

BACKGROUND

SUBJECT: Government Funding, Saskatchewan Distance Learning Crown Corporation

DATE: May 3, 2023

During media interviews on May 2, 2023, Saskatchewan's Education Minister Dustin Duncan suggested school divisions will save approximately \$13 million due to the establishment of the Saskatchewan Distance Learning Crown Corporation.

The Minister said, "It's going to mean teachers that are going to be freed up to get back into the classrooms across public school divisions. We think for the public school divisions, it'll save about \$13 million in operations that will no longer be borne by the public school divisions, and it could be in the neighbourhood of 250 teachers that they continue to have funding for, but now don't have the expense relating to online learning." (CTV News, Regina, May 2, 2023)

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation finds the Minister's math to be intriguing. If you divide the \$13 million in savings predicted by the Minister, by the 250 teachers he is talking about, that comes out to \$52,000 per teacher. That is an interesting number since a Class 4 first-year teacher salary is \$59,459.

Further, school divisions are now revising their budgets following a disappointing increase in operating funding this year, preceded by many years of funding below the rate of inflation. They are contemplating layoffs, hiring freezes and other cuts. It is extremely doubtful any additional teachers will be hired. And while there will be certain savings gained by centralizing spending in a crown on capital, facilities and equipment, school divisions will still have considerable responsibilities and expenses related to distance learning students in their school – even with a new Crown corporation in charge of distance learning.

These include, but are not limited to, providing technical assistance, providing print support material, designating a space in each school for students accessing online learning, providing adequate hardware, network connections and electrical outlets, and providing a designated staff member to oversee the student in class.

All of these requirements are outlined in documents provided by the Ministry of Education, can be found in Appendix B of the Quality Assurance Framework for K-12 Online Learning document found on the [Government of Saskatchewan's website](#).

The bottom line? These extra costs will be borne by school divisions who will still have to dedicate people to monitor students taking online courses. And given the 0.7 percent increase in school operating funding provided by the Minister, it will be extremely difficult for them to meet those obligations.