



2023-24 BUDGET ADDRESS

Honourable Donna Harpauer
Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance
22 March 2023

Check against delivery

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Speaker, colleagues, and guests,...

It is so nice to see so many of you here today, in your legislature.

On such a great day, in our province.

The first Premier of our province, Walter Scott, had this to say about Saskatchewan's future.

"This province has as yet less than half a million souls,...

"And there is plenty of room for at least 10 million.

"Just as sure as the sun shines,... there will be within this province alone some day,...

"A population running into the tens of millions."

Premier Scott said those words in 1910,... at a time that Saskatchewan was growing by tens of thousands of people every year.

People came to this province from many places,... to build a better future and better life for themselves and their families.

When Walter Scott was Premier,... Saskatchewan grew at a pace that we have not seen since,...

Until now.

Mr. Speaker, just today,... we learned from Statistics Canada that in 2022,...

Saskatchewan grew by more than 29,000 people.

That is the biggest population increase we have seen in any single year since 1914,...

1914,...when Walter Scott was still Premier.

In other words,... we haven't seen this kind of growth since the last time we had a Premier named Scott.

It is my honour today to table a budget designed to ensure that growth continues,...

And that it's growth that works for everyone.

FISCAL PICTURE

Mr. Speaker, the 2023-24 Budget is built on a foundation of sound financial management,...

With a projected surplus of one billion dollars.

There are no tax increases and no new taxes in this budget, helping keep life affordable for Saskatchewan people.

When taxes, utilities and housing costs are combined, Saskatchewan is the most affordable place to live in Canada.

Saskatchewan's economy is leading the country in growth.

Saskatchewan is expected to lead all provinces in economic growth in 2022 and to be second in 2023, according to private sector forecasts.

Mr. Speaker, more people are living in our province than ever before,...

And more people are working in our province than ever before.

Employment reached an all-time high in 2022, adding over 20,000 new full-time jobs.

Already in 2023, there are 9,400 more people working in Saskatchewan than a year ago.

That's growth that works for everyone.

Business investment continues to grow.

More than 80 major projects have been committed to by private companies in recent years,,...

For total investment of nearly \$32 billion.

Saskatchewan has what the world needs.

And Saskatchewan is a safe, secure, sustainable supplier of valuable commodities in an increasingly unstable and dangerous world.

Our export growth is leading the nation,... up 56 per cent already this year on top of a 41 per cent increase last year.

More export sales abroad mean more jobs here at home.

We are seeing strong results for manufacturing sales,... for wholesale and retail trade,... and investment in building construction.

A growing economy means higher revenue from our resources like potash and oil and from companies investing in our province.

Total revenue is forecast to be \$19.7 billion in 2023-24, up 14.7 per cent from last year's budget.

Economic growth and our solid bottom line also allows our government to pay down up to \$1.0 billion in operating debt this fiscal year.

Paying down debt reduces interest costs by \$44 million this year and allows us to invest those savings in people, program and projects.

Including last fiscal year, debt retirement and lower borrowing have generated \$117 million in annual interest savings.

INVESTING IN PEOPLE

Mr. Speaker, our government does not seek growth for the sake of growth.

"The purpose of growth is to build a better quality of life for Saskatchewan people – to build strong communities and strong families – and grow a stronger Saskatchewan now and for the next decade."

That's a quote from our Premier in the Saskatchewan Plan for Growth.

And it's a perfect description of growth that works for everyone.

This budget builds that better quality of life by record investment in health care, education, social services, important infrastructure projects,... and the security and safety of Saskatchewan people.

Health

“Growth that works for everyone” means everyone in Saskatchewan has access to health care services they need when they need it.

This budget delivers record health investment of \$7.1 billion overall.

The Ministry of Health’s budget is a record \$6.9 billion, up 6.7 per cent from last year’s budget.

The 2023-24 Budget includes \$98.8 million, for the Health Human Resources action plan.

The plan, funded through the ministries of Health, Advanced Education and Immigration and Career Training, will recruit, train, incentivize and retain doctors, nurses and other health care professionals.

In Health, \$55.5 million in this budget is aimed at recruiting 250 full-time positions and expanding part-time positions in rural and remote areas around the province.

It also includes support for recruiting internationally educated health care workers and for the College of Medicine for new academic and research positions, special residency seats and family medicine seats.

In Advanced Education, \$25.2 million in new funding will expand training programs.

More than 550 seats will be added across 18 health training programs to help address critical market needs.

