

2003 - 04

SASKATCHEWAN  
Provincial Budget

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Our Plan for 2003 - 04



SASKATCHEWAN  
The Hon. Jim Melenchuk  
Minister of Finance

# Introduction

The Government's plan and budget for 2003-04 is the result of a comprehensive departmental planning and budget process over the past nine months. This plan and budget are part of continuing efforts to support a managing-for-results approach within government. Preparing plans, tracking progress and reporting back will lead to more and better information for managers and decision-makers, enhanced accountability to the public and, ultimately, improved government performance and a better quality of life for Saskatchewan people.

The Government's plan for 2003-04 touches upon past accomplishments and highlights key initiatives planned over the coming year in support of four overriding themes:

- A prosperous and competitive economy
- Strong and vibrant communities
- Healthy and self-reliant families
- Opportunities for youth

A fifth theme, "Modern and Competitive Infrastructure," emphasizing improvements to highways, water and sewer, schools and hospitals, etc., is woven throughout this document in support of the four themes listed above.

This document provides an overview of the key initiatives planned for the coming year. More detailed information about these and other important initiatives will be published later this year in department annual reports that will report on 2002-03 activities and present plans for 2003-04. Department plans will also include performance measures and baseline data to help the public monitor and evaluate the government's progress over time in achieving its stated priorities.

Departments will report back on actual results compared to their plans in 2003-04 Annual Reports, which will be released in July 2004. Information gathered through the reporting process will be used to continually re-evaluate the priorities and initiatives outlined in department plans.

Please note: The Action Plan initiatives on the following pages include a department reference at the end of each, indicating which area of Government is responsible for that particular action.

# A Prosperous and Competitive Economy

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*Our government's plan to expand and diversify our economy includes increasing investor awareness of the opportunities for business and industry development in Saskatchewan.*

[2003 Throne Speech]

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Despite difficult global economic conditions over 2001 and 2002, and two consecutive years of drought in Saskatchewan, our economy is performing well. Steady, positive economic growth is projected in 2003 and beyond fueled by both our traditional strengths and emerging new industries.

The following section identifies some key initiatives planned for the coming year that will increase our global competitiveness, ensure good working conditions for Saskatchewan people, encourage innovation and development of new technologies, support our agricultural sector and expand the northern economy.

## Maintain a Positive Business Climate to Support Investment and Job Creation

We continue to see the momentum of an economy that is diversified and growing. Our strong, competitive business climate is resulting in more prosperity for our businesses and more jobs for Saskatchewan people. The 2003-04 Budget builds on our success to date and will help to maintain a positive climate for investment and jobs.

The January 2002 KPMG Competitive Alternatives study confirmed that Saskatchewan is

one of the most competitive places to do business. Of the nine countries surveyed, Canada was the most competitive overall. Among all major cities in the North American midwest, Saskatoon was ranked the second most competitive and Saskatchewan's four largest cities – Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert and Moose Jaw – all ranked better than the Canadian average.

A key means of continuing to attract investment and jobs is the Premier's Investment Attraction Council, an internal body of ministers and senior officials established to ensure that government departments, agencies and Crown corporations work together in support of economic development. The Council has been instrumental in developing the ethanol strategy, the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program, the oil and gas royalty restructuring, a beef development strategy, an action plan on procurement and the Action Plan for Agro-Forestry.

Another key ongoing initiative is the Our Future is Wide Open campaign, part of the Government's ongoing commitment to improved attitudes about the province and promote business and investment in Saskatchewan.

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*We want to let everyone know that Saskatchewan is brimming with possibility, promise and prospects.*

[Premier Lorne Calvert, January 2003]

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### *Action Plan for 2003-04*

- Further improve business tax competitiveness by expanding the incremental Corporation Capital Tax exemption, originally introduced in the 2002-03 Budget, from \$5 million to \$7.5 million effective January 1, 2004 and to \$10 million effective January 1, 2005 for Saskatchewan-based businesses, to achieve an aggregate exemption level of up to \$20 million. About 100 corporations will be removed from the tax rolls, while other Saskatchewan-based businesses will see a reduction in their Corporation Capital Tax of up to \$30,000 per year. Saskatchewan has the highest Corporation Capital Tax exemption level of the nine provinces with a corporate capital tax [Finance]
- Continue to improve the competitiveness of Saskatchewan small business corporations by lowering the small business corporate income tax rate from six per cent to 5.5 per cent effective January 1, 2004 and to five per cent effective January 1, 2005. Since 1991, the small business income tax rate has been reduced by one-half and increased the level of income to which this rate applies from \$200,000 to \$300,000 [Finance]
- Continue efforts to maintain a competitive fiscal environment to stimulate increased oil and gas exploration and development activity. Major changes to oil and gas royalties and taxes were announced in October 2002. The changes included lower royalty and tax structures, new volume incentives and a reduced Corporation Capital Tax Surcharge rate for production from new wells and projects effective October 1, 2002 [Industry and Resources]
- Implement year two of the six-year, \$12.6 million Saskatchewan Mineral Exploration Incentive Program, announced in September 2002. In 2003-04, the program will cost \$2.1 million and includes:
  - ~ A 10-year royalty holiday for new precious and base metal mines
  - ~ Development of a competitive royalty and tax regime for diamond mining
  - ~ A rebate of the tax on fuel used to generate power in remote locations and for off-road mineral exploration
  - ~ Incentives to encourage grassroots mineral exploration by individual prospectors and exploration companies
  - ~ Enhanced airborne geophysical surveys [Industry and Resources]
- Continue to work with First Nations and the federal government in meeting Treaty Land Entitlement obligations. Government has facilitated the transfer of more than 470,000 acres of land to Saskatchewan First Nations since 1992. This land base is the core of long-term economic development opportunities for Saskatchewan First Nations [Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs]
- Promote development of the ethanol industry through the Greenprint for Ethanol Production released in March 2002. *The Ethanol Fuel Act*, proclaimed in July 2002, provides a legal framework to mandate an ethanol blend in gasoline sold in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan fuel distributors will be required to ensure that there is a five per cent average ethanol content in all Saskatchewan gasoline distributed in the province, beginning April 1, 2004. The percentage requirement increases to 7.5 per cent January 1, 2005. Government will spend an estimated \$3.36 million in 2003-04, increasing to \$15.2 million in 2004-05, to provide a 15 cent per litre grant to those fuel distributors who purchase their ethanol from Saskatchewan producers [Industry and Resources]

- The Aboriginal Employment Development Program (AEDP) strives to build a workforce in Saskatchewan where Aboriginal people compete for jobs based on their skills and qualifications, and where they have representation at all occupational levels in proportion to their population numbers in the province. To date, under this Program, employers have hired more than 1,500 qualified Aboriginal people. In 2003-04:
  - ~ Eight new partnership agreements will be signed with employer organizations
  - ~ The number of Aboriginal people hired in partnership organizations will increase by 10 per cent, from 1,500 in 2002-03 to 1,650 in 2003-04
  - ~ The number of people receiving Aboriginal cultural awareness education in partnership organizations will increase by 30 per cent [Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs]
- Nominate an estimated 100 principal applications under the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program. This program, which operates under an agreement with the federal government, allows Saskatchewan to nominate a set number of applicants who can make a significant economic contribution to the province [Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs]
- Expand Saskbiz.ca community profiles beyond the pilot project area to other communities throughout the province. The Saskbiz website ([www.saskbiz.ca](http://www.saskbiz.ca)) offers strategic investment information on Saskatchewan communities and recently received an Outstanding Economic Development Initiative award recognizing it as one of the best economic development promotional sites in North America. The website offers information on population, demographics, industries and the workforce in Saskatchewan and the map-based technology provides quick access to accurate, local and regional data which helps investors and site selectors looking to establish new businesses in Saskatchewan [Industry and Resources]
- Saskatchewan Finance introduced the Saskatchewan Electronic Tax Service (SETS) in 2001-02, offering businesses a secure, fast and convenient alternative to filing tax returns in paper format ([www.gov.sk.ca/finance/revenue/efile/](http://www.gov.sk.ca/finance/revenue/efile/)). In January 2003, SETS was simplified by allowing businesses to submit a return using an access code rather than having to fully register for the service. Beginning in 2003-04, inter-jurisdictional truckers belonging to the International Fuel Tax Agreement will be able to file returns and pay taxes and fees using SETS [Finance]
- Saskatchewan Justice introduced a new Corporate Registry computer system (COBRA) in 1999-2000, offering registered businesses, non-profit corporations and co-operatives enhanced organization profile histories and on-line search capabilities ([www.corporations.justice.gov.sk.ca](http://www.corporations.justice.gov.sk.ca)). In 2002-03, COBRA was enhanced to add on-line filing of incorporations, annual returns and other event types for business corporations. By the end of 2003-04, 30 per cent of total registrations and filings with the Corporate Registry will be completed on-line [Justice]
- Implement an action plan on procurement to make it easier and less expensive for Saskatchewan suppliers to sell goods and services to government [Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation]

## Good Working Conditions

The modern workplace is more complex and diverse than that of 30 years ago. Not only is the composition of the workforce significantly different, new industries, methods of work and markets have emerged in recent decades that have dynamically altered where, when, by and for whom work is now performed.

A healthy workplace encompassing safe and healthy work practices, fairness and equity, and inclusiveness and diversity is a key contributor to the economic well-being of the province. Injuries and inequity in the workplace exact a heavy toll on both employers and employees, particularly new entrants to the labour force. In 2001, injuries cost employers an estimated \$227.2 million in direct costs (compensation, medical aid and vocational rehabilitation). Positive employee-employer relations that reflect co-operation and teamwork are also keys to success and are essential to maintaining Saskatchewan's competitive position.

