

# Speech from the Throne October 22, 2008 Highlights

## A Stronger Saskatchewan. A Better Life.

### **Debt Reduction and Fiscal Prudence:**

- Additional \$1 billion to pay down debt. By the end of the year, the new government will have reduced the province's debt burden by nearly 40 per cent.
- Approximately \$2 billion in the Growth and Financial Security Fund to ensure Saskatchewan is prepared to weather possible impacts on the province's revenues.

### **Better Infrastructure**

- Increase commitment to infrastructure for highways, schools, universities, hospitals and other vital projects by \$500 million or 50 per cent - to a total of \$1.5 billion.

### **Lower Taxes for Everyone**

- Largest single-year income tax reduction in Saskatchewan's history (\$1,320 tax savings per year for family of four and up to \$440 per year savings for single person).
- Family of four will have the highest level of personal exemptions of any province in Canada.
- 80,000 taxpayers will no longer pay provincial income taxes.
- Introduction of a new Low-Income Tax Credit that provides benefits up to \$600 per family.
- Above tax measures will reduce taxes for Saskatchewan people by \$300 million per year.

### **Innovation**

- Establishment of Innovation Saskatchewan to coordinate, focus and support research activities, with a special emphasis on commercialization of innovation and technology.

### **Workforce Training**

- Greater cooperation among universities, regional colleges and technical institutes.
- Improvements to the Graduate Retention Program.
- Commitment to providing First Nations and Métis people with the educational opportunities, skills training and employment options to become full partners in our common future.

### **Education**

- Engage First Nations and Métis people – treaty education as required curriculum, Provincial Panel on Student Achievement, Aboriginal Education Summit.
- Additional \$60 million on top of the \$117 million for new construction and refurbishing of existing schools.
- Commitment to Saskatchewan libraries to assist in providing early learning programs, literacy training and support for community development.

### **Better Life for Children and their Parents**

- Additional \$1.7 million for licensed child care spaces.
- Increasing pre-kindergarten programs by almost 25 per cent.
- Reduction of education portion of property taxes.

### **Assistance for People with Disabilities**

- Plan to address wait list for needed support programs.
- Equitable income support for women and men with disabilities.
- Increase the amount people can earn before their support payments are reduced.

### **Commitment to Seniors**

- Increase to the Saskatchewan Income Assistance program to help seniors maintain their quality of life. This program has not been increased since 1992.

### **Better Life for At Risk Children**

- Saskatchewan's Children and Family Services Act and Adoption Act will be renewed and improved.

### **Affordable, Accessible Housing**

- Introduction of a new, more responsive Saskatchewan Housing Corporation.
- Development of a new capital program for the Housing Corporation.
- Protection for renters through changes to the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act based on recommendations from the Affordable Housing Task Force. Other recommendations implemented – shelter rates for low income renters, living

allowances under the integrated student loan program increased, increased per diem rates paid to organizations operating emergency shelters.

#### **Building Better Lives – Community Based Organizations**

- Earlier this year, CBOs received the largest ever increase to assist in recruitment and retention of staff.
- Long-term, stable funding agreements.

#### **Better Health Care**

- \$100 million into improving health care facilities.
- 40 new physician undergraduate seats and 60 new residency positions.
- Introduction of a comprehensive physician recruitment strategy that will include accelerated training and licensing of international medical graduates.
- Mechanisms to better support rural doctors.
- Redesigning health care to better fit the needs of patients through the Patient First Review.

#### **Better Life through a Greener Environment**

- Unveil an effective response to control greenhouse gas emissions.
- Comprehensive water management plan.
- New program to encourage homeowners to install geothermal heating systems.

#### **Better Life for First Nations and Métis**

- Further consultations with First Nations, Métis and industry leaders on the development of new consultation guidelines for future projects.
- Jordan's Principle to become the guiding principle for providing care to our children.

#### **Better Highways**

- Introduction of a five-year rolling plan for highway construction, and the expansion of the primary weight highway network.

#### **Stronger Crowns**

- 'Saskatchewan First' investment policy.

#### **Better Life for Farm Families**

- Immediate and full participation in federal programs designed to help farm families.
- Plans to bring administration of AgriStability (formerly CAIS) to Saskatchewan.
- Strengthening Crop Insurance.
- Long-term strategies for growth in livestock industry.
- Long-term, secure water supplies in Saskatchewan's southwest.
- Increased compensation under the Farm and Ranch Water Infrastructure Program.

#### **Stronger Communities through Working with Municipalities**

- Continuation of the Saskatchewan Infrastructure Growth Initiative to help municipalities meet the growing demand for more residential lots and infrastructure.
- New long-term revenue sharing formula in place by the 2009 budget.

#### **Stronger Democracy**

- Restriction of government advertising in the period leading up to an election.
- Legislation allowing the people of our province to elect the next nominee to the Senate.

#### **Better, Safer Life**

- New Witness Protection Act to help crack down on crime stemming from the activities of gangs.
- Strengthen existing laws relating to seizure of property used in the commission of crimes or the proceeds of crime.
- Gang database that will assist police services in the identification and tracking of gang members.
- Keeping promise to add 120 new police officers over four years – funding for at least 30 new officers in the upcoming budget year.
- Complimentary home security audit, and the installation of basic security devices for low income seniors.

#### **Better Life through Tourism and Arts**

- Continue to upgrade our provincial parks.
- Keep commitment for increased tourism funding.
- Introduction of a new Arts Professions Act which will increase protection for artists and their intellectual property.