\$10.0 million will support the continuation of a 150-seat expansion in nursing programs.

And \$2.4 million will help train internationally educated healthcare providers.

Immigration and Career Training has \$5.2 million in this budget to assist with initiatives to fill current vacancies through the licensing of internationally educated healthcare workers who are already in Saskatchewan.

This budget includes a \$42.5 million increase to fund the largest volume of surgical procedures in the history of the province,...

6,000 more surgeries will bring the total to 103,000 this year.

Mr. Speaker, this investment will reduce the surgical waitlist to its pre-pandemic level by March 2024, a year ahead of schedule.

This budget supports the health and care of seniors with a \$39 million increase to procure long-term care beds and to support long-term care providers.

\$5.5 million will be used to hire 75 continuing care assistants. This initiative is the final phase of government's three-year commitment of \$18.4 million to hire 300 additional CCAs to deliver home care and support for seniors living in long-term care facilities.

There is a \$19.8 million increase in this budget for 64 permanent acute care beds – 36 at Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon, and 28 at Pasqua Hospital in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, the 2023-24 Budget includes an \$8.8 million increase to enhance emergency medical services in rural and remote areas.

This budget has a \$7.0 million increase for more medical imaging, primarily CT and MRI scans, and \$2.6 million for more endoscopy procedures to help reduce wait times for these high demand services.

This budget invests \$518 million into mental health and addictions programs and services – 7.5 per cent of total Ministry of Health spending – including targeted investment of \$12.4 million more than last year.

It's the highest-ever total investment for mental health and addictions programs and services.

New funding will provide counselling and treatment services as well as support for the second phase of the 150 additional addictions treatment spaces commitment,...

And provide funding for 50 newly established treatment spaces.

The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency will receive a further \$2.9 million for oncology drugs and additional staff.

It brings the agency's grant to \$222.7 million, its highest ever.

Mr. Speaker,... more doctors.... more nurses,... and more health care professionals,...

More diagnostics,... more surgeries,... and new urgent care centers,...

More acute care beds, more long-term care beds,... and more home care support for seniors,...

More mental health funding,... and more counselling services,... more spaces for addictions treatment,...

That's growth that works for everyone.

Education

The 2023-24 Budget includes more than \$4.0 billion for prekindergarten to grade 12 and post-secondary education.

That's up 6.2 per cent from last year's budget.

Mr. Speaker, a growing province means higher enrolment.

There are more than 189,000 students going to kindergarten to grade 12 schools in Saskatchewan, the most in more than 20 years.

Growth that works for everyone means every student receives the best possible education.

The Ministry of Education will provide a record investment of \$3.1 billion, an increase of \$192.8 million or 6.7 per cent over last year to support schools, early learning and child care, and libraries in a growing province.

Saskatchewan's 27 school divisions will receive \$2.0 billion in school operating funding, up \$49.4 million from last year's allocation.

The province is providing \$7 million to maintain the more than 200 additional full time educational assistants hired since September 2021 – supporting diverse student and classroom needs.

Mr. Speaker, in this budget there is \$23 million to support the startup

and operation of the new Saskatchewan Distance Learning Corporation – Sask DLC.

Students should have access to the widest possible number of learning opportunities regardless of where they live in the province.

Saskatchewan Distance Learning will provide those opportunities through a wide variety of online courses from kindergarten to grade 12, as well as high school electives.

Grade 12 completion and electives will be available to adult students as well.

This budget includes \$382.4 million for early learning and childcare, an increase of \$72.1 million or 23.3 per cent over last year.

This funding supports young families in our province, helping make life more affordable.

As of April 1st, 2023, it will reduce childcare fees for families of children up to the age of six to an average of \$10 per day.

Mr. Speaker, more students,... more schools,... more affordable child care...

That's growth that works for everyone.

Our government is also investing \$764.8 million into the post-secondary education sector this year, an increase of \$24.5 million or 3.3 per cent,...

Giving students more opportunities to prepare and pursue the careers of their choice right here in Saskatchewan.

Post-secondary institutions are receiving \$697.4 million in operating and capital grants, including \$432 million for the University of Regina, University of Saskatchewan and the federated and affiliated colleges.

There is \$171.1 million for Saskatchewan Polytechnic, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies and the Dumont Technical Institute, and there is \$35.6 million for Saskatchewan's Regional Colleges.

