

# Taking Action on Poverty



## The Saskatchewan Poverty Reduction Strategy

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In December 2014, I had the pleasure of appointing the Advisory Group on Poverty Reduction. They were tasked with reviewing current efforts to reduce poverty in the province and identifying gaps where more work is needed. This dedicated group of individuals worked extremely hard, meeting with community organizations, receiving public feedback, and researching best practices in poverty reduction. This past summer they released their recommendations for a provincial poverty reduction strategy to Government. I want to thank them for their excellent work. Over the past ten years, our prosperity has allowed us to reduce the number of people living in poverty to well below the national average. We have invested in a number of programs and initiatives related to housing, education, mental health and addictions, and income assistance that have made a real difference to those living in poverty. Yet despite having one of the lowest poverty rates in Canada, we still have much work to do.

While we continue the work we have been doing, we are also looking ahead to the next 10 years. We have set an ambitious goal to reduce the number of Saskatchewan people who experience poverty for two years or more by 50 per cent by the end of 2025. But we can't do it alone. We need community organizations, business, and individuals to be fully engaged in this important initiative. Everyone has a role to play, and I look forward to seeing this goal become reality.

Although our provincial finances are currently facing a lot of pressures, we still need to tackle poverty in whatever way we can. It will require us to become innovative with our resources and creative in our thinking. We will need to approach poverty in unprecedented ways.

Woven throughout the pages of this strategy are a number of initiatives that are making life better for Saskatchewan people along with some new ideas that will build on this momentum into the future. I am hopeful that this plan will reduce poverty in our province and secure a better quality of life for our most vulnerable citizens.



Donna Harpauer  
Minister, Social Services

# Introduction

Saskatchewan is a prosperous province. Over the past decade, the percentage of people living in poverty in our province has declined. According to Statistics Canada, as of 2012, the percentage of individuals with incomes below the Market Basket Measure (MBM)<sup>1</sup> was 10.6 per cent, which is well below the national average of 12.0 per cent and down from the provincial rate of almost 14 per cent in 2006. Although this downward trend is positive, some Saskatchewan people are still experiencing poverty.

In the 2014 *Speech from the Throne*, the Government of Saskatchewan declared its intention to develop a Saskatchewan Poverty Reduction Strategy. The first step in the development of the strategy took place in December 2014 when the Minister of Social Services announced the formation of the Advisory Group on Poverty Reduction, made up of Government and community representatives.

The members of the Advisory Group on Poverty Reduction were:

- **Alison Robertson (co-chair)** – Director of Community Development, Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre
- **Constance Hourie (co-chair)** – Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Social Services
- **Ron Anderson** – Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Justice/Corrections and Policing
- **Steve Compton** – Chief Executive Officer, Regina Food Bank
- **Dr. Jo-Ann Episkenew** – Director, Indigenous Peoples' Health Research Centre
- **Karen Lautsch** – Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health
- **Alastair MacFadden** – Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Economy
- **Dr. Ryan Meili** – Physician, WestSide Community Clinic
- **Greg Miller** – then Associate Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education
- **Russ Mirasty** – Retired RCMP Commanding Officer in Saskatchewan
- **Dr. Cory Neudorf** – Chief Medical Health Officer, Saskatoon Health Region

The Advisory Group was asked to review past and ongoing initiatives that address poverty, identify key gaps and opportunities to reduce the incidence of poverty in Saskatchewan, and make recommendations to Government to inform the future development of a Poverty Reduction Strategy.

The group also hosted a Poverty Roundtable in April 2015 to gain perspectives and advice from the community. Approximately 100 people attended, including individuals with lived experience, representatives from Government, health regions, First Nation and Métis organizations, the education sector, early childhood development agencies, and community groups from across the province who are involved in poverty reduction actions at the local level. Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement, experts in the community dialogue on poverty, facilitated the roundtable.

Members of the Advisory Group also felt it was important to meet with organizations that serve vulnerable populations and have insights into the challenges of families and individuals living in poverty. These included representatives of anti-poverty organizations, Directors of Education, Regional Inter-Sectoral Committees, First Nation organizations, the Advocate for Children and Youth, the Provincial Ombudsman, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, and the Federal Government.

In addition, the Advisory Group solicited feedback through an online survey which received more than 350 responses. Written submissions were also received from individuals and organizations with an interest in poverty reduction.

<sup>1</sup> Describes the disposable income needed to purchase a modest but adequate basket of goods and services.



The Advisory Group prepared a final report with recommendations for the Province to consider. The recommendations were provided to the Minister of Social Services in August 2015. The Advisory Group used the following principles to guide their work:

- Promoting the rights and dignity of all people;
- Building on the strengths of individuals and families;
- Redesigning services to make them more accessible;
- Ensuring equitable services are available for all Saskatchewan residents whether they live on- or off-reserve;
- Encouraging government agencies and community organizations to work collaboratively to deliver effective services;
- Ensuring programs and policies designed to reduce poverty are based on evidence with clear targets and measurable outcomes; and
- Encouraging the development of innovative policies and solutions to address poverty.

