



June 2009

Dear Parents:

**The Saskatchewan government covers the cost of one eye exam every year for all children under the age of 18.** However, currently less than 40 per cent of eligible children receive regular eye exams.

We are working with the Saskatchewan Association of Optometrists to ensure that more children have their vision checked. One potential way is *Eye See...Eye Learn* -- a program we're currently piloting with kindergarten and pre-kindergarten children in the Greater Saskatoon Catholic School Division. This includes 34 schools in Saskatoon, two in Humboldt, and one each in Viscount and Biggar.

And that's why we're contacting you. As a parent of a child who is eligible for annual eye exams, we encourage you to take your children to an optometrist every year for an eye health exam.

Signs of vision problems can include squinting, blinking, problems focusing on a project, clumsiness, headaches, avoiding colouring or reading books, getting frustrated during play, and burning, itching, watering, red or droopy eyes. Even if your child does not show signs of vision problems, we encourage you to take your child to an optometrist. An eye examination is not painful and it is not necessary for your child to know how to read.

An eye exam is a critical part of maintaining your child's health and well-being, similar to regular immunizations and doctor exams. An eye exam is important for a number of reasons: Research shows that nearly 25 per cent of school-aged children have vision problems, while 80 per cent of what children learn is obtained through eyesight. Children with vision problems may not know a problem exists and therefore may not bring it to your attention. Undetected and untreated vision problems can affect a child's ability to read, learn and participate in childhood activities. Untreated vision problems may result in developmental delays, behavioural and social problems.

For more information about eye exams or for a list of Saskatchewan optometrists, please contact the Saskatchewan Association of Optometrists at 1-877-660-3937 or visit [www.optometrists.sk.ca](http://www.optometrists.sk.ca)

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Don McMorris in black ink.

Don McMorris  
Minister of Health

Handwritten signature of Ken Krawetz in black ink.

Ken Krawetz  
Deputy Premier and  
Minister of Education