

Province starting more pre-k programs [CA-SK] ^[1]

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EXCEERPTS

Citing long-term benefits such as lowering the teen crime , pregnancy and dropout rates, Saskatchewan Learning Minister Deb Higgins announced 15 more pre-kindergarten (pre-k) programs are to start in the province in the upcoming school year.

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Higgins said the province has had to review spending plans after the federal Conservatives announced they would not be continuing the proposed \$5-billion child - care agreement, signed earlier by the Liberals, past March 31, 2007.

What was originally planned to be universal province-wide pre-k programming for all four-year-olds has been reduced to an increase in pre-k classes, with most of those going to the urban centres.

"The restriction on resources and the federal funding not being there has meant that what we need to do is step back, look at the plan and make sure we're implementing (the program) where the needs are the highest," Higgins said.

Kathy Abernethy, a policy analyst with Saskatchewan Learning, said the department is waiting for a response from some of the school boards as to which communities will get the new pre-k classes.

"We do have rural spots for some of these classes, but most of the 15 will go to Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, because the cities have most of the children," she said.

Higgins said \$300,000 allocated last month in the provincial budget for childcare and pre-k programs will cover the 15 programs, bringing the total up to 119 pre-k classes in Saskatchewan.

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-Reprinted from the Leader-Post.

Region: Saskatchewan ^[2]

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