In addition, there were a number of specific recommendations that focused on six areas:

1. Income Security;
2. Housing/Homelessness;
3. Early Childhood Development;
4. Education/Skills Training;
5. Employment; and
6. Health/Food Security.

## Poverty in Saskatchewan

While there is no single defining feature of who experiences poverty in Saskatchewan, some groups are more likely to experience it than others. For example, we know that lone parent families, First Nations and Métis people, residents of the North, recent immigrants, and individuals with some form of disability, tend to experience higher rates of poverty. Many individuals living in poverty belong to more than one of these groups.

Our Government understands that every individual and family living in poverty has his or her own unique story. Many people who experience poverty face multiple barriers to preparing for work or finding and keeping a job. These barriers can include a low level of education, addictions, health issues, disabilities, and a lack of work experience. Additionally, discrimination is still preventing a number of our citizens from reaching their full potential and contributing to our province's economy.

Due to the diversity and complexity of these barriers, it is unrealistic to introduce a single solution that will address all of the challenges that people experiencing poverty may be facing. That is why our Government is taking a broad, holistic approach to address poverty by not just focusing on last-resort programs such as income assistance.

# Our Vision

Our Government recognizes that first and foremost, to reduce poverty in our province, our economy must be strong. Historically and across jurisdictions, the demand for income assistance and support programs rises as an economy declines. Without sufficient employment opportunities, more people become at risk of sliding into poverty, while people experiencing poverty have more difficulty getting jobs in order to better their lives.

To help keep our economy strong, our Government introduced the *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth – Vision 2020 and Beyond* in 2012. The *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth* describes a “virtuous cycle of growth” which explains that a strong economy leads to a sustainable tax base that enables investment in measures that enable a better quality of life for all citizens.

While a strong economy is key, we also know that reducing poverty in Saskatchewan will require Government ministries and agencies to more closely align programs and collaborate on service delivery.

The Province has developed a number of separate strategies that can help address the root causes of poverty. These include:

- *A Strong Foundation – The Housing Strategy for Saskatchewan* (2011);
- *Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nation and Métis People* (2013);
- *Working Together for Change – A 10 Year Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Saskatchewan* (2014); and
- *People Before Systems: Transforming the Experience of Disability in Saskatchewan* (2015).

These reports have influenced many of the initiatives found in this strategy. These existing strategies and action plans must be woven together wherever possible in order to develop the most effective policies and programs to address poverty in our province.

In addition, any meaningful efforts to reduce poverty cannot be done by Government alone. Community-based organizations, First Nations and Métis leaders, municipalities, health care providers, educators, business, the Federal Government, and people who have experienced poverty must all be involved in efforts to reduce poverty.

This reality has influenced our vision:

***We envision all of Saskatchewan committing to actions that will reduce poverty in communities, improve the quality of life for our citizens, and provide better beginnings for our vulnerable children.***

# Four Pillars

In 2010, our Government introduced a document titled *From Dependence to Independence – Actions and Investments for Saskatchewan’s Most Vulnerable People*. The document identified four pillars to guide our policy and program decisions to reduce poverty. These pillars, which are still relevant today, are:

1. **Sustaining a strong economy:**

By facilitating an environment that will encourage and sustain a strong economy, all of our citizens can gain an opportunity for financial independence and success.

2. **Ensuring citizens have a higher level of disposable income to use at their discretion:**

Ensuring that citizens have a higher level of disposable income through initiatives such as reducing their tax burden means that we can help individuals and families pay their rent or mortgage, put food on the table, and invest in their future.

3. **Removing the barriers to independence:**

By offering programs and supports such as skills training and affordable housing, we can assist individuals and families in disadvantaged circumstances to remove the barriers that inhibit their transition from dependence to independence.

4. **Providing financial support to our most vulnerable citizens:**

By providing financial support such as income assistance, employment supplements, and child care subsidies, we can ensure that low to no income individuals and families have the assistance they need to persevere through tough times.

# Targets and Measures

This strategy sets an ambitious overall target of **reducing the number of Saskatchewan people who experience poverty for two years or more by 50 per cent by the end of 2025**. Achieving this target will require the co-operation of Government, community organizations, business, and citizens.

Persistence and depth of poverty are both key components needed to understand and track progress on reducing poverty and the success of the strategy. As the strategy's implementation plan is developed, it will be accompanied by clear outcomes for different initiatives. Those outcomes will have a number of measures and targets to track the impact of our collective efforts to reduce poverty.