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*Occupational hazards are a primary reason why Saskatchewan and Canada continue to experience unacceptable levels of workplace injuries and illness. During 2003, Saskatchewan will expand its education program to prevent workplace accidents.*

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[2003 Throne Speech]

## Action Plan for 2003-04

- Provide information on labour standards to the 50,000 to 70,000 workers, employers and human resource practitioners who call annually to the Government's toll-free inquiry line [Labour]
- Improve compliance with health and safety standards through 3,000 on-site inspections and reviews of 300 health and safety programs [Labour]
- Conduct between 2,000 and 2,500 labour standards investigations [Labour]
- Provide conciliation services to employers and unions to resolve disputes and conclude negotiations to establish or renew collective agreements [Labour]
- Develop and support the Workplace Responsibility System by supporting occupational health and safety committees, assisting workplaces to develop health and safety programs and helping to develop occupational health and safety representatives in smaller, higher-risk workplaces [Labour]

## Foster Innovation

Innovation is a key driver of our economic growth, productivity and quality of life. A tradition of innovation has allowed Saskatchewan to develop a broad-based economy encompassing resources, food products, manufacturing, professional services, information technology and tourism. Innovative technologies developed at the universities have fueled rapid growth in information and communications, electronics and instrumentation and biotechnology.

Saskatchewan's universities continue to build on their success as centres of excellence in research and innovation. Between 1999-2000 and 2001-02, they posted a combined increase of 69 per cent in externally funded research and development. Investment in the provincial research parks and research agencies have further encouraged the development of high technology clusters, with national and international companies locating in Saskatchewan to access highly qualified people from our post-secondary institutions.

Continued research and development is vital to ensure that Saskatchewan stays competitive and is at the leading edge of technological advances.

#### *Action Plan for 2003-04*

- Begin operation of the Canadian Light Source, Canada's national synchrotron facility on the University of Saskatchewan campus, in January 2004. The \$173.5 million Canadian Light Source Synchrotron will be a powerful lure in attracting high technology companies. The synchrotron is creating direct jobs for researchers and has the potential to create hundreds of spin-off jobs in research [Industry and Resources]
- Begin construction of the Saskatchewan Forest Centre in Prince Albert in 2003. The Saskatchewan Forest Centre is charged with acquiring, creating and disseminating forest-related knowledge and ensuring that the forest industry has access to the best market research, new technologies and growth opportunities from across Canada and around the world. It is a non-profit company governed by a 13-member Board of Directors, nine from the private sector and four from government [Industry and Resources]
- Continue to support funding to the Petroleum Technology Research Centre (PTRC) in the Research Park at the University of Regina, a state-of-the-art facility that works to enhance the production and value of Saskatchewan's oil resources [Industry and Resources]
- Allocate approximately \$8 million through the Innovation and Science Fund to priority projects developed in consultation with the universities. This includes approximately \$4.8 million for upgrading the University of Saskatchewan Research Network (USR-Net) to support research in areas such as computer networking, medical imaging, structural sciences and bioinformatics by linking computers to improve access to information [Industry and Resources]
- Invest \$12.6 million in research and development funding for primary and value-added agriculture. In January 2003, the Government announced a \$3.12 million investment in agricultural research for 35 new agricultural research and development projects as part of its semi-annual funding program. This funding will help research and development at the University of Saskatchewan and projects at the Crop Development Centre, the Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute, the Western College of Veterinary Medicine and the Veterinary Infectious Disease Organization [Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization]
- Continue to offer a 15 per cent corporate income tax credit to encourage private sector investment in research and development and the expansion of knowledge-based industries in the province. In 2003, this credit is expected to provide \$10 million in research and development assistance to Saskatchewan businesses [Finance]



- Continue supporting Saskatchewan research into advanced road materials by using new road strengthening technology developed by Saskatchewan-based Pavement Scientific International on 100 km of Thin Membrane Surface (TMS) reconstruction [Highways and Transportation]
- Provide \$400,000 to the University of Regina to establish a Canada Research Chair on environmental change and society [Learning]
- Host the “Explore our Energy” conference in April 2003, which will provide the opportunity to examine energy possibilities in Saskatchewan, new oil and gas technology and research and future directions for Saskatchewan energy business [Industry and Resources]
- Saskatchewan Industry and Resources and the Saskatchewan Research Council (SRC) have recently partnered with Precarn Incorporated to make \$4 million in funding available over four years through the Saskatchewan Intelligent Systems Technologies – Precarn Alliance Program for the development and application of intelligent system technologies in Saskatchewan. Intelligent systems can be found in robotics, machine sensing, human-machine interfaces, neural networks and controls and intelligent computation. These systems have broad applications in a number of sectors including mining, forestry, agri-food, energy, environment, manufacturing, space and aerospace, medical and information technologies, communication and virtual reality [Industry and Resources]

## Accelerate Twinning and Develop Key Commercial Routes

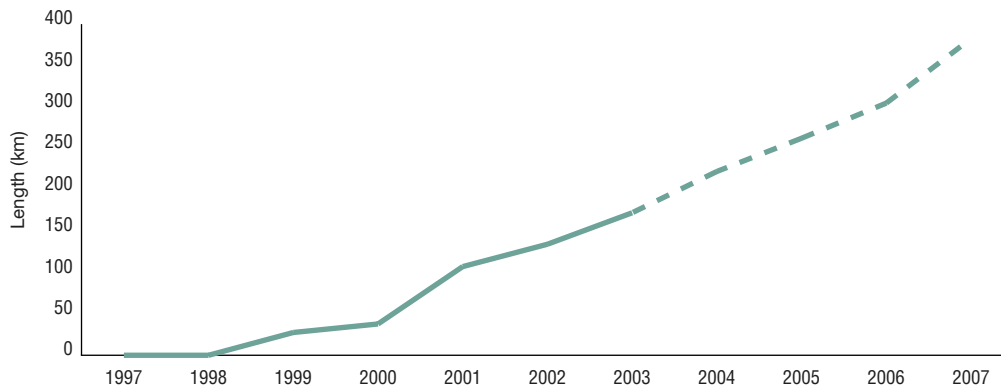
Saskatchewan’s economy is trade dependent – we need a competitive and accessible transportation system that will enable our producers, suppliers and manufacturers to access key commercial routes and link to major trade corridors. Our transportation network of roads and highways also connects families and communities and provides vital access to health, education and social services. Saskatchewan’s plan for transportation addresses these challenges and is producing results.

### Action Plan for 2003-04

- The province, in partnership with the federal government through the Strategic Highway Infrastructure Program (SHIP) and the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund (CSIF), will significantly accelerate progress on twinning:
  - ~ Highway 1 west will be twinned in 2003 – *one year ahead of schedule*
  - ~ Highway 1 east will be twinned in 2007 – *five years ahead of schedule*
  - ~ Highway 16 between North Battleford and Lloydminster will be twinned in 2007 – *three years ahead of schedule*
 [Highways and Transportation]



## Length of Twinning Highways 1 and 16



- Through the Centenary Fund, grade 13 km of Highway 6 north of the US border as part of a multi-year project to rebuild Highway 6 from the US border to 30 km north to support increasing north-south trade [Highways and Transportation]
- Recent regulation changes will result in year-round primary weight access on 10-month primary weight highways, providing increased transportation efficiency for Saskatchewan carriers and shippers [Highways and Transportation]
- As part of the federal-provincial Prairie Grain Roads Program, upgrade 150 km of Thin Membrane Surface roads on strategic grain haul corridors to a paved standard [Highways and Transportation]
- Continue the Centenary Enhanced Tourism Signing Program to promote Saskatchewan tourism. There are also initiatives to improve rest stop signing, expand directional signing for parks and provide new information signs at five major border crossings [Highways and Transportation]

## Support the Agriculture Sector

The agriculture and food industry in Saskatchewan is a vital component of our economy. Historically, the industry has been driven by international demand for wheat, barley and canola, while being augmented by a modest livestock sector. In recent years, this orientation has shifted, and both sectors have been changing and growing.

Saskatchewan farmers continue their significant international presence in the export of traditional crops, but now are major world players in new crops such as lentils and mustard seed as well. Fully one out of every seven acres is seeded annually to pulse and special crops. In total, today's farmers grow over 50 different crops – all of which are chosen in response to market conditions. Many of these new crops being produced are higher value, with the result that under normal climatic conditions, we continue to increase the output per acre of land. Furthermore, our farmers are among the lowest cost producers

internationally, in large part because they utilize some of the most advanced dryland farming technologies in the world.

The provincial livestock sector is also evolving and growing. In the mid-1990s, we set a goal of producing two million slaughter hogs by 2002. The industry achieved this goal and continues to expand. Despite the impact of the 2002 drought, beef cow numbers totaled 1.25 million head at the beginning of 2003, up two per cent from a year earlier. The potential exists for the beef cow herd to expand to two million, which will provide one million feeder animals to be finished locally and enable the doubling of provincial processing in 10 years.

Utilizing our expanding and more diverse primary output, agricultural processing is greater than ever before. The total value of foods and feeds processed in the province rose to \$1.77 billion in 2001, an increase of 49 per cent from the level in the mid-1990s.

Saskatchewan producers continue to address the challenges of technological change and international market distortions, the pressure to achieve economies of scale and the need to manage both production and price risks. With a supportive environment, our agricultural industry will maintain its expansion and economic contribution to the provincial economy. Such an environment will allow producers to deal with both the demands and the opportunities of risk management, food safety, environmental sustainability, renewal and science and innovation.

The droughts of 2001 and 2002 demonstrate the importance of a strong crop insurance program. For the 2002 crop, payments to producers have exceeded \$1 billion, representing approximately 40 per cent of the total insurance coverage provided. In addition to this ongoing program to address production risk, timely, short-term actions were taken to help farmers address the drought. These measures included the Herd Retention Program and the Livestock Drought Loan Program. In addition, the province introduced the 2002 Short-Term Hog Loan Program in response to drought-driven increases in feed costs and a declining market price for hogs.

Although the resilience of the agricultural sector was severely tested in 2002, favorable soil moisture conditions and reasonable commodity prices indicate the industry is poised to recover in 2003.

