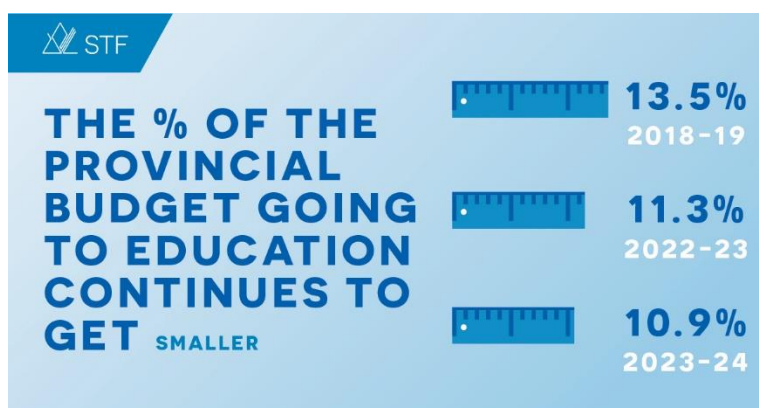


Provincial Budget 2023-24

Chronic Underfunding of Education Continues

Education funding in the 2023-24 provincial budget is a disappointment that only reaffirms that the Government of Saskatchewan lacks the political will to invest in education. While this budget will again be “record spending,” it does not equate to improved or increased support for students. Most households are also experiencing record-high grocery bills, and there is often less in the cart. Unfortunately, the government has been underfunding public education for a decade. Every student, whether they require access to additional supports or services or not, is impacted by the lack of funding.

“Teachers are doing everything they possibly can to support a growing number of students in an underfunded system,” says Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation President Samantha Becotte. “Once again, this government is choosing to shortchange kids and families. Saskatchewan is in a strong financial position. Government has the money to invest in education. It is simply refusing to make students a priority.”



The Saskatchewan School Boards Association’s reaction to this budget was similar to the STF’s response. SSBA President Jaimie Smith-Windsor said in a [news release](#) that “the operating increase announced in the 2023-24 budget does not cover the expenses that school divisions are facing,” and that “this budget contributes to the existing instability and continuing erosion of the publicly funded education system – and school boards are increasingly concerned about that.”

The Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce also [expressed disappointment](#) with this budget, saying it “does fall short in addressing a few priorities that are important to our members.” Amongst the list of priorities identified by Chamber members is an education spending increase.

For this to be a status quo budget for operations, an increase of at least 5 percent was required. Instead, operational funding received a paltry increase of 2.5 percent. This does not come close to covering increased costs due to inflation or projected student enrolment increases. This means, once again, school divisions will be forced to make difficult decisions that will further reduce the supports and services students have access to.

With this budget, Saskatchewan students are falling further behind.

Both Alberta and Manitoba recently released budgets and have allocated a higher year over year increase in funding for education.

With a projected \$1 billion surplus, government managed to find money for qualified independent schools and a 13 percent increase for municipal revenue sharing, but delivered what amounts to more cuts for Saskatchewan students.

As teachers prepare for the next round of provincial collective bargaining to begin in two months, this is yet another indication that it will be a difficult round and that the government is not prepared to address the dire and growing needs in Saskatchewan's publicly funded school system.

Ministry of Education Budget Breakdown

The Ministry of Education provides funding for family literacy and library sectors, early learning and child care, and prekindergarten to Grade 12 education. While the overall education budget saw a more substantial increase of 6.7 percent, the operational portion only increased by 2.5 percent. The budget includes:

Funding to 27 School Divisions for Operations: \$2 billion, an increase of 2.5 percent. Inflation is expected to be approximately 4 percent and student enrolment is expected to increase by 2 percent.

Saskatchewan Distance Learning Corporation: \$23 million to support its startup.

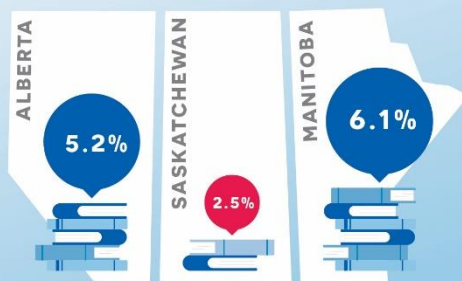
Qualified Independent Schools: \$17.6 million in operating grants, an increase of \$78,000.

Capital: \$147.3 million for five school capital projects including three new schools and renovation projects.

Focus on Operational Funding

There's a reason operational funding is the focus of our analysis and reaction. The operational portion is the money that is divided up amongst the province's 27 school divisions to deliver public education. While renovations and new infrastructure are important and needed, it isn't the building that teaches students.