## Action Plan

We understand more needs to be done to break down the barriers that keep citizens from fully participating in the economic and social life of our province. We will strengthen or expand initiatives and programs that are working, and continually identify opportunities for improvements. With that in mind, we will focus on six priority areas:

1. Income Security;
2. Housing and Homelessness;
3. Early Childhood Development and Child Care;
4. Education, Skills Training and Employment;
5. Health and Food Security; and
6. Vulnerable Families and Individuals.

Progress in these areas will be difficult to achieve without better collaboration and communication from all sectors. Programs and services must be made more accessible to the individuals and families they are meant to serve. We agree with the Advisory Group on Poverty Reduction's recommendation for Government and community organizations to do more to work collaboratively to deliver effective services and to redesign services to make them more accessible. Under this Strategy, when the fiscal capacity of the province allows, we will:

- Implement a "no wrong door" policy and simplify processes to provide easier access to Government programs and services.
- Expand the Hub model across Saskatchewan, including to First Nations and the North.
  - The Hub model brings together human services from across the community and different levels of government to find ways to immediately connect common clients to meaningful supports.
- Provide an integrated, co-ordinated, and multi-system response to support marginalized and vulnerable families.



# 1) Income Security

*One of the best ways to reduce poverty is to ensure citizens have enough income to meet their everyday needs. That is why we created the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability program, enhanced the Seniors Income Plan, linked shelter rates in social assistance programs to the changes in the rental market, introduced the Low-Income Tax Credit, and indexed the minimum wage. Our responsibility is also to ensure that citizens are able to retain as much of their hard earned income as possible. In 2008, we brought in the largest income tax reduction in the province's history, meaning over 112,000 low-income residents no longer pay provincial income tax.*

Our Government has a number of income assistance programs and tax credits in place to help individuals and families with low incomes meet day-to-day living expenses. Many of these programs support independence so that citizens have the resources and incentives to participate in the work force and take full advantage of employment opportunities.

Listed below are a number of the income assistance programs, benefits and tax relief measures our Government provides to low-income individuals and families.

Program	Description	Target Group
<b>Income Support Programs</b>		
Saskatchewan Assistance Program (SAP)	Basic income support for Saskatchewan families and individuals who, for various reasons, including disability, illness, low-income or unemployment, cannot meet basic living costs.	People with low income
Transitional Employment Allowance (TEA)	TEA provides financial support to people who are participating in employment services or transitioning to a job.	People with low income
Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability Program (SAID)	Provides an income for persons with significant and enduring disabilities separate from the traditional welfare system.	People with low income who have significant and enduring disabilities
Provincial Training Allowance (PTA)	PTA is an income-tested program that provides assistance for living and daycare costs for people with low incomes participating in eligible Adult Basic Education (ABE) or skills training programs.	People with low income who are eligible for ABE or skills training programs
<b>Income Supplements</b>		
Saskatchewan Employment Supplement (SES)	SES helps working families with lower incomes with child related costs of going to work.	Low-income working families with children
Saskatchewan Rental Housing Supplement (SRHS)	SRHS is a monthly benefit that assists families with children and people with disabilities with the cost of rental housing.	Low-to-moderate income families with children and people with disabilities

Program	Description	Target Group
Child Care Subsidy (CCS)	The Child Care Subsidy assists parents with low incomes to enter and remain in the workforce or in school by subsidizing the cost of licensed child care services.	Low-income families with children
Seniors Income Plan (SIP)	Monthly supplement provided to seniors who have little or no income other than the federal Old Age Security pension and Guaranteed Income Supplement.	Seniors with low income
Personal Care Home Benefit (PCHB)	Provides monthly financial assistance to low-income seniors living in a licensed personal care home.	Seniors with low income
Discounted Bus Pass Program	Subsidizes the cost of a monthly bus pass so that people in receipt of the Saskatchewan Assistance Program (SAP), Transitional Employment Allowance (TEA), Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID), Saskatchewan Employment Supplement (SES) and Provincial Training Allowance (PTA) can participate more fully in their communities.	People with low income
<b>Tax Credits and Benefits</b>		
Saskatchewan Low-income Tax Credit	This credit reduces the taxes of Saskatchewan residents with lower income. The credit is fully refundable, meaning that a person does not have to pay income tax in order to receive the benefits. A recipient must file an income tax return as a resident of Saskatchewan and meet income and family criteria to be eligible for benefits.	People with low income
Active Families Benefit (AFB)	Parents and legal guardians can now claim a fully refundable tax benefit of up to \$150 per year per child for all children under 18 years of age enrolled in eligible activities. The AFB helps families with the costs of their children's participation in cultural, recreational, and sports activities.	Parents and legal guardians with children under 18 years of age
Federal and Provincial Disability Tax Credits	The Disability Tax Credit (DTC) is a federal non-refundable tax credit, which also includes a provincial supplement. DTC is given to taxpayers to greatly reduce the amount of income tax the individual with a disability has to pay. This may also apply to a person who is financially caring for an individual with a disability.	People with severe and prolonged disabilities