#### *Action Plan for 2003-04*

- Invest \$1 billion over the next five years to implement the federal-provincial Agricultural Policy Framework (APF), using the five chapter framework to enhance our efforts to build the agricultural sector:
  - ~ Risk Management Chapter: build enhanced crop insurance and new Net Income Stabilization Account (NISA) programs
  - ~ Food Safety and Food Quality Chapter: assist industry in implementing on-farm food safety programs and refine strategies to build Saskatchewan's food processing sector, ensuring Saskatchewan's food processing sector can provide safe foods
  - ~ Environment Chapter: increase efforts to convert marginal crop land to permanent cover (in the last two years the Conservation

Cover Program has resulted in approximately one million acres being sown to grass) and develop an Environmental Farm Plan workbook to facilitate farm planning

- ~ Renewal Chapter: provide farm families with better tools and resources to plan their future and respond to change (continue to develop the Farm Family Opportunities Initiative which proactively identifies and provides support for on-farm diversification, off-farm business and off-farm employment opportunities)
- ~ Science and Innovation Chapter: continue long-standing support to agricultural research to ensure farmers have access to leading-edge technology to stay competitive [Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization]

- Increase livestock production by improving access to capital, attracting new people to the industry, proactively identifying potential development opportunities and infrastructure requirements, and providing project support for new or expanding enterprises [Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization]
- Deliver the Agricultural New Generation Co-operatives program to enhance Saskatchewan's rural economy and to assist farmers in benefiting from the returns of value-added activity [Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization]
- Build markets for the agriculture and food sector by ensuring proper trade rules and promoting our products both domestically and internationally [Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization]
- Provide technology transfer and skill development for producers and their families, including specialist and technical expertise through extension services, financial advice and assistance in developing business plans, and

information and counseling services to deal with the stresses of the industry [Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization]

- Provide approximately \$240 million per year in tax exemptions and rebates for farm input costs, including the Provincial Sales Tax (PST) exemption for major farm inputs, the PST rebate for livestock and horticultural facilities, and the fuel tax exemption for farm activities [Finance]

## Strengthen the Northern Economy

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*The people of northern Saskatchewan will possess the means to address the goals and aspirations they have for their communities, their families and themselves. With respect for northern people, their cultures and traditions, Government will work as an active partner with communities, Aboriginal authorities, business and industry to promote the social and economic development of the north.*

[Northern Strategy vision statement]

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Saskatchewan's north is rich in culture, history and resources. The Northern Administration District makes up about half of Saskatchewan's total area (about 320,000 square kilometres) and includes a variety of distinct regions based on geography, resource base, population and history. The population of the north is approximately 36,000 people, with about 81 per cent of Aboriginal ancestry – Cree, Dene and Métis.

The geographic size of northern Saskatchewan, its rich resource base and small population presents

northerners with challenges and opportunities. Key to the future economic and social success of the north is its young population – 54 per cent of residents are under the age of 25, compared to 37 per cent provincially.

Our framework for development is the Northern Strategy ([www.northern.gov.sk.ca/default.html](http://www.northern.gov.sk.ca/default.html)), a comprehensive statement of agreed upon goals and objectives for the further social, economic and political development in the north. The Strategy is the product of the Premier's Dialogue with Northern Leaders that started in 1997 and culminated with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in 1998 between the Province, the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, the Prince Albert Grand Council, the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Association of Northern Communities (New North), and the three Athabasca Basin First Nations.

The 2003-04 action plan was shaped, in part, by the Northern Dialogue Tour led by Premier Calvert in September 2002. The following section identifies our intended outcomes and some key initiatives planned for the upcoming year to work in partnership with northern communities, Aboriginal authorities and businesses in support of northern social and economic development.

#### *Action Plan for 2003-04*

- Over the next five years, allocate \$20 million in provincial and federal funds to support economic development and infrastructure in the north through the new Northern Development Agreement, signed in La Ronge in October 2002 by provincial, federal and

northern representatives. Under the Agreement, the Governments of Canada and Saskatchewan will each provide \$10 million over the next five years [Northern Affairs]

- In 2003-04, work with the Northern Development Board and federal government will focus on identifying priority areas for investment and specific project eligibility criteria, in anticipation of an approximate \$2.5 million provincial investment of Agreement funding [Northern Affairs]
- Create or maintain an estimated 135 jobs through the \$2.5 million Northern Development Fund by providing commercial loans to businesses, and primary production loans to trappers, commercial fishers and wild rice growers [Northern Affairs]
- Lead the completion of immediate site safety improvement activities at the abandoned Gunnar uranium mine site and undertake project scoping work in anticipation of a commitment of federal funding for the clean-up of all abandoned uranium mine sites in northern Saskatchewan [Northern Affairs; Environment]
- Provide ongoing technical advisory and financial support to new northern commercial forest sector partners, including Northwest Communities Wood Products [Industry and Resources], La Loche Wood Products and Green Lake Métis Wood Products [Northern Affairs]
- Redesign Regional Development Organizations to lead regional development planning and decision-making across the north [Northern Affairs]
- Support the development of a \$3.5 million Saskatchewan-based fish processing plant creating 30 new direct jobs, and complete two remaining lakeside fish handling improvement projects [Northern Affairs]

- Improve the northern transportation system to strengthen economic development and better meet the needs of northern residents:
  - ~ Continue upgrading 40 km of access roads to four northern communities (Dillon, Timber Bay, Montreal Lake and Cumberland House)
  - ~ Invest over \$31 million to preserve, operate and improve provincial highways, airports and bridges in northern Saskatchewan
  - ~ Lengthen the runway and improve the surface and lighting at the La Loche airport [Highways and Transportation]

In addition to its transportation investment, Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation continues to work with northern groups and communities to enhance employment opportunities for northern residents.
- Through the Northern Labour Market Committee, work with other departments, northern partners and industry to continue to support skills and training opportunities in forestry and mineral sectors [Northern Affairs; Learning]
- Through Northern Saskatchewan Environmental Quality Committee (EQC) mine site inspections, strengthen public confidence in northern uranium mines' environmental protection and worker safety measures. Secure northern communities' input on the further development of decommissioning and reclamation plans for Cogema's Cluff Lake mine, as well as some 42 abandoned uranium mines, plus implementation of Cameco's Key Lake recyclable products project [Northern Affairs]
- Strengthen communications with the 31 member communities of the EQC regarding the development and ongoing operation and regulation of northern Saskatchewan's uranium mines [Northern Affairs]
- Encourage more mineral exploration and development (with related jobs for northerners and particularly youth) through the Saskatchewan Mineral Exploration Incentive Program, announced in September 2002. The mining sector is the largest employer in northern Saskatchewan (at about 1,600 jobs) and creates many more jobs in the transportation and northern services sectors [Industry and Resources]
- Investigate, through the Northern Labour Market Committee, potential negotiation of a third, five-year mineral sector Multi-Party Training Plan with federal, industry and northern Aboriginal partners [co-chaired by Northern Affairs, Learning and Community Resources and Employment]
- Administer 14 mineral surface leases for northern mining projects in a continued effort to increase the existing 50.3 per cent northerner employment rate on sites and northerners' \$85 million (53 per cent) share of contract and goods and services supply opportunities tied to these operations [Northern Affairs]
- Continue to lead the development, with northern partners, of a Non-Timber Forest Products Strategy, including the development of workshops and pilot projects that increase northerners' awareness of the commercial values of such non-timber forest products as wild edibles (e.g., mushrooms, berries, fiddleheads) and forest materials for the floral and craft industries (e.g., birch bark sleeves, conks, mosses, balsam wreaths) [Northern Affairs]
- Complete development of a northern tourism strategy and implement area tourism planning models in three pilot communities [Northern Affairs]

# Strong and Vibrant Communities

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*Within our vision of a wide open future for Saskatchewan, our government believes that secure families and vibrant communities are fundamental to the well being of our people and our province.*

[2003 Throne Speech]

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Government is working to build strong and vibrant Saskatchewan communities in partnership with other governments, First Nations and Métis people, businesses and community organizations and young people. We all share in the responsibilities and the opportunities to renew and revitalize Saskatchewan's urban, rural and northern communities.

Two years ago, Government embarked on a dialogue with Saskatchewan communities to hear not only concerns, but also innovative local ideas on issues such as health, housing, farming, transportation and improving social and economic structures. The priorities of people in communities across Saskatchewan are reflected in the following plans and actions for the coming year.

## Revitalizing Rural Communities

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Action Committee on the Rural Economy (ACRE) Vision Statement  
*Rural Saskatchewan – proud communities that welcome and embrace change. Working together as responsible stewards of the environment, we have healthy and diverse rural communities where people of all ages choose to live and work. A network of successful farms, communities and business enterprises is the foundation of our strong rural economy. We offer a competitive business environment that ensures our continued prosperity.*

[Final ACRE Report, March 2002]

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Rural Saskatchewan faces many challenges, including pressures on farm income due to periodic droughts and international trade subsidies, the need to attract economic development and jobs and the changing structure of rural communities. But there are also numerous opportunities, as demonstrated by the success stories of Saskatchewan's many rural entrepreneurs. Building the rural economy will come from increased diversification, a more competitive business environment and a greater focus on innovation and technology.

First Nations and Métis communities have identified the need to become involved in building the rural economy. The number and size of successful businesses owned by First Nations and Métis people are increasing and are major contributors to the rural and overall provincial



economy. Two Aboriginal-owned businesses located in rural Saskatchewan (NorSask forest products and Kitsaki Development Corporation) were listed in the top 150 Saskatchewan businesses in 2001.

Government recently released *A Strategy for Rural Saskatchewan: Responding to ACRE*, which outlines the framework of goals, priorities and actions that will guide our efforts to build the rural economy. But success cannot be achieved by Government alone – we are committed to working with individuals, businesses, co-operatives and communities, because fundamental change must also come from within rural Saskatchewan.

