

SPEECH

**HONOURABLE
DAVE HANCOCK
MINISTER
ALBERTA EDUCATION**

VISION FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT

**CNIB
12010 JASPER AVENUE
EDMONTON**

**MAY 29, 2008
12:15 P.M.**

(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)

INTRODUCTION

Thank you, and good afternoon everyone.

On behalf of Premier Stelmach and my colleagues in the Alberta Legislature, I'm honoured to be here today at the CNIB.

I'm pleased to be joined by so many people from the education and vision loss communities.

It reinforces the great working relationships we have in our province and in our education system.

CONSULTATION

In November 2007, Education met with stakeholders to formally gather feedback on the services we provide to students who are blind or visually impaired.

This one-day workshop proved to be beneficial for all participants.

Department staff and all of the participants at the workshop left with a reinforced and shared understanding of the needs of students with vision loss in Alberta.

Teachers for the visually impaired, other vision specialists, teacher assistants, and administrators at the workshop shared their frank thoughts and suggestions about how we can all work together to enhance services for Alberta's students.

ENHANCEMENTS

We listened, we learned, and now we're making changes.

Today, I'm pleased to announce that the Government of Alberta is investing more than \$9 million over the next three years to enhance services for blind and visually impaired students.

This funding will enable us to

- recruit more braille transcribers to ensure students receive their braille textbooks at the same time as their sighted peers;
- revise curriculum materials to enhance the ability of students with vision loss to write provincial examinations;
- increase the number of vision specialists so students receive more individualized attention and support to help them succeed in the classroom and achieve their educational goals; and

- provide increased access to specialized equipment, such as braille computers and closed circuit televisions.

Providing high-quality support for all students is a priority for this government.

I believe improving these services will further contribute to student success, high school completion and lifelong learning.

Of course, supporting students with vision loss is a shared responsibility between my department and education stakeholders.

And, it's clear all partners involved acknowledge that success depends upon teamwork.

I look forward to continuing to strengthen relationships with CNIB, the Alberta Society for the Visually Impaired, school authorities, and all other involved parties as we move forward.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for being here today so I could share this exciting news with you.

Also, thank you to all the groups that participated in the program review and provided thoughtful advice and guidance.

I am confident that our students with vision loss will benefit from these enhanced services.

Thank you!