Program	Description	Target Group
Federal and Provincial Caregiver Related Tax Credits	<p>If a taxpayer is the caregiver for a family member with a disability or illness, the taxpayer can claim certain non-refundable tax credits, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amount for an eligible dependant.</li> <li>• Amount for infirm dependants age 18 or older.</li> <li>• Caregiver amount.</li> <li>• Family Caregiver Amount.</li> </ul>	Family members who are caregivers of persons with a disability
Federal and Provincial Medical Expense Tax Credits	A taxpayer can claim a non-refundable tax credit for medical expenses incurred by themselves, their spouse or common-law partner, or a dependant.	All taxpayers
No PST on Children's Clothing and Footwear	Clothing and footwear for children 17 and under is exempt from PST	Families with children 17 and under

In addition to these items, the Federal Government offers a GST rebate to low-income families and individuals as well as the National Child Benefit to assist families with children.

Appendix A illustrates how a variety of households benefit from some of these initiatives.

### Addressing Poverty in Yorkton

SIGN Family Preservation Program is an Intensive In-Home Support Program that addresses poverty issues for families in Yorkton and area. The program helps connect these families with the resources and supports they need to overcome their obstacles and take control of their situation.

Staff from the program assist families in a variety of ways, including helping them apply for housing through the Housing Authority, teaching them to advocate for themselves, and ensuring they are receiving their Child Tax Credit and access to adequate financial resources. They also help families develop a budget, connect them with the food bank if needed, and link them to local employment agencies.

One success story relates to a mother who had received custody of her five children, ages two through seven years. At the time, the family lived in a two-bedroom apartment. Staff from SIGN Family Preservation Program worked with the mother in contacting the Housing Authority and a Family Preservation Worker, who assisted in addressing the needs of the individual and the family. By taking these steps, the mother was able to find adequate housing within the year.

To build on existing actions in this area that assist in reducing poverty, the following initiatives will be pursued:

## Initiatives Going Forward

### Short-term actions include:

- Redesign provincial income assistance programs to better align with the Ministry of Social Services objectives:
  - Improve services and programming to help people experiencing low income improve their quality of life.
  - Increase sustainable transitions to training, education, and employment for adults receiving income assistance.
- The specific focus of the redesign will include:
  - Reviewing basic income support programs and supplements to better match benefits and services with citizen needs.
  - Setting up a process to review the redesigned benefit programs to ensure they are meeting intended goals and objectives.
  - Streamlining administrative processes to improve the citizen experience.
  - Strengthening service practices to better define a person's career status and the best next steps on the path to employment.
  - Developing mechanisms to incentivize participation in employment.

### Future direction for when the Province's fiscal capacity allows:

- Increase earned income exemptions under the Saskatchewan Assistance Program and Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disabilities program.
- Increase the Low Income Tax Benefit.
- Increase the Basic Personal Amount Tax Exemption.

### SIGN Adolescent Group Home

SIGN Adolescent Group Home works to keep its residents attending school and engaged with the learning process as they work towards high school graduation. Staff from the home communicate weekly with schools and provide incentives for achieving attendance goals. In the home, they strive continuously to assist residents with the development of skills critical to long-term success in the workforce. These range from basic chores and housekeeping to communication and relationship skills like negotiation, co-operation, conflict resolution and language etiquette. By encouraging involvement with positive peers, sports, recreation, culture and necessary supports such as counselling, they also help youth find positive alternatives to choices that may increase the risk of poverty, such as gang involvement, early parenthood or substance abuse. Additionally, they lower the risk of homelessness by working alongside the Ministry of Social Services to attempt to reunify children with family members or relatives whenever possible. Through this work, the SIGN Adolescent Group Home helps prepare the youth for more independent living as they mature into adulthood.

## 2) Housing and Homelessness

*Safe, affordable housing offers a foundation for people to build a future. Having a safe and affordable place to call home makes it far easier for individuals experiencing poverty to succeed in education, training, and employment.*

Introduced in 2011, *A Strong Foundation – The Housing Strategy for Saskatchewan* has resulted in stronger partnerships and collaboration across the housing sector, increasing housing supply and improving access to new and existing housing. The number of new houses being constructed is well above the 10 year average. The past three years of rental starts have exceeded the previous 15 years combined.

Since November 2007, our Government has invested more than \$675 million to develop 10,426 units and repair 3,861 homes around the province. Over \$231 million has been spent specifically to develop over 3,500 new affordable rental housing units. Of this total, over \$53 million has been allocated to programs such as the Rental Development Program to support the construction of 614 rental units for individuals with multiple needs, including physical and cognitive disabilities, addictions, and mental illness. Our Government has also invested over \$51 million for the development of 580 housing units and beds for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and developed the province's first emergency shelter for high-risk youth in Regina in 2011.

