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Provincial Point of View

March 21, 2014

BALANCED BUDGET KEEPS SASKATCHEWAN ON THE PATH OF STEADY GROWTH

**STEADY
GROWTH**

A stylized arrow graphic that starts as a green line and transitions into a yellow arrowhead pointing upwards and to the right. It is positioned behind the word 'GROWTH' in the 'STEADY GROWTH' text.

***Saskatchewan Provincial
Budget 2014-15***

No Tax Increases; Important Investments in Infrastructure and People

Finance Minister Ken Krawetz on March 19, tabled a balanced budget aimed at keeping Saskatchewan on the path of steady growth.

This year's budget avoids tax increases by controlling government spending.

"Our government's preference will always be to balance the budget by controlling spending rather than by raising taxes," Krawetz said. "We were able to achieve that once again this year, while still making targeted investments in infrastructure, employment and job training, seniors, students, people with disabilities, children and families."

This year's budget also sees the government moving to a summary focus as recommended by the Provincial Auditor.

"Steady growth is the big picture, a vision for the long term and a full view of what's happening in Saskatchewan," Krawetz said. "So beginning today, the focus of our budget and our financial statements will be a summary focus, which includes all aspects of government revenue and spending."

The Provincial Auditor supports the new budget presentation.

"Our office strongly supports these changes," Acting Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson said. "They will eliminate confusion and help legislators and the public better understand the Government's finances."

A budget surplus of \$71 million is forecast, taking into account all Government Business Enterprises including commercial Crown corporations, and Government Service Organizations which include ministries, boards of education and health regions, among others.

Revenue for 2014-15 is projected at \$14.07 billion, down 0.7 per cent from last year, while expense is estimated to be \$14.0 billion, down 0.2 per cent from last year. This year's budget invests in infrastructure and people, aligning with the goals and priorities of the Saskatchewan Plan for Growth.

Saskatchewan's commercial Crown corporations, including SaskPower, SaskTel and SaskEnergy are projected to spend \$2.0 billion on capital projects in 2014-15, up \$100 million or 5.3 per cent from last year.

In addition to Crown capital investments, \$886.9 million will be spent on a range of government infrastructure projects this year, an increase of \$39.4 million or 4.7 per cent. The capital budget includes key investments in schools, health care facilities including hospitals and long-term care

facilities, post secondary institutions, roads, highways and municipal infrastructure.

“Our government continues to build and upgrade infrastructure right across the province, meeting the challenges of growth and planning for future growth,” Krawetz said. “Whether schools or hospitals, highways or high-speed data networks, power generation plants, bridges or natural gas transmission lines, our government is building for the future.”

Government will invest \$664.5 million to build, maintain and operate Saskatchewan’s highways and transportation system, keeping the government on track to meet its commitment to spend \$2.2 billion on transportation infrastructure over four years.

Key infrastructure investments include:

- \$405.2 million to provide provincial highway and transportation infrastructure upgrades, including twinning Highway 16 from Saskatoon to Clavet, pre-construction work on a number of twinning projects on Highways 6, 7 and 39, and pre-construction work for future passing lanes on Highway 7 from Delisle to Rosetown;
- \$16.0 million to complete the new hospital in Moose Jaw;
- \$2.0 million to begin planning the renewal of Victoria Hospital in Prince Albert;
- \$4.1 million for planning four new major school projects including replacing the Connaught School and Sacred Heart School in Regina as well as major renovation projects for St. Brieux School and Sacred Heart in Moose Jaw;
- \$32.6 million transferred for post-secondary capital initiatives, an increase of \$7.1 million or 28 per cent over last year. Initiatives include capital maintenance, \$6.5 million for continued construction of the Health Sciences Facility at the University of Saskatchewan, \$4.5 million for the Trades and Technology Centre at Parkland Regional College in Yorkton and \$1.0 million for continued construction of Weyburn’s Southeast Regional College.
- Due diligence associated with the Regina Bypass P3 Project and work on the west portion of the bypass continues this year.
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- The government is also making a commitment toward funding a new commuter bridge in the north industrial area of Saskatoon. Planning will begin this year with funding expected to flow in 2015-16.
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- This year’s budget also makes key investments in people and quality of life. These include:
- Record funding of nearly \$5.0 billion to be spent through the Ministry of Health - a 3.0 per cent increase compared to last year - to deliver high-quality health care services for Saskatchewan people;