The focus of our rural development strategy is to create a competitive business environment, provide sustainable and effective public infrastructure and support strong and healthy communities. Through the rural strategy, we have already produced many positive results that will help to revitalize rural communities:

- Legislative changes to *The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act* which changed farmland ownership restrictions
- Introducing lower royalty and production tax structures on production from new oil and gas wells to increase economic activity in rural communities
- Ability to process more of the feed grain we produce by encouraging the production of ethanol-blended fuel and offering a grant of 15 cents per litre to fuel distributors for ethanol produced and consumed in Saskatchewan
- Expanding the organic sector by funding a \$500,000 partnership to provide support for organic certification
- Financial support to the Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association to develop a mentorship program to increase the number of rural veterinarians

#### *Action Plan for 2003-04*

ACRE has stated that reversing the trend in rural Saskatchewan will not happen overnight as the decline has been going on for the past 50 years. Government's rural development strategy is a long-term plan for sustained growth and prosperity. The lead agency for the strategy is Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization, with participation from a broad range of departments and agencies working together. During 2003-04 we will:

- Work with key tourism stakeholders to examine mechanisms for enhanced development and marketing of tourism in rural Saskatchewan
- Enhance the Livestock Loan Guarantee Program to allow for the provision of guarantees directly to individual feedlot operations
- Establish a feedlot facilities equity investment program to encourage participation in the feedlot sector by members of community associations and commercial lenders
- Establish a Rural Leadership Development Program that will give people the information and skills required to implement new development projects and programs in their communities
- Host a second Rural Economic Opportunities Conference



- Expand the mandate of ACRE to monitor implementation of the rural strategy and to recommend new initiatives during the next two years
- Support the province's eight regional colleges to provide over 30,000 education and training opportunities to rural and northern Saskatchewan residents, and support the K-12 schools in providing credit courses for secondary students via distance education
- Expand CommunityNet to 366 communities across Saskatchewan
- Provide SaskTel digital cellular service access to over 94 per cent of Saskatchewan's population

## A Clean and Healthy Environment

Saskatchewan is blessed with an abundance of natural resources and a clean and healthy environment. Our current and long-term prosperity depends on the proper protection, development and management of our environment and natural resources. Saskatchewan Environment works with other departments and many partners to ensure our resources and environment are properly protected, developed and managed for long-term sustainability. In particular, the department works in partnership with both the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan on a range of renewable resource issues and projects including allocation, land use planning and resource protection.

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*People are changing their attitudes and behavior as they realize that the health of the environment is a responsibility shared by all. Historically, there was little concern for the environment, and the results of this abuse are still evident. There are opportunities to do better in the future by working to understand the results of stresses to the environment, developing standard measures or indicators to track these stresses and developing effective programs to mitigate impacts to assure a sustainable future.*

[Saskatchewan's State of the Environment Report, 2001]

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Information on the current state of Saskatchewan's environment will be released in April 2003 in a State of the Environment Report. While Saskatchewan's overall environmental quality is good, we do face some challenges:

- Work still remains in addressing issues such as contaminants in ground water, minimizing the effects of municipal wastewater discharges and the management of nutrients and organics in our shallow surface water supplies
- Continued effort is required to maintain the quality of our air. Additional monitoring and collaboration with other agencies will be required to enable a full assessment of rural air quality
- Further enhancement of progress on waste minimization remains a challenge, as does the clean up of contaminated sites. Collaboration with the federal government on the clean up of abandoned uranium mine sites remains a priority

### *Action Plan for 2003-04*

- Expand air quality monitoring to Swift Current and Prince Albert and develop a public information/warning system based on air pollution levels [Environment]
- Apply a water quality index to seven major water basins in Saskatchewan to gauge aquatic protection [Environment]
- Continue development of regional waste authorities. Over \$1.6 million has been made available over the past three years to assist with developing six regional waste authorities; as a result, 88 municipal landfills have been closed. Regional waste systems will be able to apply for funding again in 2003-04, as \$575,000 will be available through the Centenary Fund [Environment]
- Under the Centenary Fund, \$2.15 million has been spent on remediating high-risk industrial sites over the past three years. Remediation is complete at three sites (Shragge Steel in Regina, IPCO Herbicide Plant in the RM of Corman Park and NWR Salvage in the RM of Vanscoy). We expect that the remaining three high-risk contaminated sites (Woodland Campus in Prince Albert, Inland Steel in Saskatoon and Northern Petroleum Refinery in Kamsack) will be completed in 2003-04. Also, more than 400 orphaned petroleum storage sites identified by municipalities have been assessed, and 70 sites have been cleaned up through the Centenary Fund. Approximately 30 more orphaned petroleum storage sites will be cleaned up in 2003-04 [Environment]
- Launch an enhanced fire prevention public relations campaign to reduce the number of forest fires and the damage they cause, continue to deliver effective, cost-efficient wildland fire management and maintain an effective forest fire fighting capacity to protect provincial resources and communities [Environment]
- Support energy conservation and efficiency initiatives by the Office of Energy Conservation and seek funding from the Government of Canada to implement a variety of measures [Environment; Industry and Resources]
- Continue to support climate change research, awareness and technology initiatives by the Petroleum Technology Research Centre, Climate Change Saskatchewan, International Test Centre for Carbon Dioxide Capture and Prairie Adaptation Research Collaborative [Environment; Industry and Resources]
- Support the sustainable management of forest resources, including forest inventory and forest health monitoring, at a cost of over \$3 million. An expanded forest inventory will allow the province to determine opportunities for new forest industries based on the long-term sustainable harvest of forest resources on provincial Crown lands. Forest health monitoring carried out by Saskatchewan Environment in co-operation with forest industries allows Government and industry to monitor the ecological health of the forest and the effects of harvesting activities [Environment]
- Saskatchewan's Biodiversity Action Plan, to be released later this year, will focus on ways to improve biodiversity conservation in the province [Environment]
- Continue to work towards completion of Representative Area Networks to ensure that the province's terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems persist into the future. Completion of the designation process will result in a network of sites protecting some 6.5 million hectares or approximately 10 per cent of the province [Environment]

- Work with First Nations to develop protocols to enforce environmental laws on reserves [Environment]
- Continue support for converting marginal crop land to perennial forage cover to promote soil conservation, greenhouse gas sequestration and wildlife habitat improvement [Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization; Environment]
- Continue to implement measures to reduce energy usage in provincial government buildings; our target is to reduce energy usage by 20 per cent in 70 of the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation's largest facilities by April 2005 [Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation]

### Safe Drinking Water

While the vast majority of Saskatchewan people have access to safe drinking water, some communities have problems with their water quality. Following the release of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Drinking Water Safety in North Battleford in March 2002, the Government of Saskatchewan accepted all recommendations directed to the Province and released a comprehensive, Long-Term Safe Drinking Water Strategy ([www.se.gov.sk.ca/environment/protection/water/water.asp](http://www.se.gov.sk.ca/environment/protection/water/water.asp)).

The Long-Term Safe Drinking Water Strategy is a key cross-government initiative led by Saskatchewan Environment (including the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority) and involving the Departments of Health, Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs and Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization.

### Action Plan for 2003-04

- 19 multi-year water and sewer projects have already been approved for \$10.1 million of federal and provincial funding under the Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program (CSIP). Projects include the Lumsden water treatment plant, the Maidstone well pipeline and water treatment upgrade and a new sewage lagoon and effluent irrigation system in Fort Qu'Appelle. Also, under the Northern Water and Sewer Program, \$4.9 million will be spent on 24 projects for 18 communities. Further projects will be approved for 2003-04 CSIP funding in the near future
- Through the Municipal Financing Corporation, municipalities can access financing to upgrade waterworks or related infrastructure
- Repair and upgrade 16 water control structures throughout the province, and undertake inspections and preparatory work for a further eight projects at a cost of \$3.7 million through the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority. These structures are an essential means of managing our water resources and ensuring water supply to all Saskatchewan residents. The largest project is the completion of Phase 2 rehabilitation of the Avonlea Dam, strengthening the dam and improving public safety downstream
- Increase the number of certified operators at provincially regulated waterworks and wastewater works to reach 475 certified operators by the end of 2003-04 and begin to implement continuing education requirements for waterworks operators
- Implement new, legally enforceable standards for bacteriological testing
- Employ "Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality" as conditions for waterworks licences

- Increase levels of monitoring, inspection and testing for provincially regulated water systems to a level of two inspections per year at all surface water systems and groundwater systems serving more than 500 people. All other waterworks and wastewater works will be inspected once each year
- Implement requirements for waterworks upset reporting (for incidents such as equipment failures or operational problems affecting water quality) and reporting of low disinfectant levels to provide for greater consumer safety
- Deliver the first annual State of Drinking Water Quality report
- Undertake watershed stewardship activities for key watersheds
- Develop the Saskatchewan Water Information Management system to give citizens access to reliable information about the quality and value of their drinking water, and the operations that produce it
- Establish regulations that will require municipalities to put in place rate and capital investment policies for their water utilities by January 1, 2005 and to publicly report on these policies by July 1, 2005
- Undertake consultations regarding amendments to *The Planning and Development Act, 1983* to ensure that:
  - ~ All subdivision application approvals are issued subject to the protection of and adequate provision of quality drinking water for the residents of the development
  - ~ All municipalities have in place zoning bylaws that address watershed protection plans to protect their drinking water supplies by 2007

## Strengthen Community Infrastructure

Up-to-date, reliable and competitive public infrastructure is essential to continued economic growth and social prosperity for Saskatchewan. Sound public investments in roads, buildings and municipal infrastructure can serve as a catalyst to private investment and help communities and people to stay connected. A modern and competitive infrastructure attracts investment that creates jobs and promotes economic and social prosperity in a growing and thriving province.

Changes in the rural economy, including elevator consolidation and branch line abandonment, have significantly increased the amount of grain transported by truck on rural highways that were not originally designed to carry heavy truck traffic. Expansion in the oil industry and diversification of the northern economy are key drivers of our economic growth, but the added traffic increases pressure on our highway system. With three per cent of Canada's population and 20 per cent of Canada's roads, Saskatchewan has more than twice as many roads per capita as any other province. Saskatchewan's geography, combined with federal policy changes that have transferred an enormous amount of freight onto the roads from the rail system, creates significant challenges on rural roads. The province's multi-year highway improvement program is addressing these challenges and producing results.