The 2023-24 Budget includes \$47 million for student supports, a 24 per cent increase from the 2022-23 Budget, due to growing use of the Student Aid Fund and the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship.

The Graduate Retention Program, the most generous support program of its kind in the country, will continue to provide up to \$20,000 in tax credits to post-secondary students who remain in the province to begin their careers and build their future.

In total, the program provides approximately \$65.0 million in support annually, and more than 81,000 students have claimed these credits to date.

Mr. Speaker, the 2023-24 Budget includes \$5.4 million to increase immigration through the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program,...

to support the influx of Ukrainians landing in Saskatchewan,... and to provide more funding for settlement services.

There is \$4 million to increase skilled trades training seats, primarily in construction and related trades,...

And \$1.2 million to increase the Apprenticeship Training Allowance for students living away from home to attend training and for an anticipated increase in apprentices.

Social Services and Assistance

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's growing economy means more people are working and fewer people require income assistance.

At the same time, we are increasing support for those who need it.

The 2023-24 Budget includes a record \$1.4 billion for the Ministry of Social Services, a record budget to help vulnerable people and families build a better life.

This budget includes an additional \$26.6 million in benefits to support people with low incomes, families and seniors.

For the second year in a row, Saskatchewan Income Support clients will receive higher monthly benefits.

This budget includes \$14.3 million to increase Saskatchewan Income Support benefit payments including the Adult Basic Benefit, the Shelter Benefit and the Alternative Heating Benefit by \$30 each per month.

Clients who receive the Saskatchewan Assured Income for disabilities, a program that did not exist 16 years ago, will receive \$30 more per month in living income benefits. The SAID program will continue to pay the actual costs of a number of expenses such as utilities.

An additional \$3 million fulfills Government's three-year commitment to increase the maximum Senior's Income Plan benefit.

The maximum monthly benefit will rise by \$30 per month to \$360.

Mr. Speaker,... over the course of our government's 16 budgets,...

The Senior's Income Plan benefit has quadrupled,...

From \$90 a month to \$360 a month.

That's growth that works for everyone.

Over the previous 16 budgets when the members opposite were in government.

The Senior's Income Plan benefit did not increase one dime.

That's no growth,... and that didn't work for anyone.

A \$2.9 million investment will help make the cost of living in personal care homes more affordable.

The Personal Care Home Benefit will increase by up to \$400 per month and SAID clients under age 65 who live in personal care homes will receive up to \$684 more per month.

Mr. Speaker, government-wide funding for people with disabilities is projected to be \$717.8 million in the 2023-24 Budget,...

Up \$38.8 million from last year's budget and up \$502.9 million, or 234 per cent since 2007-08.

Our government is committed to working with community organizations that assist people who have complex challenges and are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

This budget provides \$7.7 million to support two Indigenous-led pilot projects that provide supportive housing and wrap-around services for people experiencing homelessness in Saskatoon and Regina.

This also includes funding for permanent shelter spaces and after-hours services.

In 2023-24 the Ministry of Social Services will provide over \$400 million in funding to community-based organizations.

That's an increase of \$13.5 million for CBOs that work with people with intellectual disabilities,... those who support at risk children, youth and families,...

And approved private service homes that care for people with intellectual disabilities.

This lift for Social Services CBOs is part of Government's total \$17.6 million increase to the base budget for CBOs across government.

Mr. Speaker,... more support for Seniors... more support for people with disabilities,... more support for at-risk youth,...and more support for those who are most vulnerable and need assistance.

That's growth that works for everyone.

Protection of Persons and Property

Mr. Speaker, the 2023-24 Budget includes over \$1 billion in investments in public safety and the justice system.

Everyone in Saskatchewan deserves to be protected from

interpersonal violence.

That's why this budget provides operational funding for second stage housing to ensure women in dangerous situations can safely leave and stay away from abusive partners.

New funding of \$876,000 over three years will support survivors of interpersonal violence with the expansion of counseling services for clients living in second stage housing.

Over \$27.5 million in interpersonal violence supports and services are included in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, the 2023-24 Budget invests in police and law enforcement initiatives, including \$7.0 million to establish the Saskatchewan Marshals Service,...

To increase policing capacity within the province, with a focus on rural and remote areas.

When fully operational in mid-to-late 2026, the Saskatchewan Marshalls Service will have approximately 70 officers for an additional law enforcement presence across Saskatchewan, supporting the RCMP and municipal police operations, where appropriate.

