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**The 2013-2014 Expenditure Budget is tabled**

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**The Government puts Québec back on track for budget balance**

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**Quebec City, December 6 2012** – “We needed swift action to restore budget balance in 2013-2014. Our government’s first expenditure budget is the reflection of our determination to put public finances in order,” said Stéphane Bédard, Minister responsible for Government Administration, Chair of the Conseil du trésor and Government House Leader, as he tabled the detailed spending estimates of departments and agencies for the 2013-2014 fiscal year in the National Assembly.

He pointed out that the expenditures contributing to the budget deadlock left by the previous government amounted to \$1.1 billion for the 2012-2013 year, which was much higher than the \$800 million alluded to by the previous Finance Minister. To bring spending growth in line with the Government’s ability to pay, it will be contained at 1.9% in 2012-2013 and 1.8% in 2013-2014.

“Achieving a zero deficit is not just a collective responsibility, it’s a necessity,” said Minister Bédard. “That being said, all our attempts at restraint are the result of concerted action and have been well thought out. The Government’s main missions have been protected.”

**Priority for Health, Education and Family**

As befits the priorities of Québec, the largest part of Government spending growth will be devoted to Health, Education and Family. The overall budget of the Health and Social Services sector will be up by 4.8%, taking the contribution of the Fund to Finance Health and Social Services Institutions (FINESSS) into account. It will be used mainly to fund new initiatives to enhance primary care, giving an additional 750,000 Quebecers access to family doctors.

The budget for Education, Recreation and Sport and the Higher Education portfolio will go up by an overall 2.2%. The increase will be used to reduce class sizes, add more professional resources and improve services for students with disabilities, social maladjustments or learning difficulties.

The Parti Québécois is committed to finding a childcare place for every child in Québec. The budget for Family will therefore go up by 3.2%, and the money will be used to fund the additional 28,000 places that will be needed over the next four years.

**All departments and agencies have to play their part**

The budgets for all other portfolios will be reduced by \$122 million in 2013-2014, a decrease of 0.9%. However, some sectors will still get increases, such as Culture – up 2.1% – and Municipal Affairs, Regions and Land Occupancy – up 1.4%.

In order to meet its objectives in 2013-2014, the Government has also set a supplementary savings goal of \$200 million. At the beginning of the new fiscal year each department will be told how much it is expected to contribute. Another savings goal of \$200 million has been set for the consolidated entities, of which \$100 million will affect budget-funded agencies and special funds.

“We are determined to put order in our public finances starting right now, and the actions we are taking will have an impact far beyond 2013-2014,” said Minister Bédard.

**Improve the management of infrastructure projects**

In addition to never meeting its own budgeted spending targets, the previous government invested more and more into infrastructure without providing proper follow-up. As a result, those investments have significantly affected the spending levels and the debt service.

The Government’s action plan, tabled on November 20 in response to the SECOR-KPMG report, sets out a series of measures to tighten up both the planning and the management of infrastructure projects, two areas where serious deficiencies were noted. The Government will table a new Québec Infrastructure Plan by the spring. Forecast annual investments will average \$9.5 billion through 2013-2018.

“It is high time to correct the past negligence in Québec, which has led to unacceptable cost overruns and compounded the debt. Our roads, schools and hospitals are our collective wealth. They represent tangible investments for our citizens, and they have to be monitored scrupulously. The actions we take today will benefit all Québécois, both now and in the future,” said Minister Bédard.

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**Source:**

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