Three key initiatives provide financial support to urban, rural and northern communities for transportation and water and sewer infrastructure:

- Municipal Revenue Sharing Grants – unconditional operating assistance is provided to all municipalities in the province. In addition, conditional grants are provided to rural municipalities for heavy-haul high-volume road construction, bridges and traffic counting
- The Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program – announced in 2000, \$170 million will be spent over five years to develop, renew and enhance infrastructure in Saskatchewan communities. The first priority under the program is green municipal infrastructure, such as water and wastewater projects. Local economies will benefit from the creation of 6,000 seasonal jobs. In the past two years, the provincial government has contributed to 233 local projects at a cost of \$32 million
- The Centenary Fund – the 2000-01 Budget announced a multi-year investment in core infrastructure in six key areas:
  - ~ K-12 school capital and information technology projects
  - ~ University, Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) and regional college capital
  - ~ Municipal infrastructure
  - ~ Heritage properties and parks
  - ~ Highways, rural roads and environmental clean-up projects
  - ~ Social housing

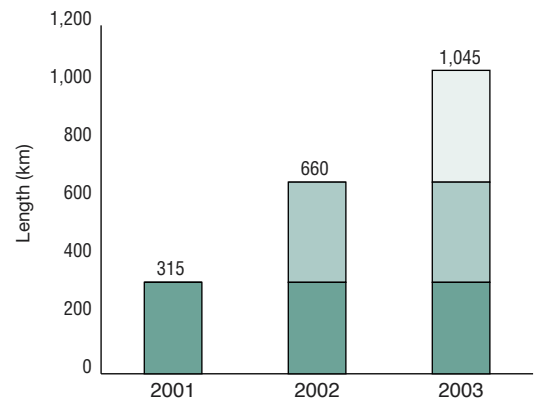
**Action Plan for 2003-04**

- To meet the demands of a growing economy, over 750 km of provincial highways will be improved, including:
  - ~ Reconstruct 11 km of Highway 55, 15 km of Highway 26 and surface 34 km of Highway 155 to accommodate increased haul in the forestry industry

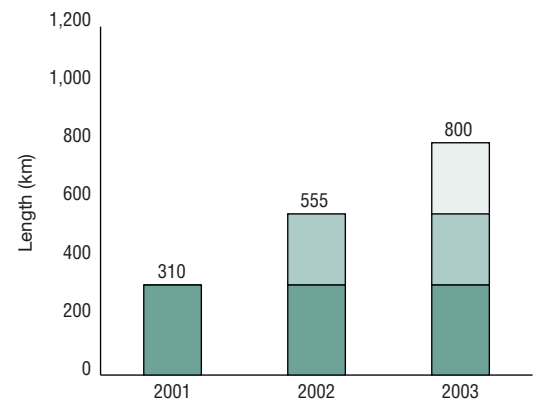
- ~ Repair 70 bridges and replace over 25 bridges or structures on the provincial highway system
- ~ Resurface approximately 275 km of the principal highway system and 110 km of the regional network
- ~ Meet our March 2001 commitment to upgrade 800 km of TMS roads over three years

[Highways and Transportation]

**Provincial Highway Resurfacing**



**TMS Improvements**



- Work in partnership with local governments, area transportation planning committees, producers and industry to develop a safe, sustainable and efficient transportation system:
  - ~ Continue partnering on 21 initiatives with 42 different partners to manage traffic on over 500 km of low-volume provincial highways
  - ~ In 2003, revenue from trucking partnership agreements with industrial partners will provide an additional \$2.85 million of transportation investment  
[Highways and Transportation]
- Increase total revenue sharing grants to municipalities by \$10 million, providing municipalities with additional unconditional funding to address local priorities. An additional \$10 million will be provided in 2004-05  
[Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs]
- CSIP will provide \$22 million of federal and provincial infrastructure funding. Twenty-seven multi-year water and sewer, solid waste, energy efficiency and local transportation projects for \$14.5 million have already been approved for 2003-04 funding and are under development. The remaining CSIP funding for 2003-04 will be allocated to new projects in the near future  
[Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs]
- Under the Centenary Fund, \$4.1 million of municipal infrastructure funding will be provided for 24 projects. Under this program, funding has been provided for transit vehicles for people with disabilities, fire halls and emergency buildings, a police station and regional landfills. For 2003-04, funding will be provided for additional transit vehicles, heritage properties, community buildings, parks, trails and playgrounds. Also, \$1.2 million will be provided to Western Development Museums, Government House and other government heritage properties  
[Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs]
- Funding will be provided through the Centenary Fund for several new and ongoing projects of benefit to northern communities, including:
  - ~ Affordable housing initiatives, specifically the construction of 92 new units between 2003 and 2006 [Community Resources and Employment]
  - ~ Upgrades to Cumberland House Historic Park [Environment]
  - ~ Canoe route/portage upgrades in Lac la Ronge Provincial Park [Environment]
- Funding will be provided for various northern capital projects:
  - ~ Funding for the new St. Joseph's Hospital in Ile-à-la-Crosse [Health]
  - ~ Funding for the new Ile-à-la-Crosse school [Learning]
  - ~ Continued funding for Northern Water and Sewer through the Centenary Fund, CSIP and the Northern Revenue Sharing Trust Account for water projects in Air Ronge, Bear Creek, Beauval, Brabant Lake, Buffalo Narrows, Creighton, Cumberland House, Ile-à-la-Crosse, La Ronge, Sled Lake, St. Georges Hill, Stony Rapids, Timber Bay, Turnor Lake and Uranium City and for wastewater projects in Denare Beach and Pinehouse [Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs]
- Upgrade 36 government buildings in 16 communities, including roof replacement and enhanced accessibility at Kelsey Campus in Saskatoon, roof replacement at SIAST Woodlands Campus in Prince Albert, a new elevator and improved accessibility at the Moose Jaw Court House and improved accessibility at the Regina Court House [Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation]



- Provide state-of-the-art communications support for education, health care and Government services to 366 communities through CommunityNet. CommunityNet will be complete by the fall of 2003, seven months ahead of the targeted completion date. When fully implemented, CommunityNet will be available in:
  - ~ 881 schools and education offices (including 86 First Nations schools)
  - ~ 39 regional colleges, offices and learning centres
  - ~ 310 health facilities
  - ~ 162 public libraries
  - ~ 256 government offices
 [Information Technology Office]
- CommunityNet is making it possible for SaskTel to expand its commercial high-speed Internet service to residences and businesses more quickly than it originally planned. Service will be extended this year, bringing the total to 237 communities. This rapid expansion will see high-speed Internet being available to residents in communities as small as several hundred people, making Saskatchewan the most connected province in Canada. This expansion will allow Saskatchewan businesses to better compete in the global marketplace by opening doors for the sale of locally-manufactured goods and services to millions of potential customers throughout the world [SaskTel]

### Safe Communities

Generally, Saskatchewan residents are as safe as residents of other provinces. However, this does not hold true for all population groups and communities. Our poorest communities –

predominantly inner-city, on-reserve and in the north – experience the most crime. In response, Saskatchewan Justice and Saskatchewan Corrections and Public Safety are using targeted, integrated approaches and continue to work with communities to develop appropriate responses. Programs and policies are assessed and developed to effectively combat crime and rehabilitate offenders. In particular, we are working with Aboriginal organizations, communities and individuals to adapt the criminal justice system so that it meets their needs for safety and security.

Canadians are increasingly concerned about the overall risks to security and safety. The Province has shared responsibility in many of the areas related to public safety and security. While Saskatchewan in general is at relatively low risk as a target for terrorist activities, we have recently experienced natural disasters that have challenged the abilities of municipalities, the provincial government and the federal government to respond (e.g., flooding in 2000, forest fires and wildfires in 2002). A key question has become: “What level of response is appropriate at the local, regional, provincial and national levels?”

There are also important changes in technology, the marketplace and the global economy. Another challenge is the development of an effective regulatory framework, reflecting current best practices, technology and safety/security requirements in a way that balances risks and responsibilities more equitably between Government, the business community and individuals.



Government responsibilities for public safety were reorganized in March 2002 with the creation of the new Department of Corrections and Public Safety, which brings together adult and youth corrections, protection and emergency services, and licensing and inspections. Saskatchewan Justice retains responsibility for victim's services, policing, court administration, prosecution, and legal aid.

#### *Action Plan for 2003-04*

- Saskatchewan Corrections and Public Safety will promote safe communities by:
  - ~ Supervising approximately 1,250 adult offenders in custody and 5,660 in the community
  - ~ Supervising approximately 330 young offenders in custody and 2,500 in the community
  - ~ Inspecting about 8,000 to 10,000 boilers and pressure vessels, 200 to 220 amusement rides and 2,000 to 2,400 elevating devices
- Fund 10 new police positions this year to support targeted approaches to reducing crime [Justice]
- Continue targeted crime prevention and community policing programs, including the Serious and Habitual Offenders Comprehensive Action Plan and support for serious crime units [Corrections and Public Safety; Justice]
- Continue support for community justice programs that facilitate a variety of services to 67 of Saskatchewan's 72 First Nations, including crime prevention, community development and public education, support services for victims and offenders, alternative measures and supervision of low risk offenders [Justice]
- Extend the Sask911 service to Lloydminster and northern communities this year, completing implementation to all but the most remote communities in the province [Corrections and Public Safety]
- Implement Phase 2 of the Regina Auto Theft Strategy, with a targeted reduction of auto thefts by 10 per cent in 2003 over 2002. Auto theft in Regina has decreased by 37 per cent since the program was implemented in February 2002 [Corrections and Public Safety; Justice]
- Expand integrated urban crime response programs to North Battleford and Saskatoon [Corrections and Public Safety; Justice]
- Develop an action plan to address the recommendations outlined in the report of the Office of the Ombudsman, including a plan to replace the Regina Correctional Centre [Corrections and Public Safety; Justice]
- Continue dialogue with the Commission of First Nations and Métis People and Justice Reform [Corrections and Public Safety; Justice]
- Establish an Elders Advisory Committee to the Departments of Justice and Corrections and Public Safety on program and policy issues [Corrections and Public Safety; Justice]
- Coordinate the implementation of a comprehensive provincial government public emergency and security plan [Corrections and Public Safety]
- Implement a fire prevention and suppression strategy for communities in the forest fringe areas [Corrections and Public Safety; Environment]

# Healthy and Self-Reliant Families

Saskatchewan's Early Childhood Development Strategy provides the foundation for achieving our goal of healthy and self-reliant families by supporting the growth and development of our most vulnerable children. Today, across the province, more children and their families are benefiting from a variety of important public services, including better child care facilities, nutritional lunch programs, community education initiatives, opportunities to help families become more independent and quality health services.

The following sections identify some key initiatives planned over the next year to support the development of healthy and self-reliant families.

