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| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Saskatchewan | 26e | 4e | Discours sur l’éducation | 18 avril 2011 | Donna Harpauer | Minister of Education | Saskatchewan Party |

Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good evening, and I am pleased to be here tonight with my ministry officials to speak to the Ministry of Education’s 2011-12 budget.

With me to help answer questions that the committee members may have is, to my immediate right, Audrey Roadhouse, the deputy minister; to my left, Darren McKee and Cheryl Senecal, both assistant deputy ministers. Behind me is Dawn Court, director of finance, corporate services; Lois Zelmer, executive director of early learning; Mike Back, director of infrastructure and education funding; Angela Chobanik, senior policy advisor, infrastructure and education funding; Elaine Caswell, associate executive director, student achievement and support; Rosanne Glass, executive director, strategic policy; Doug Volk, executive director, Teachers’ Superannuation Commission; Brett Waytuck, Provincial Librarian, Provincial Library and literacy; Sonya Leib, senior financial manager of corporate services; and Daryl Richter, manager of capital projects.

Before we discuss the 2010 or ‘11-12 budget, I would like to take a minute to tell you about a few of the significant accomplishments we have made over the last few years. These accomplishments have had a positive impact on Saskatchewan’s families.

Since November of 2007, we have committed to funding for 38 major school capital projects and more than 580 additional smaller school capital projects across the province. This brings the four-year total to a record of 422.5 million investment in the province’s pre-K to 12 [pre-kindergarten to grade 12] education infrastructure. We have made record investments in early learning and child care, including a 35 per cent increase in child care spaces and a 75 per cent increase in the number of pre-kindergarten programs. This brings the total number of licensed child care spaces, operational or in development, at the end of 2011-12 fiscal year to approximately 12,700 and the total number of pre-kindergarten programs to 270. In addition government will fulfill its promise to provide education property tax relief. These are just a few of the examples in how we’re making a difference to Saskatchewan’s families.

The 2011-12 ministry budget continues to focus on improving educational outcomes. We know that a strong education gives young people the best start in life and provides a wider range of opportunities for young people as they enter the workforce. As a result, the total ministry budget for 2011-12 is $1.4 billion. This represents a 117.6 million or a 9 per cent increase over last year.

The overall funding for school divisions will increase by 36 million or 2.3 per cent in the 2011-12 based on the government fiscal year. Education property tax will be reduced by 55.6 million, fulfilling the government’s commitment to reduce education property tax. 19.9 will be provided in capital — 13.9 million of that for school capital, 4 million for school-based child care capital, and 2 million for pre-kindergarten capital funding. Approximately 6.1 million of this capital funding will be for nine projects in six school divisions to achieve approval in principle moving to detailed design. The projects include three new schools, two gymnasiums, and four additions or major renovations.

We know that investment in the early years is critical and will help to address student outcomes. The ‘11-12 budget includes 2.1 million for 500 additional child care spaces and 2.6 million for 40 new pre-kindergarten programs primarily targeted for vulnerable three- and four-year olds.

Closing the achievement gap between First Nations and non-First Nations students remains a high priority for this government; 2.9 million is dedicated to support First Nations and Métis education. This will allow the ministry to move forward with proven initiatives that will strengthen education outcomes for First Nations and Métis young people.

We also value the role and the tremendous programs and services of the many community-based organizations connected with the ministry, and they will receive a 1.5 per cent increase in funding. We remain committed to highly literate citizens with equal access to information, so libraries will receive a general increase of funding of 1.5 per cent in this budget as well.

So these are the highlights of this year’s budget, and it concludes my opening remarks. We look forward to the discussion on education and the important role that it plays within our province. And with that I open the floor for questions