

Saskatchewan Budget 2022-23

The Government of Saskatchewan's 2022-23 funding for education is a failure to recognize and respond to the needs of students and their families. The K-12 operating budget will force school divisions to further cut supports to students. The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation is not alone in this position; the [Saskatchewan School Boards Association](#) also says this budget falls short.

Before the pandemic, the school system was facing significant challenges. This is why class size and composition were a key focus of provincial collective bargaining in 2019. Two years and one pandemic later, these issues have not disappeared and they have not been addressed. The pandemic has only made the need greater.

The Federation recognizes there aren't unlimited funds, and that the government must make difficult decisions. Some years these decisions are more difficult than others. No matter what the fiscal situation is, **these choices are always driven by values**. The budget is the government's action behind its promises. Finance Minister Donna Harpauer is reported as stating this budget process was a "[positive experience](#)," yet the result is a budget that is bad for education and fails to meet students' needs.

Chronic Underfunding

The impact of this budget is much greater than just the upcoming year. Budget after budget, the government has chosen to not make students and education a priority. Since 2017, education funding has not kept pace with increasing costs (teacher salary increases, inflation, diverse student needs) and enrolment.

To prevent additional cuts a 4.7 %, or just under \$63 million, increase to operating spending was required. **This budget fell short, resulting in a total shortfall of approximately \$200 million in operating funding since 2017.**

Key Points

- Class size, composition and complexity were significant concerns before the pandemic.
- These challenges have only increased and are symptoms of an underfunded system that does not have enough specialized resources.
- This budget is not enough to maintain existing programming.
- Students will lose resources and supports they need.
- Government has chosen to shortchange kids and their futures by underfunding education.
- Planning for a strong Saskatchewan tomorrow requires investing in public education today.

**It's time to
properly fund
education.**



Budget Breakdown

The education budget encompasses more than K-12 education. It also includes libraries, early years and child care, and school infrastructure. Of this total budget, \$287.8 million is from the federal-provincial agreement for child care.

The K-12 operating budget is the funding that primarily impacts the educational experience and access to supports for students. Government stated the operating budget for 2022-23 is \$1.99 billion, an increase of 1.5 %. An analysis shows this also includes some funding for capital projects. When that capital funding is removed, the school operating budget increased by only 1.4 % for a total of \$1.86 billion.

Operating Deficit

To maintain status quo, Saskatchewan's school divisions required the operating budget to increase by 4.7 %. Therefore, the budget amounts to a cut of more than 3 % to operating spending. **School divisions' only option will be to cut programs and resources that directly support student learning.**

Long Waits, Limited Access to Support

Educational assistants play an integral role in schools and the Federation welcomes the addition of up to 200 new EAs. Assuming all EAs are distributed evenly across the province, an additional 200 EAs means 46 students for each EA, down from 48.6 students per EA in 2021-22.

While EA support may be enough for some students, those with the most complex needs require and deserve access to highly educated and trained professionals such as speech-language pathologists, psychologists and occupational therapists.

Parents, students and teachers are all acutely aware there is a significant shortage of access to these specialists. Students and their families are stuck waiting and going without much-needed support because there is not enough funding to meet the demand. **Simply put, 200 additional educational assistants for just one year is not enough to address students' needs.** This is a temporary and inadequate measure that will not address the complex needs of students.

Government Failed to Fund its Own Priorities for Education

Mental health and well-being is one of the four pillars of the Provincial Education Plan, but received no specific funding in this budget. The deficit budget means that introducing any new supports to address the mental health needs of students will be nearly impossible.

Students have lost time for learning throughout the pandemic. **Additional supports are required to catch students up.** This deficit funding is not enough for school divisions to maintain existing programs, let alone introduce the additional resources students need and deserve.

Independent School Funding

The new Certified Independent School category, which allocates increased public funding to private schools, raises concerns and questions about the government's intent for the future of public education.