## Ensure All Children Have the Best Possible Start in Life

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*The formative years of childhood are crucial to achieving our potential as adults.*

[2003 Throne Speech]

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Saskatchewan's Early Childhood Development Strategy ([www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/echild/index.html](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/echild/index.html)) is a comprehensive, long-term plan that builds on existing early childhood development programs to ensure that children prenatal to age five have the best possible start in life. The KidsFirst program supports the healthy growth and development of our most vulnerable children by providing intensive support to families in communities across the province where the need is greatest – that is, where the greatest concentration of

vulnerable families exists. This is accomplished through innovative partnerships among families, communities, community organizations, schools, health authorities, Aboriginal organizations and governments.

The nine targeted communities that receive KidsFirst funding include: the north, Nipawin, Meadow Lake, Prince Albert, North Battleford, Yorkton, Regina, Saskatoon and Moose Jaw. All other communities will benefit from better integration of existing services. Community developers located in other areas across the province will ensure that families in need get connected to resources in their communities.

The Early Childhood Development Strategy is a key cross-government initiative involving the Departments of Learning, Health, Community Resources and Employment, and Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs.

### Action Plan for 2003-04

- In-hospital screening of new births to identify families in need of support:
  - ~ 95 per cent of births in targeted communities will be screened
  - ~ 90 per cent of all Saskatchewan births will be screened, an increase of 10 per cent from 2002-03
- Early childhood development services will be provided to 340 new post-natal mothers and their families for a total of 763 post-natal families
- Enhanced provision of mental health and addictions counseling services (a further eight full-time equivalents will be funded in 2003-04 for a total of 21)

- As of the end of September 2002, seven of the nine targeted communities had created 72 new child care spaces; by the end of March 2003, a further 78 spaces are expected to be created for a total of 150 in 2002-03. In 2003-04, the number of child care spaces will increase by 80 for a combined total of 230 new child care spaces in targeted communities
- As of the end of September 2002, five of the nine targeted communities had expanded existing early learning programs, resulting in the development of 55 new early learning spaces; by the end of March 2003, a further 65 spaces are expected to be created for a total of 120 in 2002-03. In 2003-04, the number of early learning spaces will increase by 40 for a combined total of 160 new early learning spaces in targeted communities
- Community developers have been hired in other areas across the province to ensure that families in need get connected to resources in their communities

## Children are Ready to Learn and Schools are Ready for Children

Schools face both challenges and opportunities in meeting the needs of learners, including a high number of vulnerable children and youth and increasing numbers of learners of all ages with diverse and special needs that may require more costly accommodations or supports to participate and achieve positive outcomes.

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*As our children reach school age, our government responds by supporting programs for Kindergarten to Grade 12. Additional support is provided for at-risk and special needs students.*

[2003 Throne Speech]

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Community-based approaches to educating our children are working to address these challenges and opportunities. Community schools, first launched in Saskatchewan in 1980, help ensure that all children, regardless of their individual social and economic circumstances, receive a quality education. Community schools draw on parent and community involvement in the school to help students develop and learn. Preschoolers, students and their families are provided with enhanced programming such as pre-kindergarten, nutrition programs, cultural activities, and adult education and training opportunities. We know that support provided through community schools pays off in long-term benefits.

Since 2000, the number of community schools in Saskatchewan has more than doubled from 41 to 88 and expanded to include secondary and rural schools.

Building on the experience of community schools and the innovation of Saskatchewan educators, the Role of the School Task Force developed the School<sup>Plus</sup> concept. School<sup>Plus</sup> will integrate education and human services to ensure that our schools are able to respond to the particular needs of *each* community and *all* of our students.

Government is working in collaboration with other human service providers and community agencies through the Saskatchewan Council on Children and Youth to implement School<sup>Plus</sup>, to make schools the centres of learning and community support for children and families. School<sup>Plus</sup> is a key priority for this government – as the ability of schools to meet the developmental and learning needs of children and youth increases, we can expect more young people to succeed in school.

#### *Action Plan for 2003-04*

- Extend pre-kindergarten through 100 programs in 42 communities, from 85 pre-kindergarten programs in 31 communities [Learning]
- Field test effective practices toward School<sup>Plus</sup> implementation in 21 school divisions across the province. This will involve consultation with school communities to identify current strengths and areas for enhancement in both the learning program and supports for learning [Learning; Community Resources and Employment; Health; Justice; Culture, Youth and Recreation; and Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs]
- Support Aboriginal curriculum initiatives, including the revision of the Native Studies 20 course and development of Cree and Dene 10, 20 and 30 [Learning]
- Provide funding to improve library services for Aboriginal people and to ensure universal access to library services for all residents [Learning]
- Increase the Foundation Operating Grant to fully cover teachers' collective agreement costs for 2003 [Learning]
- Financial incentives will be used to encourage the amalgamation of several K-12 school divisions, resulting in an estimated 25 per cent reduction in the number of school divisions in

the province (from 99 to 75) by the fall of 2003 and enabling a full range of services to students in each division [Learning]

- Over the next two years, \$32.8 million will be spent on K-12 capital projects [Learning]

### **Healthy Saskatchewan Families**

Good health is fundamental to the quality of life of Saskatchewan families. Saskatchewan's health system serves a population of just over one million people and Government will spend more than \$2.5 billion on health care this year (just over 42 cents of every operating dollar spent). Below are some examples of the number and types of services this funding provides for:

- 4,761,800 visits to family physicians and 920,700 visits to specialists
- Coverage of 77 per cent of the total costs of nursing home care for some 9,000 residents in special-care homes, hospitals and health centres
- 800,000 days of in-patient hospital care
- More than 266,000 radiology services, 125,000 ultrasounds, 53,600 CT scans and more than 10,800 MRI exams
- 1,300,000 tests at the Provincial Lab, in addition to millions more in labs at hospitals and physicians' clinics

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*Saskatchewan pioneered both publicly administered hospitalization and medicare in North America. Our Government's plan will ensure that quality health care is available to all.*

[2003 Throne Speech]

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Change will be needed to sustain our health care system. Saskatchewan was one of the first provinces to undertake an in-depth review of how our health services are delivered, resulting in *The Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care*. The Action Plan is a blueprint for our health care system to improve and secure quality health care for all Saskatchewan people.

Government is committed to implementing the Action Plan and work has already begun to address key challenges in the system. Some first-year highlights include:

- Establishing 12 new Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) to improve province-wide planning and co-ordination of services
- Creating Canada's first Health Quality Council to develop innovative ways to improve health care quality
- Improving management of surgical waiting lists by establishing the Saskatchewan Surgical Care Network ([www.sasksurgery.ca](http://www.sasksurgery.ca)) to develop a province-wide surgical care registry and tools to assess and fairly rank patients for surgery. A website launched earlier this year provides information about access to surgery and expected wait times

Concrete steps are also being taken to create primary health care teams, attract the doctors, nurses and other health providers we need, and improve the delivery of every day health services in communities. The Action Plan will continue to guide our decisions and investments in the health system in the years ahead. Some key initiatives planned for the coming year, to build on the progress already made, are outlined below.

#### *Action Plan for 2003-04*

- Over the coming year, the Department of Health, Regional Health Authorities and other key stakeholders will continue implementation of the Action Plan with:
  - ~ Full implementation of a health telephone advice line to enable people to get easier, faster access to important information, 24 hours a day, seven days a week
  - ~ Additional information on other regional sites added to the Saskatchewan Surgical Care Network website as the surgical registry is implemented. Currently, the website provides information about wait times for non-emergent surgery in Regina and Saskatoon
  - ~ Developing primary health care teams in Regional Health Authorities – primary health care teams are expected to be established in all RHAs this year
  - ~ Training Emergency Medical Responders to the Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) level; based on year one of the initiative, review and update training requirements with Regional Health Authorities. The three-year training target for this initiative is 240 EMTs
  - ~ Support for northern health authorities through funding for primary care and prevention initiatives
  - ~ Continued funding for the Health Quality Council
- Regional Health Authorities will receive funding to expand and enhance regional health services, including:
  - ~ More service at existing dialysis sites and two new satellite locations
  - ~ Improved access to specialized medical imaging services such as CT scans and heart vessel examinations

- ~ Expanded capacity of the poison information centre which has proved very valuable since it was introduced in September 2001 [Health]
- \$19 million in funding for medical capital equipment [Health]
- Continued recruitment and retention of health professionals – key initiatives over the coming year include:
  - ~ Funding for return-service bursaries (over 400 bursaries were awarded in 2002-03) and professional development programs
  - ~ Implementing new physician alternate payment agreements
  - ~ Improving working conditions and productivity by designing and implementing injury prevention and return-to-work programs for RHA employees
  - ~ Maintaining 40 opportunities for northern residents to upgrade their math and science skills through the Northern Health Science Access Program
  - ~ Adding 40 seats in the Northern Nursing Education Program, increasing the number of nursing seats for RNs and RPNs to 300 in each year
  - ~ Continuing intake of 60 students per year at the College of Medicine [Health]
- The provincial response to the West Nile Virus will include public education, surveillance to track the disease in birds, mosquitoes, horses and people, and mosquito control programs. Assistance will be provided to municipalities to increase mosquito control in those areas where the spread of the West Nile Virus is most likely to occur [Health]

- Funding for construction on the Fort Qu'Appelle First Nations Hospital, the Weyburn Regional Care Centre, the Yorkton Long-Term Care Centre and the Melfort Regional Care Centre and a new hospital in Ile-à-la-Crosse [Health]

### Families Have Opportunities to Work and Play

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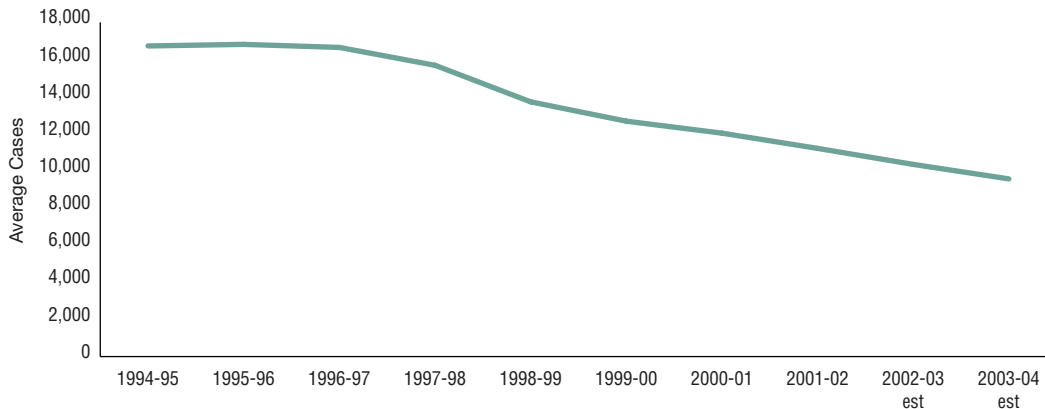
*During the past several years, the social services system in Saskatchewan has changed its emphasis from that of a traditional welfare agency to one that promotes independence through a variety of supports for families and individuals.*

[2003 Throne Speech]

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We have long been committed to helping vulnerable families and individuals build independence and improve their quality of life. Saskatchewan's Building Independence program continues to reduce the number of families with children reliant on social assistance by supporting their participation in the workforce and economy. Since its introduction in 1997, Building Independence has helped more than 6,000 families – including more than 13,000 children – leave social assistance by eliminating barriers to employment. Reforms have proven highly effective. Family welfare dependency has declined by almost 40 per cent from 1996 to 2002.

