

NEWS RELEASE

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FEDERATION RESPONDS TO 2022-23 BUDGET

SASKATOON – The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation is disappointed that the Government of Saskatchewan has again chosen not to make education funding a priority. An increase of 4.7 percent was required to simply maintain the status quo of programming and services. This budget results in a more than 3 percent cut to K-12 operational spending.

“These cuts will directly impact students across the province,” said STF President Patrick Maze. “School divisions will be left with no choice but to cut programs and services that are already underfunded and insufficient to meet students' needs.”

In the past five years, Saskatchewan's K-12 operational budget has not kept pace with increased costs and enrolment, resulting in a five-year funding shortfall of 10 percent.

“Classroom size and complexity are growing and becoming more urgent each year. These challenges are symptoms of a chronically underfunded education system,” said Maze. “Teachers and school staff have shown incredible creativity and resiliency in trying to meet growing needs without the proper tools but there is only so much they can do. Students' needs are going unmet. Saskatchewan families deserve better.”

Class size, composition and complexity were challenges prior to the pandemic. These issues have only grown over the last two years, due to ongoing budget challenges, interrupted learning and lack of access to non-teaching professionals for students.

“This budget is a failure to plan for tomorrow and invest in our province's future,” said Maze. “A strong Saskatchewan requires all students to have access to a quality, properly funded public education system. At a time when we need more support for learning, the supports students have will be clawed back. Unfortunately, it is often the most vulnerable students who are first to be impacted by cuts.”

The Federation implores the government to work with sector partners to understand the significant impact its chronic underfunding is having and commit to developing a path for predictable and sustainable education funding.

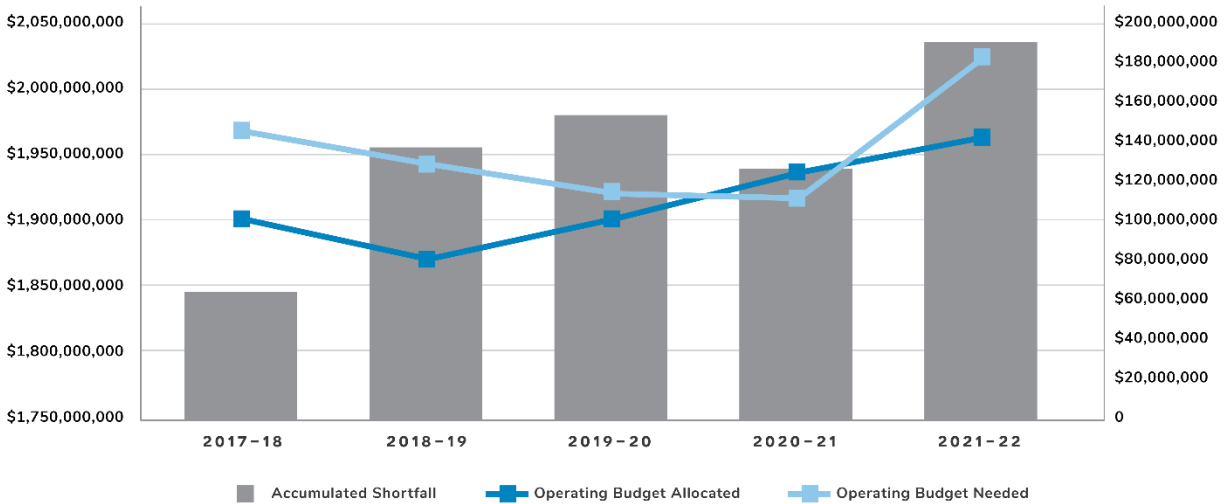
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BACKGROUND

- To keep pace with increased costs and projected student enrolment increases (one percent), the operating budget for K-12 will need to increase by 4.7 percent, or just over \$90 million, from last year.
- Anything less than 4.7 percent is essentially a cut for school divisions.
 - Any new initiatives – teacher and student well-being, home visits, addressing academic gaps from COVID-19, etc. – would need to be over and above the \$90 million or school divisions will likely need to further cut existing programs to fund anything new.
- The Federation called on Government to maintain funding and provide additional funding specifically for:
 - Addressing class size and complexity, including recommendations of the Class Size and Complexity Committee
 - Catching up students who experienced a learning loss due to the pandemic
 - Ensuring students have timely access to professional mental health supports
 - Timely access to professional services such as school psychologists, speech language pathologists and occupational therapists
 - Supports to welcome additional students from Ukraine into our schools, including meeting the demands of increased enrolment and specific needs of those students
 - Making the childcare subsidy accessible to Ukrainian newcomers
- Heading into the 2022-23 fiscal year, school divisions are already dealing with a five-year budget deficit of 10%.

WHAT IS ALLOCATED VERSUS WHAT IS NEEDED AND THE RESULTING SHORTFALL



- From 2017-18, operating budgets have increased by just under 1.8% or \$33.5 million. To keep up with increased costs and enrolment over the same time 11.79% percent, or \$187 million, would have been needed.
- Funding for early childcare (through the agreement signed in August with the federal government) will also appear in the budget. The federal commitment is \$1.1 billion over five years. The Federation is supportive of all funding and programming for early learning; however, this funding has no impact on the K-12 operating budget.
- Government revenue is likely forecast to increase because of non-renewable resources. Will this translate into higher funding for education or will be it allocated elsewhere?
 - Oil over \$100 USD per barrel
 - Potash \$725 USD per short ton
 - “The potash sector in Saskatchewan hit all-time record highs in 2021, with production reaching 14.2 million tonnes K2O and the value of sales hitting \$7.6 billion.” - [Potash Sector Sets New Records in Production and Sales in 2021](#)
- Capital funding, while necessary, does not impact operating funding. Between 2020-21 and 2021-22, school operating spending was increased by 1.6 percent (had not kept up with 2020 cost of living), while school capital spending increased by 45.7 percent, according to the 2021-22 Budget Estimate. Capital spending appears more attractive to this government in part because of P3 agreements.

- The 2021-22 kindergarten to Grade 12 funding was \$2.11 billion. This includes capital and operational funding such as salaries, student transportation, governance, administration, and facility operations and maintenance.
- The operations portion of the 2021-22 budget was \$1.96 billion.
- The number of students in Saskatchewan has steadily increased, while the number of teachers has essentially remained flat since 2013-14 (except for 2020-21, due to COVID-19). From 2013-14 to 2021-22, the total number of students grew from 170,582 to 186,084, an increase of 9.1 percent, while the total number of full-time equivalent (FTE) educators increased by only 130, or 1.1 percent.
- Moreover, the ratio of students to regular classroom teachers has increased from 18.6 in 2013-14 to 19.9 in 2021-22, representing an increase of 6.7 percent. This implies that a classroom that had 30 students in 2013-14 would have 32.1 students in 2021-22. The increase in the number of teachers did not keep pace with student enrolment growth.