

Funding pulled from heritage language schools in Saskatchewan

Minister says \$225K in dropped funding can be provided by parents

[CBC News](#) Posted: Mar 06, 2016 11:39 AM CT Last Updated: Mar 06, 2016 3:03 PM CT



Refugee high school students get extra help learning English in an after school program. (CBC News)

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A government-subsidized language program in Saskatchewan says it's having its funding pulled after 25 years.

The Saskatchewan Organization for Heritage Languages has been operating language schools since 1991 with funding from the government, teaching more than 40 languages across the province.

According to the organization, the Ministry of Education says it will not renew the program's \$225,000 grant next year.

SOHL operates 80 heritage language schools and organizations. The schools focus on teaching language and culture to immigrants and refugees, and improving access to indigenous languages.

Schools across province

In Regina, there are heritage language schools for Chinese, Cree and Ojibway, Dari, Filipino and dozens of other languages.

However, the organization says the cuts will mean the continuation of many of the schools will be uncertain.

"As a result of the announcement by the Ministry of Education, many of these non-profit heritage language schools will be faced with the difficult decision of whether they can continue to operate," said SOHL President Girma Sahlu in a press release.

The program also receives funding from other organizations and relies on help from volunteers.

The organization is questioning the timing of the decision, when Canada is bringing in more refugees. It said the heritage classes are crucial support for newcomers searching for a way to feel at home in their new surroundings.

Decision due to economy: Ministry

Minister of Education Don Morgan spoke about the decision on Friday.

He said the heritage language and schools make the province a "culturally rich and diverse place," but said the decision to cut funding was made for economic reasons.

"This was a difficult decision made in light of the current economic situation in our province," he said.

According to the Ministry of Education, the heritage language program funding amounts to \$4.58 per student each month.

"We think this is a particular program that can be provided by the parents," he said.