## Social Assistance Caseload Trend Families with Children



Reducing welfare means two things. First and foremost, when people have the opportunity to participate in the workforce, they are better able to provide for themselves and their families. Secondly, the reduction in caseloads results in substantial cost savings to government.

Safe and affordable housing contributes to secure, well-functioning families. The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation provides housing to approximately 8,000 families. In addition, the province's Centenary Affordable Housing Program (CAHP), also administered by the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, was launched last year with construction of 124 units for seniors and northern families. This program is cost-shared between the Province and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). CAHP will receive a total of \$45.86 million over five years from the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, CMHC, municipalities and other sources. Over the five-year period of the program, the funding is expected to generate up to

\$135 million in new construction, up to 1,500 new affordable housing units, and up to 1,400 person years of employment in the construction industry. Funding will be targeted to home ownership, inner city renewal and affordable rental.

We are seeing the direct results of these initiatives. The incidence of poverty in Saskatchewan has declined since the mid-1990s. Child poverty in Saskatchewan, defined by Statistics Canada's After Tax Low Income Cut Offs (LICOs), stood at 18.2 per cent in 1995 and declined to 11.6 per cent in 2000. Child poverty in Saskatchewan is below the national average of 12.5 per cent.

Too often, working people have to choose between the demands of work and family – between doing their jobs and caring for their children or, increasingly, their parents. This juggling act puts severe stress on people and has far-reaching effects.



The *Labour Standards Act* has been amended to increase job-protected leave for new parents. In addition, federal-provincial labour ministers accepted the recommendations of *Work-Life Balance in Canada: A Report to Ministers Responsible for Labour in Canada*, outlining the effects that changes in family life and the workplace have had on working people and the resulting impact on productivity. Specifically, ministers agreed with the recommendation proposing that jurisdictions implement an incentive or awards program to encourage workable and co-operative ways to increase work-life balance, thereby reducing the negative impact on employees and increasing the bottom line for employers.

Sports, recreation, culture and multicultural initiatives are also important components of family life. Government allocates a portion of the annual lottery profits generated in Saskatchewan to support the activities of urban, rural and northern municipalities, and Aboriginal and voluntary organizations providing programs and services in these areas. In 2002-03, \$26.7 million was allocated to more than 12,000 volunteer, non-profit groups providing sport, culture and recreation programs.

The Community Initiatives Fund, which receives a portion of the profits from casinos in Regina and Moose Jaw, also provides funding to community groups for initiatives of benefit to Saskatchewan families. Since the inception of this Fund in 1997, more than 1,700 community groups have received more than \$12.1 million (as of

March 31, 2003) to support approximately 2,000 programs, including:

- Food banks and school nutrition programs
- Programs for children and youth with physical or mental disabilities
- Sport, culture and recreation programs such as summer camps and summer play programs, youth centre activities, leadership development, and inner city sport and recreation programs
- Prevention and intervention programs dealing with family violence and violence prevention, teen parenting, life skills and sexual assault
- Community/school parenting programs, preschool programs, home and school programs, alternative learning, and summer learning programs

#### *Action Plan for 2003-04*

- The demand for social assistance will be further reduced, subject to stable economic conditions, from a monthly average caseload of just under 30,000 in 2002-03 to 27,600 in 2003-04; the total number of people dependent on social assistance is projected to decrease from 54,800 in 2002-03 to 50,800 [Community Resources and Employment]
- The 2003-04 Budget includes \$2 million in new funding for an array of initiatives aimed at providing persons with disabilities with the supports they need to become employed. Saskatchewan Community Resources and Employment is expanding supports to identify realistic workplace options and effective strategies for job maintenance and ongoing independence. \$1 million has been added to provide a \$10 per month increase in the allowance provided through social assistance to people with disabilities. This allowance helps to meet the costs associated with a disability and

to allow those with disabilities to participate more fully in the economic and social life of their communities [Community Resources and Employment]

- Participation in the Saskatchewan Employment Supplement, a program that helps prevent welfare dependency, will increase from an average of 7,900 families in 2002-03 to an average of approximately 8,200 families [Community Resources and Employment]
- On average, approximately 45,000 households comprised of over 105,000 adults and children will benefit from one or more of the government's income security programs each month [Community Resources and Employment]
- Provincial programs will support more than 7,800 spaces in over 450 licensed child care facilities. Day care subsidies will be provided for 3,700 children in 2,700 families [Community Resources and Employment]
- Over the next five years, in partnership with the federal government, the Province will enhance licensed child care. In 2003-04, we will match the federal contribution of \$900,000 to provide a total of \$1.8 million to develop 500 new child care spaces [Community Resources and Employment]
- All families will continue to benefit from the recent personal tax reform. A two-income family of four earning \$50,000 a year will now pay about \$1,500 less income tax in 2003 than it did 10 years ago. The Government's personal tax reform plan is now fully implemented. Commencing in 2004, the personal income tax system will be fully indexed to inflation. This means that the amount of tax payable on a fixed amount of income will decline every year [Finance]
- The Province, through the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, will make conditional commitments in 2003 to Community Based Organizations (CBOs) for the construction of more than 400 new homes under the Centenary Affordable Housing Program [Community Resources and Employment]
- Continue to pursue co-operative partnerships with different levels of government and local organizations to address the need for more affordable housing and support services for modest-income families. To date, the Province, working in partnership with municipal governments, community development organizations and family homeowner co-operatives, has enabled 209 lower-income families to become homeowners through the Neighbourhood Home Ownership Program. In 2003-04, the Province will continue to provide funding to more than 60 new families [Community Resources and Employment]
- Help approximately 10,000 families receive maintenance payments and ensure that parents meet their support obligations. Parents will also be helped through a support variation project that will assist them with variation of orders or agreements and provide information about the variation process. The Family Justice Services Division will work to expand the mandatory parent education program to more sites across the province [Justice]
- Government must be responsive when intervention is necessary to support children and families – changes to *The Child and Family Services Act* will be introduced to recognize the importance of kinship care as a first option in these circumstances [Community Resources and Employment]
- Approximately 7,400 families and 23,000 children will receive government services

designed to protect children from harm, including appropriate residential and personal care to children in care of the Minister of Community Resources and Employment and support for at-risk families to prevent further family breakdown. The number of children in care of the Minister of Community Resources and Employment is projected to decrease from 2,938 in 2001-02 to 2,800 by the end of 2003-04 [Community Resources and Employment]

- Develop a response to the federal-provincial recommendation for jurisdictions to implement an incentive or awards program to encourage workable and co-operative ways to increase work-life balance [Labour]
- The Physically Active Saskatchewan strategy will be implemented to reduce the physical inactivity of all age groups, working towards our goal of a 10 per cent reduction in physical inactivity by 2005 [Culture, Youth and Recreation]
- Provincial parks will again benefit from the Centenary Fund. \$1.8 million in developments to provincial and regional parks are planned this year to help ensure the long-term stability of our parks, including nature centre replacement at Duck Mountain Provincial Park, interpretive trails and an amphitheatre at Greenwater Lake Provincial Park, enhancing displays and upgrading facilities at Fort Carleton Historic Park and upgrading various recreation sites across the province [Environment]
- Increase funding to the Wascana Centre Authority, Meewasin Valley Authority, Wakamow Valley Authority and Chinook Parkway by 10 per cent. 2003-04 marks the third year that these four urban parks, as well as three others (North Battleford, Prince Albert and Weyburn), have had access to funding for capital projects from the Centenary Fund (\$500,000 annually) [Environment]
- Grants available through the Community Initiatives Fund will continue to be provided to groups providing services and supports to children and families. Allocations will be significantly increased to support:
  - ~ Community projects to mark the province's Centennial – \$8.5 million over the next three years
  - ~ Projects that encourage increased physical activity – \$5 million over the next three years
  - ~ New recreation opportunities for northern and First Nations communities – \$5.5 million over the next three years[Culture, Youth and Recreation]

# Opportunities for Youth

Saskatchewan's youth population (aged 15 to 24) represents about 15 per cent of the overall population. Over the last decade, the youth population has increased by just over five per cent. A significant proportion of the youth population is Aboriginal, which presents both a challenge and an opportunity for Saskatchewan's future. A greater proportion of Aboriginal people are currently socially and economically disadvantaged, but this group also offers potential for meeting Saskatchewan's future labour market needs.

The following section identifies some key initiatives planned for the coming year to help prepare our youth for a successful transition into adulthood.

## Help Youth to Stay in School and Succeed in Learning

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*Keeping all students in school until they successfully complete Grade 12 allows for greater opportunities in the world of work and greater potential for success in life.*

[Saskatchewan Education Indicators Report, 2000]

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The 2002 youth in transition survey reported that Saskatchewan, at 7.3 per cent, enjoyed the lowest high school dropout rate in the nation, well below the national dropout rate of 12 per cent, a tribute to the hard work, vision and leadership of our educators and their community-based partners.

Saskatchewan Learning reports a trend that sees more students who have left full-time study at high school continue to take classes leading to graduation.