- Regional health authorities will receive \$3.25 billion, up 3.4 per cent from last year, for operating funding and targeted initiatives;
- \$60.5 million for the surgical waitlist initiative, aiming to meet the three month waitlist target for all regional health authorities by the end of 2014-15;
- \$13.15 million - an increase of \$3.4 million compared to last year - for the operation of five Collaborative Emergency Centres, as well as to enhance primary health care sites;
- \$4.5 million for the HomeFirst/Quick Response Homecare program - an increase of \$2.5 million over last year;
- \$3.7 million for ongoing enhancements to the Seniors' Care Urgent Action Fund to address issues in long-term care facilities;
- \$800,000 to develop a new Seniors' House Calls program for seniors with complex issues;
- \$155.7 million, up \$4.9 million or 3.3 per cent compared to last year, for initiatives including the planning, delivery and evaluation of cancer care through the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency;
- \$956.5 million to be spent through the Ministry of Social Services - up \$65.8 million or 7.4 per cent compared to last year;
- \$446.2 million, up \$84.3 million compared to last year, for new and enhanced programming for people with disabilities and for increased utilization;
- \$8.7 million increase for Child and Family agenda initiatives bringing the total commitment in new funding to \$62.5 million since 2011;
- \$1.76 billion to be spent through the Ministry of Education, an increase of \$52.4 million over last year;
- School operating funding provided to school divisions is \$1.82 billion, an increase of 2.4 per cent from last year and is made up of \$1.17 billion from the Ministry of Education and \$646.7 million from Education Property Tax;
- \$52.7 million, up 4.3 per cent compared to last year, to expand the number of child care spaces by 500;
- \$20.4 million - an increase of more than 6.0 per cent over last year - to support 15 new pre-K programs;
- \$668.9 million for post secondary institution operating grants and targeted funding, an increase of \$16.8 million compared to last year;
- Direct student supports of \$216.0 million, an increase of \$18.5 million over last year or 9.4 per cent, including:
 - \$82 million through the Graduate Retention Program, up \$18.1 million from last year;
 - \$37.4 million for other ongoing provincial tax credits related to education costs and interest paid on student loans;
 - \$32.5 million for the Student Aid Fund;

- **\$31.0 million for the Provincial Training Allowance;**
- **\$7.5 million for the Saskatchewan Advantage Grant for Education Savings;**
- **\$7.0 million for the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship; and**
- **\$5.0 million for the Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity Scholarship;**
- **Increases of \$2.1 million to add 700 new Adult Basic Education spaces and \$1 million to add 300 new apprenticeship training seats;**
- **\$189.2 million - an increase of \$4.4 million or 2.4 per cent over last year - for initiatives that directly benefit First Nations and Métis people including \$6.0 million to double funding for initiatives related to the Joint Task Force on First Nation and Metis Education and Employment; and**
- **\$394.6 million of direct provincial support to municipalities, an increase of \$32.8 million, or 9.1 per cent, from last year and an increase of \$152.7 million or 63.1 per cent from the 2007-08 Budget.**

Government has also chosen to maintain the current provincial tax provisions for credit unions, including the special income tax reduction and the exemption from paying the provincial capital tax, recognizing the restraints credit unions face related to raising capital as well as their important place in the economy of our province.

“This budget strengthens government’s fiscal accountability, while meeting the challenges of a growing province,” Krawetz said. “It helps secure a better quality of life for all Saskatchewan people and it represents another confident step forward by our government on the path of steady growth.”

[Balanced Budget Keeps Saskatchewan on the Path of Steady Growth](#)

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"From a Provincial Point of View" is a weekly message from Ken Cheveldayoff, MLA Saskatoon Silver Springs. Your opinions are important and your letters, emails, and phone calls on any issues relating to the provincial government are welcomed.

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