YEAR OVER YEAR BUDGET INCREASE FOR EDUCATION



Did you know ... A January 2023 survey of Saskatchewan residents found:

67% believe the Saskatchewan government should increase spending on public education.

65% believe there is a shortage of teachers and other education workers.

The operational funding is the pot of money school divisions draw on for everything that is required to deliver public education to students, including:

- Teaching materials
- Textbooks
- Computers
- Salaries for teachers, EAs, other school staff and professionals such as speech language pathologists and psychologists
- Transportation and utilities

Reality in Schools: Not Enough Resources to Meet Student Needs

The reality in schools across Saskatchewan is not reflected in this budget. According to a report from the Fraser Institute, Saskatchewan had the highest per-student funding in Canada in 2012-13. By 2019-20, Saskatchewan dropped to sixth place. Based on this data, it would take an additional \$400 million just to bring per-student funding back to 2012-13 levels.



Needs have changed since then too:

More Students and Larger Class Sizes

- The number of students has steadily increased, while the number of teachers has essentially remained flat, except for 2020-21 due to COVID-19 which included Federal COVID-19 funding.
 - From 2013-14, the total number of students increased by 11.3 percent, but full-time equivalent teachers increased by only 1.1 percent.

Increasing Needs and Decreasing Support

- From 2012-13, English as an additional language enrolment increased by 51.5 percent. EAL teachers increased by only 16.7 percent.
- From 2007-08 to 2018-19, the number of students requiring intensive support grew by 38.1 percent. Yet the number of specialists available to support these students has decreased. For example, the number of psychologists decreased by 13.5 percent between 2013 and 2021.

For more facts and statistics, visit the [STF's advocacy page](#) or watch and [share this video](#).

Advocacy Efforts Must Grow and Continue

If this budget reveals what the government values, it is clear that public education is not a value or high priority. With a projected \$1 billion surplus, the government could have increased public education funding. It simply chose not to. Elected officials either do not

understand the reality in schools or they don't care. As a collective, we need to continue to make our voices heard.

"This education budget isn't surprising, but it is disappointing," says STF President Samantha Becotte. "I urge you to not let this discourage you; instead use it to strengthen your resolve. We must continue to work together as a collective so that issues in education can't be ignored. Provincial collective bargaining begins in May, and the next provincial election is in 2024. We have an opportunity to ensure public education becomes a priority for this government."

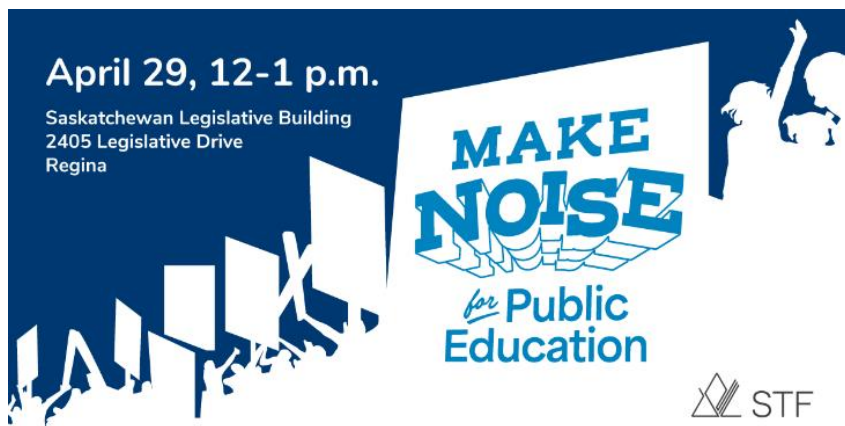
As the number of voices calling for proper funding for education grows, the request becomes more difficult to ignore. In just six weeks, Saskatchewan teachers, parents and concerned citizens have sent more than 1,600 emails to Premier Scott Moe, Education Minister Dustin Duncan and other MLAs. This is an encouraging start, and it is important we continue to build momentum.

Students and teachers deserve better.

[tellthemtuesday.com](https://www.tellthemtuesday.com)

Please continue to take the actions requested through [Tell Them Tuesday](https://www.tellthemtuesday.com) and encourage others to sign up and join in.

The Rally for Public Education in Regina on April 29 also provides a pivotal opportunity to show the government how many Saskatchewan residents believe our kids deserve better and the significance of the concerns. If you haven't already, [please sign up today](#). Any members who arrive with full or nearly full vehicles are eligible for mileage reimbursement.



April 29, 12-1 p.m.
Saskatchewan Legislative Building
2405 Legislative Drive
Regina

MAKE NOISE
for Public Education

STF