The Government of Saskatchewan has provided more than 1,900 home ownership opportunities to moderate-income families by investing over \$350 million in the HeadStart on a Home program. Since 2009, our Government has invested nearly \$8 million in Habitat for Humanity projects to provide 120 new homes for families with low incomes in 13 Saskatchewan communities.

Housing supports for students include a \$35 million investment to create over 1,100 student units in Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, La Ronge, Meadow Lake, and Nipawin.

The Province of Saskatchewan either owns or provides support to about 24,900 rental housing units. Over 18,000 of these units are owned directly by the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, while the remainder are owned and operated by third party agencies through agreements with the Province. Over the past few years, our Government has made changes to its Social Housing Rental Program to ensure those in the greatest housing need receive access to these units. In 2014, 2,700 Affordable Housing rental units were converted to the Social Housing Rental Program to ensure residents of these units pay rents that do not exceed 30 per cent of their income.

A list of the various provincial housing programs designed to support low-income or vulnerable households is provided on the next page:



Program	Description	Target Group
Social Housing Rental Program	Offers Government-subsidized rental housing for people with low incomes. The program is based on priority of needs and the availability of housing units. Priority is given to seniors, families with dependents, and individuals with disabilities. Rent is based on a tenant's income – the lower the income, the lower the rent.	People with low income
Rental Development Program	Provides one-time capital funding to assist non-profit corporations, co-operative groups, municipalities, First Nations, and the private sector to respond to community needs by developing affordable rental housing projects for low-income people. This program is particularly important for targeting Saskatchewan's hard-to-house <sup>2</sup> population.	People with low income
Saskatchewan Home Repair Programs	Assist low-income homeowners and rental property owners housing low-income tenants to repair or adapt their dwellings. These programs, which are funded in partnership with the Federal Government, help to ensure that units meet minimum health and safety standards, building codes, and accessibility requirements. Rental property owners who receive funding must rent to low-income households and charge an affordable rent.	Homeowners and tenants with low income (including families, seniors, and people with disabilities)
Secondary Suite Program	Provides eligible homeowners and rental property owners up to 50 per cent of the construction costs to a maximum of \$30,000 per unit to renovate an existing secondary suite or \$10,000 per unit for a new secondary suite that will house low-income households.	People with low income
Habitat for Humanity (Habitat) Partnership	Supports Habitat for Humanity's efforts to provide affordable homeownership opportunities for Saskatchewan's families with low to moderate incomes.	People with low and moderate income
Capital Rent Subsidy	Provides a forgivable loan of \$40,000 per unit to developers of new rental units to increase the supply of new affordable rental units. Rent must be reduced by \$300 per month.	People with low income

<sup>2</sup> 'Hard to house' refers to individuals who are unable to access or maintain stable housing due to one or more characteristics that create unusual barriers to housing. These individuals often need supports and/or services in order to access or maintain stable housing. This includes, but is not limited to, households with individuals who have physical disabilities, mental health issues, addictions issues, behavioural issues, or a number of these issues concurrently.

Program	Description	Target Group
Shelter Enhancement Program	Provides financial assistance to non-profits, First Nations groups, and charities for the purpose of constructing new or renovating existing emergency shelters and second-stage housing units.	Victims of family violence
Emergency Shelters	Ministry of Social Services pays for meals and accommodations at emergency shelters and/or uses local hotels in times of overflow.	People without a home
Cold Weather Strategies	For the development of their respective cold weather strategies, community and Government partners in Saskatoon, Prince Albert, and Regina have co-ordinated measures to support those who need shelter and lack the financial means to pay for their needs. These strategies ensure community services provide the best possible supports through enhanced co-ordination and communication.	People without a home

To build on existing actions in this area that assist in reducing poverty, the following initiatives will be pursued:

## Initiatives Going Forward

### Short-term actions include:

- Work with community agencies to expand opportunities for housing for those deemed hard-to-house.
  - Will support households that include individuals who have physical disabilities, mental health issues, addictions issues, behavioural issues, or a number of these issues concurrently.

### Future direction for when the Province's fiscal capacity allows:

- Support community Housing First initiatives.
- Continue to partner with stakeholders to increase the availability of safe, affordable, and adequate housing for individuals and families with low incomes.
- Increase access to safe, affordable housing for First Nation and Métis people.

# 3) Early Childhood Development and Child Care

*The period of children's growth from the prenatal stage to age eight is a period of tremendous human potential. Research demonstrates that prevention and intervention in the early years support children's intellectual and social skills and improve their health and self-esteem.*

## Early Childhood Development

Early prevention and intervention can also reduce the stress and negative impacts related to living in poverty and help to establish a more level playing field for children growing up in low-income communities and inequitable circumstances. Early years programming has been shown to improve educational outcomes and economic participation, lower obesity rates, reduce mental health and addictions issues, reduce juvenile crime and improve literacy, numeracy, and dispositions towards learning.

