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| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Saskatchewan | 27e | 3e | Discours sur l’éducation | 7 avril 2014 | Don Morgan | Minister of Education | Saskatchewan Party |

Good evening, Mr. Chair, committee members. I’m delighted to be joined by my colleagues to present the Ministry of Education’s 2014-2015 budget.

With me today to help answer questions that committee members may have are Dan Florizone, deputy minister; Greg Miller, assistant deputy minister; Donna Johnson, assistant deputy minister; Clint Repski, acting assistant deputy minister; Robert Spelliscy, executive director, corporate services; Kathy Deck, director of finance, corporate services; Angela Chobanik, acting executive director, education funding; Tim Caleval, executive director, student achievement and support; Gerry Craswell, executive director, information management and support; Edith Nagy, acting executive director, strategic policy; Lynn Allan, executive director, early years; Sheldon Ramstead, executive director, infrastructure; Brett Waytuck, Provincial Librarian, Provincial Library and literacy office; Doug Volk, executive director, teachers’ superannuation commission; my chief of staff, Drew Dwernychuk.

Mr. Chair, education is a prominent component of the Saskatchewan plan for growth, and I’d like to discuss how the Ministry of Education is going to achieve the goals set in the plan before we discuss the 2014-2015 budget.

The Ministry of Education has a philosophy and approach to learning called student first, which is about putting the needs of our students at highest importance. It’s about asking ourselves every day, in everything we do, in every decision we make, does this put the student first, and what difference will this make for the student?

It also means keeping up with infrastructure demands as well as shining a spotlight on success throughout our sector.

We want to ensure everyone is able to benefit from the incredible work happening in our schools. By putting the student first we know we will accomplish the outcomes set forth in our education sector’s strategic plan and thus achieve our commitments to the plan for growth. We are placing reading, writing, and math at the top of our priority list, and over time want to see 80 per cent of our students at or above grade level in these areas. By collaborating and building partnerships with our First Nations, Métis, and Inuit population, there will be significant improvement in achievement and graduation rates. This will reduce the graduation disparity and we will see our Aboriginal communities reach their full potential. We will see 85 per cent of our students walk across a stage at graduation and receive a high school diploma. To do this we need to continue to ensure that our education outcomes are improving.

Our ultimate goal is to have the best education system in Canada. Although there will be challenges ahead, I believe we can achieve this. We all want each and every student to be able to fully participate in all the opportunities available to them in our growing province.

The plan for growth puts a lot of emphasis on education, and I’m pleased that our government has made educational excellence a priority in Saskatchewan. Investment in Saskatchewan students will have a direct impact on their future success and help us reach the goals set in the plan for growth.

Our job at the ministry is to ensure that the education system is well supported, and that students of all ages from all corners of the province continue to be a priority, that the student is always put first.

The 2014-15 budget is focused on securing a better quality of life for all Saskatchewan people. This budget controls spending while still meeting the challenges of a growing province by investing in infrastructure and, most importantly, our people. The 2014-2015 budget continues to make students a priority by investing in pre-K to 12 [pre-kindergarten to grade 12] education, early years, libraries, literacy, and many community-based organizations.

The overall funding for education has increased by 3.1 per cent from 2013-2014. This investment in education is focused on student success and supporting growth in our province. Our commitment is to include the current enrolment factor into the funding distribution model. This allows us to be responsive and recognize enrolment growth, which is something we know is important to school divisions.

The overall funding for school divisions is 1.82 billion — that’s billion with a b — an increase of 2.4 per cent. This includes a $42 million increase in operating funding in 2014-2015. Included in the operating funding is an increase of $19.2 million to support school divisions’ current enrolment growth and projected increases of 2,140 students in 2014.

In terms of school division’s fiscal year, funding will increase by 24.3 million or 1.4 per cent. Our 2014-15 budget also includes a commitment of $96.2 million in capital funding. Included in the capital funding this year is $4.1 million in new funding to proceed with the replacement of École Connaught and Sacred Heart elementary schools in Regina, major renovations to Sacred Heart school in Moose Jaw and major renovations to St. Brieux School in St. Brieux; $43.5 million to advance or complete a number of other school capital projects that have been under way for several years; $15.7 million for co-owned projects with school divisions that are all currently under construction; $24 million, a 23.6 per cent increase, for school preventative maintenance and renewal and emergent funding; $6.9 million for relocatable classrooms; $2 million to support facility assessment and pre-kindergarten capital requirements. This brings Government of Saskatchewan’s overall investment in school infrastructure since November 2007 to approximately $700 million.

This budget also provides increased investment in support of the Saskatchewan child and family agenda. We understand the impact that early childhood education will have for the future of our youngest learners. Continuing to invest in the early years is critical to student success. This budget includes $65.7 million in operating funding for our youngest students in the early years. This is an increase of $2.3 million.

$1.2 million for 15 new pre-K programs to support the social, emotional, intellectual, language and literacy development of 3- and 4-year olds. An increase of $2.2 million to create 500 additional licensed child care spaces to help meet the unprecedented demand for child care and to support positive child development, early literacy, and student success. In addition, this will enable parents to pursue their education or employment. One per cent CBO [community-based organization] funding increase for child care to support the recruitment and retention of early childhood educators.

The pre-K expansion will serve approximately 240 vulnerable three- and four-year-old children and their families. Across the province, 5,056 three- and four-year-old children and their families will have access to a pre-kindergarten program. Since 2007 our government has made a significant investment in pre-K, increasing the number of programs from 155 to 316, which more than doubles the number of programs.

Also included in this budget is funding to create 500 additional child care centre spaces, bringing the total commitment to child care spaces in Saskatchewan to over 14,200, an increase of 4,935 since 2007. As a government we have made record investments in this area since 2007, including a 53 per cent increase in the total number of child care spaces.

This budget also includes $6 million in funding for the continued long-term, integrated, multi-year response to the recommendations from the joint task force for improving First Nations and Métis education and employment outcomes. This is double the amount provided last year. We also remain committed to highly literate citizens and the important role public libraries have in supporting student success. Public libraries will see a 1 per cent increase, $82,000 in the budget to the resource sharing grants. Additionally the government will continue its investment in the single integrated library system, $80,000; the national network for equitable library services, $100,000; interlibrary loan, $100,000; and CommunityNet for libraries, $2.39 million. This funding will ensure that the people of Saskatchewan can continue to access information and resources that they need through their public libraries.

Family and adult literacy-based organizations will see a 1 per cent increase in funding. These funds will ensure that at-risk, vulnerable, and marginalized students, families, and learners will continue to receive supports in their community. Total literacy funding in 2014, 2015 will be $2.42 million and will support adult literacy, 814,000; family literacy, 510,000; summer literacy camps, 600,000; and the Saskatchewan Community Literacy Fund, 500,000.

Saskatchewan students will also benefit from $815,000 in new funding to implement Saskatchewan’s action plan to address bullying and cyberbullying; $588,000 in new funding to expand English as an additional language supports in school divisions; a $2 million increase for CommunityNet bandwidth upgrades to increase Internet speeds for rural schools and expand capacity in urban schools; $200,000 in new funding to provide alternate format materials for students with disabilities; and a number of community-based organizations will also see a 1 per cent increase in funding. These are the highlights of this year’s budget.

This concludes my opening remarks. We look forward to our discussion on education and the important impact it has on the future of Saskatchewan. Mr. Chair, we are ready to answer questions.