

Saskatchewan schools get \$142M from government

BY ANGELA HALL, LEADER-POST FEBRUARY 10, 2009



Education Minister Ken Krawetz (right) talks with Grade 12 student Justin Lamb about Lamb's ice box chest.

Photograph by: Don Healy, Leader-Post

REGINA -- Principal Murray Greenwood only has to look up to find evidence of one of the infrastructure challenges facing many Saskatchewan schools.

The flaky patches of ceiling in the wood shop at Balfour Collegiate hint at the likely age and condition of the high school's roof.

"Anytime a school has weathered the winters and the elements over 80 years it obviously needs some tender loving care," said Greenwood.

The provincial government on Monday announced it will deliver some of that care in the form of accelerated infrastructure spending. In an announcement at Balfour, Education Minister Ken Krawetz said nearly \$142 million in funding for school infrastructure projects is being sped up, so school divisions don't have to wait for the March budget.

The bulk of the cash, more than \$117 million, will go toward sharing the cost of 18 major projects, such as the building of new schools in Regina and Oxbow.

About \$24 million is for dozens of smaller maintenance projects, including extensive roof repairs at Balfour Collegiate.

The major projects getting funds aren't new, but this latest allocation of money should help them

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“This means that the 18 major capital projects that we announced for 15 communities across the province last year will be jump-started with the financial booster shot,” the minister said.

“For example, projects planned to begin the design stage in 2009-2010 will now be able to start at least three to four months sooner.”

Regina projects on the list of major capital projects include the renovation/addition of Scott Collegiate, new facilities to replace Douglas Park and Arcola elementary schools and structural repairs and renovations at Campbell Collegiate.

The smaller projects — in various communities across the province — include upgrades, renovations and repairs at 28 schools, new or renovated re-locatable classrooms in 10 schools, improved accessibility in seven schools and roof repairs or replacements in 43 schools. Krawetz said he expects work on many of those projects could begin within weeks.

Saskatchewan School Boards Association president Roy Challis said the \$142 million, when added to the \$117 million in education capital funding announced last spring, adds up to a \$259 million commitment to school capital in just one fiscal year, as much as what was seen over the past several years combined.

“It will certainly speed up the work that needs to be done,” said Challis.

“We were starting to worry in some school divisions that we were going to start having bricks fall. It hadn’t happened yet because boards had found the money from the property taxpayer, but this money will help solve that.

“The number of roofs that are being fixed is a very good example of that. Most of these buildings were built in the 60s or 70s, some in the 80s. That’s a long time.”

The \$142 million is part of the \$500 million in infrastructure spending that the Saskatchewan Party government announced it was accelerating. The funding had originally been slated to make up part of a \$1.5 billion infrastructure promise in the coming budget, but the government said it was moving ahead some spending to help Saskatchewan weather the economic downturn.



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