Our Government has made significant investments in the early years and support for families. Investments include \$26 million to support over 5,000 Prekindergarten spaces for vulnerable three and four year-olds in 316 programs across the province. There are 14 Early Childhood Intervention Program (ECIP) agencies across the province providing home-based support for families with children from birth to school-age who experience developmental delays or are at risk to develop a delay before school entry. ECIPs provide services to approximately 1,200 children and their families throughout Saskatchewan. Additionally, seven of the 14 agencies also provide services to 250 children and their families living on-reserve. The Province also provides more than \$14.8 million in funding to targeted KidsFirst programs to support approximately 1,900 vulnerable families each year with prenatal health, home visiting, early learning and child care opportunities, and dedicated mental health and addictions supports.

## Child Care

Parents need support so they can maintain stable employment and invest in their children's future. The lack of adequate, reliable, and affordable child care is a very real barrier for the parents or parent of a family to remain in the workforce or to seek further education or skills training. People who work evening shifts or weekends face even greater challenges in finding appropriate care for their children.

The availability of child care has increased dramatically in our province. Since 2007, we have invested over \$380 million to support over 5,300 new child care spaces developed in communities all across the province. There has been a special focus on creating spaces in schools and post-secondary institutions. Presently, there are over 14,000 licensed child care spaces in Saskatchewan that allow parents to actively participate in the workforce or pursue higher education. We have also enhanced opportunities for child care employees. In spring 2015, the Ministry of Education worked with Saskatchewan Polytechnic to develop a high school dual credit course for training in Early Childhood Education, Level 1. This course is now available for delivery in Saskatchewan high schools.

Creating better outcomes for our children also requires that we invest in the people best able to nurture and care for them. The Province supports vulnerable families through a number of programs. These include the Positive Parenting Program; Sweet Dreams, which provides a supported living home for at-risk single mothers in Saskatoon; Kate's Place, which provides safe, stable, supportive housing for women participating in the Regina Drug Treatment Court in Regina; and the Flexible Response pilot program that provides an alternative intervention for children and families and supports keeping families together.

The list below provides information on various early childhood development initiatives in the province:

Program	Description	Target Group
Early School Entrance	Provides educational programming for children identified with intensive needs who are three years of age or older.	Children with intensive needs who are three years of age or older
Early Learning and Child Care Program	Supports families and communities by promoting high-quality care for children. The program licences and monitors child care centres and family child care homes, ensuring families have access to reliable early learning and care resources that provide a healthy, safe, and nurturing environment for children.	Families with younger children
Prekindergarten	Prekindergarten targets vulnerable three- and four-year-old children in high-need communities. Prekindergarten is funded by the Provincial Government and delivered through school divisions. It is a half time program and includes family engagement.	Vulnerable three-and four-year-old children
Early Childhood Intervention Program (ECIP)	ECIP is a province-wide network of community-based supports for families of children who experience developmental delays or are at risk of developmental delay. Interventionists connect the families to professionals and community supports and support parents to enhance their child's development by integrating developmental activities into everyday routines. ECIP also supports children and families as they transition to school or centre-based programming.	Families with children six years of age and under who experience developmental delays
KidsFirst	KidsFirst is a voluntary home visiting program. It targets high risk families in vulnerable communities, delivering an evidence-based curriculum to enhance parenting skills and give vulnerable children the best start in life. The program enhances knowledge, provides support and builds on family strengths.	Vulnerable families with children under five years of age in targeted communities
Positive Parenting Program (Triple P)	Provides education and support that aims to give parents the skills and confidence they need to parent well, by engaging, encouraging, and empowering families to address common child and adolescent social, emotional, and behavioural problems.	Vulnerable families with children
Child Nutrition and Development Program (CNDP)	Supports local initiatives that address child and family food security needs in Saskatchewan by providing funding to school divisions and community-based organizations.	Vulnerable families with children

To build on existing actions in this area that assist in reducing poverty, we propose the following initiatives:

## Initiatives Going Forward

### Short-term actions include:

- Implement a comprehensive Saskatchewan Early Years Plan.
- Explore options to help parents choose healthy and safe child care environments and to better connect families with home-based child care providers. Potential options could include an “accredited” child care category. Target Prekindergarten programs to vulnerable children.
- Make it easier for parents to find child care and other local early learning options.

### Future direction for when the Province’s fiscal capacity allows:

- Establish child care centres in all new school builds in the province, as appropriate.
- Enhance Before and After School Programs.
- Increase availability of early learning spaces including Prekindergarten programs.

### EGADZ Action to Employment Program

The EGADZ Action to Employment Program offers yard care services to individuals in the community who are in need of assistance and are unable to afford yard care services. This program employs “at risk” youth who struggle with mental health, addiction or social anxiety issues. Through the program, the youth gain employment skills, accountability and responsibility. They work in a healthy, caring and encouraging environment that allows them to develop the work ethic and attitudes needed to seek employment once the program comes to an end.