New technologies are shaping the future of our education and training system. Government is providing funding to ensure schools have better access to high-speed Internet and can upgrade infrastructure to ensure in-school Internet connectivity. In addition, support is also being provided for the development of made-in-Saskatchewan educational resources for use on-line and in classrooms.

Campus Saskatchewan ([www.campussaskatchewan.ca](http://www.campussaskatchewan.ca)) is an example of innovation from the post-secondary sector to increase access to education and training for Saskatchewan residents. Campus Saskatchewan, a partnership of post-secondary institutions, is helping to remove barriers to education and provide the flexibility today's students need. Over 150 courses are in development or are being delivered by the universities and SIAST through Campus Saskatchewan.

Higher education and training are key to the success of our young people participating in the knowledge-based economy.

### *Action Plan for 2003-04*

This Budget contains a significant commitment to support the participation in and completion of high school and post-secondary education and training, including:

- A three per cent increase in operating grants to the universities. More than 30,000 full-time and part-time students attended the Universities of Regina and Saskatchewan last year [Learning]
- A three per cent increase in funding for SIAST and regional colleges to enable them to maintain existing programs and capacity. Regional colleges will provide more than 30,000 university, technical and other education and training opportunities for people in rural and northern Saskatchewan [Learning]
- Increased funding will be provided for the third intake of additional students at the College of Medicine and the continuing nursing expansion [Learning]
- SIAST will provide more than 40,000 on- and off-campus training opportunities with more than 4,000 available through private vocational schools. More than 5,300 apprentices will be registered with the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission and approximately 1,200 other work-based training opportunities will be provided [Learning]
- \$66 million in Saskatchewan Student Loan assistance will be available to help approximately 16,800 students. Over half of this amount (\$36 million or 55 per cent) will be provided as bursaries and/or grants, reducing Saskatchewan student debt levels to among the lowest in the country [Learning]
- Funding to the Student Aid Fund will increase to provide for an increase in the in-study earnings exemption (from \$600 per study period to \$1,700 per 34 week study period) and the scholarship exemption (\$600 per study period to \$1,800) [Learning]
- Funding will also be provided this year for an interest subsidy to enable medical students to obtain an interest-free line of credit to address needs not met by the Student Loan Program [Learning]
- Approximately 4,500 training clients will receive income support through the Provincial Training Allowance. The Apprenticeship Training Allowance will provide income support for a further 1,700 individuals receiving training in the skilled trades [Community Resources and Employment; Learning]
- In total, over 300 new bursaries will be available in a variety of health disciplines which will benefit, in part, our youth. Some of these include: medicine, RN, LPN, RPN, primary care, nurse practitioner, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech language, clinical psychology, respiratory therapy, emergency medical technician, and public health inspection. In addition, there are approximately 150 continuing bursaries for students in medicine, nursing and a variety of allied health disciplines [Health]
- 23 bursaries for young teachers in specialty training will support them to secure employment with Saskatchewan School Boards that need these specialties [Learning]
- 10 Prince of Wales Scholarships will be awarded this year to encourage Grade 11 students in community schools to complete high school [Learning]
- The Centennial Merit Scholarship Program recognizes high achieving, successful high school students and awards scholarships to provide support for first-year education and training at post-secondary institutions. Approximately 300 scholarships will be awarded this year, bringing the total scholarships awarded under this program to about 950 [Learning]

- Continued implementation of the Mathematics Action Plan through classroom and community-based resources and supports, including workshops for teachers emphasizing the value of linking math to the real world and learning assessments focused on improving teaching and learning [Learning]
- Infant care for teen parents attending high school will be available in 20 schools [Community Resources and Employment]
- Funding will be provided for the development of on-line courses in all subject areas necessary for Grade 12 completion, and 90 on-line post-secondary courses, more than triple the number available in 2000-01 [Learning]
- The partners in Campus Saskatchewan will continue to expand on-line educational opportunities and enhance services to learners, including access to computers and the Internet, counseling and study support [Learning]
- The Public Service Commission, in partnership with the Aboriginal Government Employees Network, will establish an Aboriginal Speakers Bureau to help encourage Aboriginal students to stay in school and consider a career with the public service [Public Service Commission]

## Help Youth Make a Successful Transition to the Workforce

Youth employment reached a five-year high in Saskatchewan during 2002 with the youth employment rate (the percentage of youth aged 15 to 24 with a job) at just under 60 per cent.

Saskatchewan's post-secondary graduates are successfully finding employment in the province. The \$350 Saskatchewan Graduate Tax Credit

encourages post-secondary graduates to remain here. Over 28,000 tax credit certificates have been issued up to the end of February 2003. In addition, the recent reform of personal taxes has significantly reduced income taxes, making it more financially attractive for new graduates to stay and work in Saskatchewan.

The net out-migration of our youth is a long-term issue that we must continue to address. In 2002, net out-migration (of youths aged 15 to 24) was 3,651, the highest since 1991. When looking at the motivation of people to move to their current province, a survey of western Canadians (Looking West, 2001) determined that the primary motivator was employment (38.6 per cent).

A number of key initiatives are targeted at creating jobs here in Saskatchewan, so that our youth stay here. Recently, government announced new mining and oil and gas incentive packages to stimulate increased exploration and development activity. This initiative will generate new jobs for Saskatchewan people, including many for youth.

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*... we want to change the pattern of our young people going to the oil patch. Instead, we want the oil patch to come to our young people.*

[Premier Calvert, November 2002]

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In addition, the recent increase to the minimum wage, now \$6.65 per hour, helps young people make ends meet with their first jobs.



#### *Action Plan for 2003-04*

- Approximately 24,000 individuals, including many youth, will receive services through the Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services offices. Services range from assistance in preparing a resumé and searching for a job, to developing a career action plan [Community Resources and Employment]
- The Centennial Student Employment Program provides summer and part-time jobs throughout the year for high school and post-secondary students planning to return to school. The jobs relate to the student's chosen field of study and career goals. To date, this program has provided more than 3,000 employment opportunities for students. In 2003-04, this program will provide more than 700 jobs for students planning to return to school [Culture, Youth and Recreation]
- Grants will be provided through the Northern Development Fund to encourage and support northern youth entrepreneurship [Northern Affairs]
- A total of 11 interns are now active in the Aboriginal Management and Professional Internship Program. To date, four interns have secured permanent public sector employment. New interns are being recruited for the fall 2003 intake and interns who are graduating from the program in September are actively pursuing permanent opportunities in the public service [Public Service Commission]
- Help young people prepare for work, by delivering at least 100 awareness and education presentations to young people in high schools, post-secondary education settings, employment centres as well as First Nations and Métis communities, to inform youth about their rights and responsibilities in the workplace [Labour]

- Significantly increase the number of Practical and Applied Arts high school students receiving instruction in the Ready to Work program through its extensive use as a resource in the new Career and Work Exploration curriculum, to be fully implemented by 2004-05 [Learning]

#### *Encourage Youth to Lead Healthy Lifestyles*

Government is delivering and supporting programs and services that engage youth in new and innovative ways, helping them to improve their personal health and well-being.

#### *Action Plan for 2003-04*

- Engage youth in a dialogue regarding youth retention, leadership, employment, entrepreneurship and community through a newly formed Provincial Youth Advisory Committee [Culture, Youth and Recreation]
- Implement a single-window youth website that will facilitate and enable youth to access information on youth services, build youth resources, networks and supports and facilitate communication between youth with communities, businesses, government and other youth [Culture, Youth and Recreation]
- Continue to assist youth in acquiring leadership skills and gaining access to mentorship opportunities – such as those offered in our multi-sport games programs [Culture, Youth and Recreation]
- Work in partnership with the Crown Investments Corporation to develop the Leaders of Tomorrow initiative that will provide for the designation of one position for youth representation on each subsidiary Crown board [Culture, Youth and Recreation]



- Implement the Physically Active Saskatchewan strategy to reduce physical inactivity in all age groups, including youth. Since 1981, the number of overweight children and youth has tripled, from 10 per cent to 32 per cent [Culture, Youth and Recreation]
- Provide funds through the Community Initiatives Fund that support the implementation of the “In Motion” strategy in schools across the province and contribute to active and healthy living [Culture, Youth and Recreation]
- Support a variety of cessation and public education resource materials for youth, including “Kick the Nic” and “Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT)” [Health]
- Provide funds to Regional Health Authorities for child and youth mental health services, including support for Community Based Organizations (CBOs) that provide services for youth [Health]

### Effective Supports for Youth At Risk

The focus of our efforts for at-risk young people is to provide more effective, integrated support services so that youth faced with significant challenges are able to move towards safer, healthier lifestyles and become contributing members of their families and communities.

#### Action Plan for 2003-04

- Provide \$2 million annually in grants to communities through the Community Initiatives Fund to develop and/or implement programs for at-risk youth. Some examples of programs supported in 2002-03 include:
  - ~ Personal Acceptance and Change project [Regina]
  - ~ Urban Youth Fund project and Youth Transportation Services program [Prince Albert area]
  - ~ Community Youth Enhancement project [Meadow Lake area]
- Enhance programs that integrate custody and community services for youth:
  - ~ Implement policies and services for youth under the early release provisions of *The Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA)* [Corrections and Public Safety]
  - ~ Implement an integrated case management process with Saskatchewan Health to deliver the High Risk and Violent Offender Program and the Intensive Rehabilitative Custody and Supervision sentence [Corrections and Public Safety; Health]
- Implement the YCJA in collaboration with the Departments of Corrections and Public Safety, Justice, Community Resources and Employment, Health and Learning and with Aboriginal organizations, including:
  - ~ Implement an integrated case management system and a risk, needs and strengths assessment
  - ~ Expand the alternative measures program
  - ~ Enhance youth addictions and mental health assessment capacity
- Develop a community-supported continuum of services for youth in Regina and Prince Albert using the structure of the Youth Services Model [Corrections and Public Safety; Health; Learning; Justice]
- Provide \$120,000 for the Saskatchewan Youth in Care and Custody Network to provide

support to youth who are in care of the Minister of Community Resources and Employment, or who were formerly in care, and to give these youth an advocacy group on child welfare programming and other youth serving developments [Community Resources and Employment]

### Contact Information

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