth, manager of financial operations, Teachers’ Superannuation Commission; Shirley Robertson, manager of pension benefits, Teachers’ Superannuation Commission; Brady Salloum, executive director of student financial assistance; and Nelson Wagner, executive director of facilities planning. And I think I’ve got everybody.

Before we start in to the questions I just have a few opening remarks to make about the department. Saskatchewan’s $1.2 billion investment in Learning this year is a double investment in our future. It’s an investment in the future of individual learners and an investment in the future of our province. This kind of investment is one reason that in Saskatchewan our future is wide open. Building our future begins with kids, early childhood development is critical for future success. Our Kids First program expansion this year will enable it to serve 440 more families. In total more 920 families will receive early intervention and support.

This year’s budget increased the foundation operating grants to our K to 12 schools by 3 per cent to 510 million. This sustains our high quality education system, a system that is focused on the needs of students. Our SchoolPLUS initiative focuses the resources of seven government departments on meeting the needs of students in the school. SchoolPLUS is a critically important initiative of the Government of Saskatchewan and I welcome the recent appointment of David Forbes, MLA for Saskatoon Idylwyld, as Legislative Secretary to oversee the implementation of SchoolPLUS.

A strong economy and a civil society are built on an educated and productive population. We believe that one of the major roles of government is to improve the educational success and the well-being of every child and youth in Saskatchewan. With this budget we are increasing our support for partnerships between school boards and Aboriginal organizations, like the innovative partnerships in Meadow Lake, North Battleford, and Regina.

Saskatchewan people are innovators and they are comfortable using new technologies such as digital communication technologies. Our schools, our public libraries, and our post-secondary institutions have been leaders in providing digital resources, on-line access to information, and on-line courses.

The budget supports the continued innovative use of technology to expand the quality of learning, the quality of learning resources and access to them. Investing in digital technologies and e-learning across the sector is an investment in our future. The future prosperity and well-being of Saskatchewan and of Saskatchewan people depends on our having a highly trained and highly skilled workforce.

We are building on strengths such as our regional college system. Our regional colleges provide high quality university, technical, and other training opportunities in communities all across rural and northern Saskatchewan. SIAST continues to build on its solid track record in technical training.

Saskatchewan’s innovative, industry-led apprenticeship system has more than 5,300 apprentices registered. This budget sustains our investment in skills training programs that are employment focused and responsive to the evolving needs of employers and workers.

Saskatchewan has the highest proportion of young people in Western Canada enrolled full time in university. Our two universities continue to build on their successes as centres of excellence in research and innovation. The operating grant pool for the universities, federated colleges, and affiliated colleges is being increased by 3 per cent. Over and above that we are providing additional targeted funding for increased student intakes in medicine and the northern nursing education program. This will help us to ensure that we have the health professionals we need in communities around the province.

We are working with the University of Saskatchewan to continue feasibility studies for the construction of an academic health sciences complex, and we are working with the University of Regina to continue feasibility studies regarding a new laboratory building.

The budget also increases our financial support to students to enhance accessibility to high quality education and training programs. Saskatchewan was the first province to sign an agreement with the federal government to enhance benefits to students by simplifying the administrative process for student loans. This year the Canada-Saskatchewan Integrated Student Loans Program will provide more than $134 million to assist about 17,000 students.

Learning is a Saskatchewan success story. Our focus on children and young people provides a strong foundation for learning, and our strong library system supports lifelong learning. Our post-secondary system helps people prepare for personal growth as well as for real jobs in the new economy.

And we continue to build for the future. One of the most visible signs of that growth is the splendid new Saskatchewan Indian Federated College to be officially opened in June — a source of pride for First Nations people, a source of pride for all of us, and a model of partnership.

Another is the Canadian Light Source, the synchrotron, which will begin operation in less than a year, the largest scientific project undertaken in Canada in 30 years — a magnet for scholars from around the world; a powerful tool for pure and applied research.

The structures and projects that display our growth are supported by Saskatchewan’s real strength — its people.

Our investments in learning support a strong future, supported by strong communities, supported by well-educated and highly trained individuals. Our future is wide open.