August 2015 was a notable month for the Action to Employment crew. In total, the team worked a total of 759 hours with clients. As a result, one team member saved enough money to pay two months of rent in advance. Another crew member, a young single mother, earned enough to buy a new laptop and all the school supplies needed to enrol in the Addictions Counselor program at the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies.



## 4) Education, Skills Training and Employment

*There is a strong link between education and positive employment outcomes. Living in poverty makes it difficult for people to extend their education or to obtain training that would increase their ability to get a job. Access to programs and skills training that help low-income people improve their skills is critical to giving them the tools they need to build a better future.*

Achieving a Grade 12 diploma is a vital step in helping young people prepare to compete in the labour market and to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. However, school completion rates for First Nations and Métis youth in Saskatchewan could be improved. In order to begin addressing this issue, the Province commissioned the *Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis People* in 2013.

The Government of Saskatchewan has been active in developing ways to improve educational outcomes at the K-12 level, increasing access to post-secondary education and enhancing supports for Adult Learners. Saskatchewan was the first province to implement mandatory treaty education for K-12 students. Treaty resource kits for teachers have been in classrooms since 2008. The First Nations and Métis Education Achievement Fund provides \$3.8 million annually to school divisions to support the improvement of education outcomes for First Nations and Métis students in literacy, numeracy, and engagement. This funding supports the hiring of First Nations and Métis education consultants, student supports and cultural learning programs, cultural education for school staff, and more.

The Ministry of Education is collaborating with the education sector to improve reading literacy for grades one to three students. The sector-wide reading improvement plan, Saskatchewan Reads, will support effective teaching practices, help teachers identify students' strengths and needs, meet unique individual student needs, and support administrators in the leadership required to support reading instruction.

The Province also funds four First Nations to host Aboriginal Summer Literacy Camps to help children maintain and improve reading levels over the summer months. Currently, the Ministry of Education operates 31 teen and young parent centres to support the educational attainment of young parents.

To support students attending post-secondary institutions, the Province has invested in creating more student housing and increased the number of child

care spaces on post-secondary campuses.

The Saskatchewan Student Loan Program was enhanced for low-income students by introducing a new grant for students with dependent children that provides \$47 per week of study per child. Students receiving student loans are now allowed to work part-time without being financially penalized during their study period. The Saskatchewan Research Council recently announced an Aboriginal Mentorship Program to match Aboriginal students enrolled in science, technology, engineering, or math courses with mentors in the same or similar disciplines to help them take their education and experience to the next level.

Investment in accessible education and training is vital to ensuring continued labour force growth. It is also a significant way to enhance economic and social inclusion for all Saskatchewan citizens. In 2014-15 alone, the Ministry of the Economy provided over \$102 million for 36,820 training opportunities for Saskatchewan residents. This includes nearly \$49 million in post-secondary education and training programs for First Nations and Métis people. Each year, the Ministry of the Economy also provides over \$10 million in funding to help adults with disabilities succeed in education and employment. The Government of Saskatchewan has also responded to the increased number of new Canadians coming to our province by investing over \$7 million for a variety of programs and services to assist immigrants to effectively settle in Saskatchewan.

In July 2015, the Province opened the Whitespruce Provincial Training Centre which provides employment training for up to 39 low-risk, reduced-custody males. Increasing educational, professional, and other personal skills reduces offenders' chances of reoffending.

The Government of Saskatchewan also contracts with more than 40 community-based organizations across the province to help individuals facing barriers to employment. The Province is working with these organizations to improve client outcomes by offering them greater flexibility to innovate in response to client needs.

The following list provides information on the many initiatives the Province has in place to assist students and learners of all ages:

Program	Description	Target Group
<b>K-12 Education</b>		
First Nations and Métis Education Achievement Fund	This fund is for school divisions to assist in developing and implementing specific initiatives aimed at improving achievement and increasing high school completion rates for First Nations and Métis students.	First Nations and Métis students
Intensive Supports	Intensive supports promote the success of students who have learning needs that impact several areas of development and who require intense and frequent supports to optimize their learning achievement.	Students with disabilities
Provincial programs for students in hospitals, or In care or custody	The Ministry of Education provides funding for the delivery of direct educational services to students and youth in hospitals, wards of the Province, and youth transitioning out of a custody facility.	Vulnerable children and youth
Supports for newcomers in schools	Assists newcomers and their families to transition into, through, and out of the education system. Workers are embedded in communities to assist in the screening and enrolling of students into the educational system. Various services are available to the family and student to assist in increasing a sense of belonging, engagement, and academic success. An interpretation service is also available to allow for clear communication between the parents and school-based personnel.	New immigrant families and children
Youth in Custody Education Model: Transforming Young Offender Education and Literacy	This initiative is a newly established partnership between Corrections and Policing, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Education intended to develop and implement an evidence-based and best practice model for delivering quality education to youth who are in conflict with the law.	Youth offenders
Student Build Program	Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, in partnership with the Northern Lights School Division, is helping students learn basic carpentry skills by constructing single-family homes. These homes will become part of the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation rental portfolio in these communities.	Northern students

