

# Speech from the Throne

## December 5, 2011 Highlights

### MOVING SASKATCHEWAN FORWARD

#### VISION

- a province of over 1.1 million people by 2015;
- a province that is steadily eliminating its General Revenue Fund debt;
- a place where young people receive the best education and opportunities;
- a place where seniors are treated with dignity and respect; and
- a place where people with disabilities receive the best care and support available in Canada.

To quote briefly from my government's vision for Saskatchewan:

***“Simply put, our vision is that Saskatchewan will be the best place in Canada—to live, to work, to start a business, to get an education, to raise a family and to build a life.”***

#### ACTION

- Action to sustain growth and opportunity in our province;
- Action to make life more affordable for Saskatchewan people;
- Action to maintain a competitive tax and royalty regime in Saskatchewan;
- Action to improve our quality of life; and
- Action to ensure government remains responsible, responsive, trustworthy and accountable to the people of our province.

#### GROWTH

According to the most recent Conference Board of Canada report:

*“Saskatchewan’s economy is being fuelled by the continued development of the potash industry, and steady expansion in oil and gas extraction. Real gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to rise by a brisk 5.1 per cent in 2011, and Saskatchewan will have the fastest growing provincial economy”.*

*Conference Board of Canada  
November 25, 2011*

#### AFFORDABILITY

- Legislation to extend notice periods for rent increases from six months to one year for property owners who choose not to participate in the newly created tenant assistance initiative established by the Saskatchewan Rental Housing Industry Association.
- Building on the **Saskatchewan Advantage Housing Plan** by exploring additional new-growth tax incentives to encourage construction of new, affordable rental housing.
- Starting January 1, 2012, improvements to the **Secondary Suite Program** will be implemented.
- Effective January 1, 2012, the **Saskatchewan First-Time Homebuyers Tax Credit** will provide a \$10,000 non-refundable income tax credit to all first-time homebuyers – creating savings of \$1,100.
- Effective November 15, the Provincial Sales Tax exemption on children's clothing was extended to children under 18, up from age 14.
- Extend the **Active Families Benefit** to all children under 18.
- Starting next year, every new Saskatchewan high school graduate will be eligible for a \$2,000 credit toward post-secondary tuition - \$500 per year for up to four years.
- Further assistance to seniors by increasing **Seniors Income Plan** benefits by over 40 per cent over the next four years.
- A new **Seniors Personal Care Home Benefit** will subsidize the difference between a senior's monthly income and the cost of their personal care home space – up to a threshold of \$1,800 in 2012, increasing to \$2,000 by 2015.

## QUALITY OF LIFE

- In the next four years, an additional 2,000 child care spaces will be created.
- Expand the **Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID)** program, providing direct benefits to up to 7,000 additional individuals living outside of the residential care system.
- Further, SAID benefits will increase over the next four years by \$100 per month for those in residential care, \$350 per month for a single person living outside of residential care and \$400 per month for a couple.
- An additional \$4 million to improve services for individuals and families living with autism.
- Work with community-based organizations to develop and implement better programs and services for adults with autism.
- Continued attention and resources toward the stated goal that by 2014, no patient will have to wait longer than three months for surgery.
- Up to \$120,000 in student loans for new physicians and up to \$20,000 in student loans for new nurses and nurse practitioners will be forgiven for those agreeing to practice for five years in rural and remote communities.
- A new 20-doctor rural locum pool will be established to provide relief for existing rural doctors.
- A total of 20 new nurse practitioner training seats will be added over the next four years - a 67 per cent increase from the 30 training seats that exist today.
- Bring the **Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society** emergency medical helicopter service to Saskatchewan to provide added emergency coverage and complement existing road ambulance services in our province.
- Long-acting insulin will be moved from Exceptional Drug Status to the full formulary.
- **Children's Insulin Pump Program** will be extended to people 25 years old and under, from the current cut-off of 17 years of age.
- Additional funding to the highly successful **Prince Albert Community Mobilization Partnership**, a first of its kind in all of Canada.
- A further \$10 million in maintenance and upgrades to Saskatchewan parks.
- A new **Community Rinks Affordability Grant** providing \$2,500 a year to help with the cost of operating roughly 750 municipally owned indoor ice surfaces in Saskatchewan.

## LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

- legislation to standardize the start of the school year so that instruction will begin after the Labour Day long weekend across the province; teachers and school board trustees will be fully consulted on the effective implementation of these changes;
- strengthen the enforcement of maintenance orders;
- increase penalties for those who fail to pay fines;
- strengthen the ability of corrections officers to crack down on drug-related, gang-related and other illegal activity within our correctional institutions;
- more clearly define the powers and responsibilities of the Children's Advocate;
- introduce degree granting legislation providing more opportunities for our students while protecting the tradition of excellence associated with Saskatchewan degrees;
- streamline the business registration process across the three western provinces under the New West Partnership Trade Agreement; and
- ensure that any future provincial election campaigns do not overlap with a federal election campaign.