

**Strengthening Hope: Pregnant and parenting teens completing high school
October 16, 2012, Braemar School, Edmonton
Hon Dave Hancock, Minister, Human Services**

On behalf of Premier Alison Redford, my colleague here with me today, the Minister of Education ... Jeff Johnson, I am honoured to bring greetings on behalf of our government.

It is a pleasure to be surrounded by such a large group of people who understand the value of getting a good education.

I am married to a teacher, and I look forward to opportunities to visit schools and speak with young Albertans.

They are always full of good ideas.

Today's students ARE the future of our province and it is important for government to do what it can to support them as they learn and grow into adulthood.

Through our social policy framework initiative, we have made a concentrated effort to consult with Albertans, both young and old, to find out what they want Alberta to look like in the future.

We want to know what's important and what we as a government, working with communities, can do to make things easier for the people that need help.

Human Services offers a range of programs that span a person's lifetime ... designed to provide a helping hand when it is needed most.

This includes helping eligible Albertans with the costs related to going to school and updating their skills to get into the workforce.

Through our existing Learner Income Support program, Human Services provides funding to approximately 20,000 Albertans each year.

Today I am here to tell you about a new way we are doing business!

Through our partnership with Terra Centre for Teen Parents and Catholic Family Service of Calgary we have a new bursary that integrates funding for students with the Child Care Subsidy program.

This bursary is available to eligible students attending this school and the Louise Dean Centre in Calgary.

What makes this program unique is ... we have changed the way funding flows between government and students ...

... we have also expanded the eligibility criteria to include pregnant teens.

This means more students at this school and the Louise Dean Centre will qualify for funding.

This 3-year pilot project has been designed to simplify the application processes and increase high school completion rates.

Provincial dollars have been transferred to the agencies ... who are now responsible for assessing the individual needs of each eligible student and distributing funding accordingly.

This streamlined process eliminates the need for students to apply to different programs ... and wait to hear back from government.

Instead, students can use this time wisely, focusing on their studies, and being responsible parents.

Alberta Education is working in partnership with Human Services and both agencies and, in 3 years, we will gather evidence of the results achieved through this innovative funding model.

As we go forward as a government ... we will continue to look for more ways to improve on the way we provide services and supports to Albertans, when they need help the most.

Again, thank you for inviting us here today.

I would now like to turn the microphone over to the Minister of Education to say a few words about his ministry's involvement in the project.

Thank you.