This budget includes \$1.6 million to expand the Warrant Enforcement and Suppression Team (WEST), with a new unit in Prince Albert.

This new eight-officer unit targets offenders who represent a significant threat to the public.

It's the third unit of its kind in Saskatchewan.

There is \$1.6 million in this budget for a new Crime Reduction Team (CRT) in the Battlefords region.

The new CRT, with eight RCMP officers, targets street gangs and prolific offenders.

The expansion brings the total number of CRT units in the province to ten.

This budget also includes new funding of \$147,000 to build on the important work the Internet Child Exploitation unit, or ICE, does to protect children.

More police officers,... safer families,... safer communities,...

That's growth that works for everyone.

The Saskatchewan Firearms Secretariat has \$7.4 million in this budget to administer the Firearms Act and to reduce the criminal use of firearms while protecting the rights of law-abiding gun owners.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency has \$91.8 million in this budget to help protect the people of this province and create safe, strong communities.

It includes funding for the Provincial Disaster Assistance Program, which is being consolidated under the Agency.

And this budget includes funding for a new two-year term position to develop and oversee the restart of the Parkland College firefighting training program in Melville.

Investing in the Economy

Mr. Speaker, all of these new investments are possible because of Saskatchewan's strong and growing economy.

The province's economy is strengthened by key budget investments.

The 2023-24 Budget includes a \$1.4 million increase to open a trade office in Germany - the fourth largest economy in the world and the economic, financial, and manufacturing hub of the European Union.

This brings the international trade and investment strategy budget to \$19.3 million to advance the province's economic interests abroad.

Saskatchewan's expanded presence now includes nine trade offices that connect Saskatchewan businesses with investors and customers,...

And those efforts are paying off.

Saskatchewan's merchandise exports rose from \$37.0 billion in 2021 to \$52.4 billion in 2022 - an increase of 41.6 per cent.

And in the first month of 2023, exports were up even more,... 56 per cent over last year.

More exports abroad means more jobs here at home.

That's growth that works for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, this budget builds on Saskatchewan's position as a global leader in the exploration and mining of critical minerals.

This budget commits \$4 million to expand the Targeted Mineral Exploration Incentive,...

To include exploration drilling for all hard-rock minerals and increase the funding limit to support the development of these emerging commodities.

The Saskatchewan Mineral Exploration Tax Credit has been increased from 10 to 30 per cent to attract mineral exploration investment in Saskatchewan.

The increase makes Saskatchewan more competitive with jurisdictions with similar programs.

Saskatchewan's agriculture industry is at the centre of our growing economy.

Saskatchewan Growth Plan goals include growing crop production in the province to 45 million tonnes annually, increasing livestock receipts to \$3 billion per year,...

And growing agri-food exports to \$20 billion annually by the year 2030.

Saskatchewan producers harvested a crop of nearly 35 million tonnes in 2022, resulting in record agri-food exports of \$18.5 billion...

Signs of a strong and growing ag sector is on track to meet the Growth Plan goals.

The 2023-24 Budget includes \$548.2 million for the Ministry of Agriculture, a 19 per cent increase from the previous year's budget to

fund programs, services and agricultural research as well as providing business risk management programs.

This budget has \$89.8 million for strategic initiatives, including a record \$38 million for agricultural research and innovation.

This budget has \$408 million for a suite of federal-provincial risk management programs including Crop Insurance and AgriStability.

Average Crop Insurance coverage in 2023 is at a record-high level of \$446 per acre,... due to increased commodity prices and yield coverage.

The AgriStability compensation rate will increase from 70 to 80 per cent for the 2023 program year, to better support farmers in times of need.

Mr. Speaker, a growing province means growing communities.

Our government is committed to helping Saskatchewan communities meet the challenges of growth.

That's why our government introduced a dependable, predictable revenue sharing formula,... that grows as our economy grows.

The 2023-24 Budget includes the highest ever level of Municipal Revenue Sharing - \$297.9 million, an increase of \$35.3 million, or 13.4 per cent from last year's budget.

Municipal Revenue sharing is up 134 per cent since we formed government.

The 2023-24 Budget includes \$503 million of direct provincial support to municipalities, an increase of \$54.5 million or 12.2 per cent over last year's budget – for higher revenue sharing, infrastructure and a number of grants and initiatives from across government.

This budget includes \$249.1 million in targeted funding for First Nations and Metis people and organizations,... an increase of 6.8 per cent from last year.

