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NEWS RELEASE - MAY 2, 2014

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## PROVINCE PROCLAIMS MAY AS SPEECH AND HEARING AWARENESS MONTH

Social Services Minister June Draude has proclaimed May 2014 as Speech and Hearing Awareness Month in Saskatchewan.

Speech and Hearing Awareness Month encourages the early detection and prevention of communication disorders, and seeks to increase the public's awareness to the issues faced by individuals who are experiencing them.

An increase of \$37 million in this year's 2014-15 Budget will go toward supporting the inclusion of people with disabilities into the social and economic life of our province.

"This investment demonstrates our commitment to Saskatchewan's vision of being the best place in Canada for people with disabilities to live," Draude said. "That's why it is more important than ever that we encourage those who experience speech and hearing disabilities along with all members of Saskatchewan's disability community to help government shape our province's Disability Strategy."

Province-wide public consultation forums are taking place. More information regarding the Saskatchewan Disability Strategy, as well as a listing of the upcoming consultation dates can be found at [www.saskatchewan.ca/disabilitystrategy](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/disabilitystrategy).

Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (SDHHS) Inc. has been providing services to people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing since 1981. SDHHS services for clients include sign language interpreter and computerized notetaker services; a community service worker program; a discount hearing aid battery program; and access to information and a wide range of technical aids and devices.

"One in five Canadians experience some form of hearing loss. Awareness and early screening is vital for people to get the assistance they need, such as sign language, lip reading instruction, or electronic devices," SDHHS Executive Director Nairn Gillies said. "Early access to speech and language will make our community inclusive. Saskatchewan has rich cultural heritage and families with deaf individuals add to the linguistic landscape with a vibrant visual language."

"I would like to thank Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services for the valuable services they provide to those with speech and hearing disabilities, and acknowledge their continued work to raise awareness of disability issues affecting their members," Draude said. "Partnerships such as this are allowing our government to work together with our community partners to help provide the required services to support those who need them."

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For more information, contact:

Tara Giroux  
Social Services  
Regina  
Phone: 306-787-3610  
Email: [tara.giroux@gov.sk.ca](mailto:tara.giroux@gov.sk.ca)

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