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## School maintenance funds increasing by 140 per cent

Edmonton... Provincial funding to school boards for special maintenance projects will increase by 140 per cent over the next three years, soaring from \$40 million last year to \$96 million in 2007-08.

Under the new Infrastructure Maintenance and Renewal Fund, school boards will receive \$48 million this school year, \$80 million in 2006-07, and \$96 million in 2007-08 - for a three-year total of \$224 million. This funding is on top of the \$391 million school boards receive annually for utilities, janitorial services, and basic maintenance.

"This funding - along with the recent increases in school operations and maintenance dollars - will make a huge difference in our schools," said Dr. Lyle Oberg, Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. "It just makes sense to protect our investments and extend the life of our schools. When schools are well maintained, students can focus on what matters most - their education."

Infrastructure Maintenance and Renewal funding can be used for water and sewer lines, immediate maintenance needs such as roofs, window replacement and weeping tiles, and general upgrades to floors, ceilings, and lockers. Boards are also encouraged to use a portion of their funding for projects that improve energy efficiency.

"Ensuring school jurisdictions have access to the dollars they need to keep schools in good working order helps us better meet the learning needs of our students, which remain our top priority," said Education Minister Gene Zwozdesky. "These dollars alleviate cost pressures felt by many school jurisdictions, and will help ensure students are learning in a well-maintained and safe environment."

Maintenance funding levels are currently based on enrolment and the amount of open school space maintained by the board. Government is considering a per-pupil approach based primarily on enrolment with a targeted implementation for 2006-07.

School boards will receive details of their infrastructure maintenance and renewal funding in the coming weeks.

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