This includes funding for First Nations economic development,... First Nations policing initiatives,... treaty land entitlement,... training initiatives,...

And many other important programs and partnerships with First Nations and Metis people.

Mr. Speaker, a growing economy and strong finances help to keep life affordable for Saskatchewan people.

Saskatchewan has among the lowest personal taxes in the country.

A Saskatchewan family of four with \$100,000 in total income pays \$2,443 less in combined provincial PIT and sales tax in 2023, when compared to 2007.

Overall, Saskatchewan is the most affordable place in Canada for a family of four, when taxes, utilities and housing costs combined are compared across the country.

A family with two adults, two dependent children, owning their own home with annual family income of \$75,000, \$100,000 and \$125,000 pay the lowest total amount in Canada for taxes, utilities and housing.

Keeping life affordable for Saskatchewan people...
That's growth that works for everyone.

Investing in Capital for a Growing Saskatchewan

Mr. Speaker, this budget is building Saskatchewan,...

With \$3.7 billion to build schools, hospitals, highways and other important projects needed in a growing province.

There is \$337.6 million for health care capital, a \$181.0 million increase over last year's budget.

This includes:

- \$98.6 million for the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital;
- \$38.0 million for the Weyburn General Hospital replacement;
- \$20.0 million for La Ronge long-term care; and
- \$10.0 million for specialized long-term care bed replacements.

It also includes:

- \$10.0 million in this budget for urgent care centres in Regina and Saskatoon;
- \$10.0 million for Grenfell long-term care; and
- \$2.6 million for planning for a number of projects including Rosthern Hospital, ... Battleford and District Care Centre, ... and an Integrated Care facility in Esterhazy.

This budget includes \$500,000 to continue planning for the replacement of the Yorkton Regional Health Centre.

In 2023-24, our government will invest \$776 million into operating,

maintaining, building and improving the province's roads and highways through the Ministry of Highways.

This includes over 1,000 kilometres of improvements to provincial highways for a total of 4,600 kilometres of highways improved over the past four years.

Withing this year's improvements, there will be additional investment in gravel, pavement, and road maintenance in Northern Saskatchewan to support the growing forestry industry.

That puts us on track to meet our Growth Plan commitment to upgrade and build 10,000 kilometres of provincial highways by 2030.

With this year's budget, more than \$12 billion has been invested into transportation infrastructure since 2008, improving more than 19,400 kilometres of provincial highways.

This budget includes \$152.3 million for education capital.

The 2023-24 Budget includes \$115.7 million to support the ongoing planning and construction of 15 new schools and the renovation of five existing schools that have been announced in previous budgets.

There is \$4.4 million to begin planning five new school capital projects, including a new Kindergarten to Grade 12 school to replace and consolidate the elementary school in Carlyle and a new K-12 Francophone school in Prince Albert.

As well as \$16 million, an increase of \$4 million, to buy or move relocatable classrooms.

Since 2008, approximately \$2.4 billion has been committed to build 60 new schools and to undertake 30 major renovation projects.

It also includes \$97.4 million for courts and corrections capital,... including \$75.4 million for the continued construction of the Saskatoon Remand Centre.

There is funding in this budget for the planning and design work for the Saskatchewan Polytechnic Campus Renewal.

In 2023-24, Crown corporations will invest \$2.1 billion into capital,... including \$1.2 billion by SaskPower, \$341.2 million by SaskEnergy and \$412.7 million by Sasktel, mainly to deploy fibre to rural customers and modernization through the rollout of SaskTel's 5G network.

Of course, all of those projects and construction activity is on top of the 80 major projects totaling \$32 billion of private sector investment in Saskatchewan.

More investment,... more construction,... more jobs.

That's growth that works for everyone.

Conclusion

Saskatchewan's population is at an all-time high,... growing faster than at any time since the early days of our province.

Our province has what the world needs,...

And our economy is leading the nation.

Our government's goal... and the goal of this budget,...

Is to ensure that growth continues,... and that it leads to a better quality of life for the more than 1.2 million people who now call Saskatchewan home.

More people, more jobs, and more opportunities.
More investment, more exports, and a growing economy.

More doctors, more nurses, and more surgeries.

More students, more schools, and more affordable child care.

Strong financial management, a balanced budget and paying down debt.

Building schools, building highways, and building hospitals.

Safer families and safer communities.

More support for seniors, for young people, and for people with disabilities.

A growing economy, a brighter future, and a growing province whose best days are still ahead.

That's growth that works for everyone.