Program	Description	Target Group
<b>Post-Secondary</b>		
Student Financial Aid <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canada and Saskatchewan Student Loans and Grants</li> </ul>	<p>Offers student loans, scholarships, bursaries, or grants depending on income and other criteria.</p> <p>The Government of Canada and the Government of Saskatchewan work together to provide financial assistance for post-secondary students, which also includes targeted grants for low-income students and students with permanent disabilities, such as:</p> <p><b>Saskatchewan Student Grant for Students from Low-Income Families</b></p> <p>This grant provides about \$250 per month of study (\$58 per week) to students with low incomes enrolled in one-year programs below the undergraduate level and to students enrolled in graduate and post-graduate programs.</p> <p><b>Saskatchewan Student Grant for Low-Income Students with Dependent Children</b></p> <p>This grant provides about \$200 per month of study per child (\$47 per week of study per child) to low-income students with dependent children between the ages of 12 and 18.</p> <p><b>Grants for Students with Permanent Disabilities</b></p> <p>Students with a permanent disability that restricts their ability to perform daily activities necessary to participate fully in post-secondary studies or the work force may be eligible for additional assistance.</p> <p><b>Canada/Saskatchewan Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Persons with Permanent Disabilities</b></p> <p>This grant provides up to \$8,000 per year for exceptional education-related costs such as tutors, note-takers, interpreters, brailers, or technical aids.</p>	Post-secondary students from low-income and middle-income families; or post-secondary students with permanent disabilities
Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship	This scholarship is for all new Saskatchewan grade 12 or General Education Development (GED) graduates who enrol in a provincial post-secondary institution.	Post-secondary students
Graduate Retention Program	Non-refundable tax credit up to \$20,000 for post-secondary graduates who stay and work in Saskatchewan.	Post-secondary graduates

Program	Description	Target Group
<b>Literacy and Upgrading</b>		
Adult Basic Education (ABE)	<p>Adult Basic Education is an umbrella term that refers to a wide range of services, credit, and non-credit programs designed to help adult learners achieve their goals. These may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increasing education and/or certification levels;</li> <li>• gaining prerequisites for further training or employment;</li> <li>• enhancing life skills, independence and self-sufficiency; or</li> <li>• learning skills in specific areas (such as technological literacy, communications skills, or portfolio development).</li> </ul>	Adults without a grade 12 and adults upgrading their high school marks OR needing education prerequisites in order to qualify for post-secondary or training programs
English as an Additional Language programming	<p>Provincially-funded English as an Additional Language programs assist newcomers to Saskatchewan to learn the language skills to function in daily life. Language training programs are delivered by community-based organizations and Regional Colleges.</p> <p>The Federal Government funds language training programs for immigrants who are permanent residents.</p>	New immigrants
General Education Development (GED) prep and GED testing	<p>The GED program in Saskatchewan gives individuals, who have not graduated from high school, the opportunity to earn a high school equivalency diploma by writing the GED tests.</p> <p>GED Prep programs are available through community-based organizations and post-secondary institutions to provide an opportunity for learners to prepare academically to write the GED test.</p>	Adults without a grade 12
<b>Skills Training</b>		
Workplace Essential Skills Saskatchewan (WESS)	<p>Supports business and industry to train low-skilled job seekers and existing low-skilled employees in the workplace to gain the workplace essential skills needed for long-term employment and/or advancement.</p> <p>WESS provides funding to employer, industry and training institution partnerships for the development and delivery of essential skills training that is tailored to their workplace.</p>	Job seekers and existing employees with low skills

Program	Description	Target Group
Skills and Trades Centres in Regina and Saskatoon	Industry-driven training serving adults, including First Nation/Métis, immigrants and vulnerable youth who are returning to an educational environment to gain skills for jobs.	Youth and adults training to access entry level skilled jobs
Apprenticeship Training	The apprenticeship system provides apprentices with experiential education at the workplace and technical training in a classroom setting.	Workers in apprentice-able occupations
Skills Training Allocation	Skills Training Allocation is intended to address the training needs of business and industry. Skills training programs are delivered by post-secondary institutions and are designed to lead to full-time sustainable employment in areas of greatest labour market demand.	Adults in training
Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology Construction Careers and Industrial Career Centres	Provides First Nations and Métis people with entry-level construction readiness programming and short skill programs.	First Nations and Métis adults in training for entry level skilled jobs
Canada-Saskatchewan Job Grant	Reimburses employers for two-thirds of the costs of training for employed or unemployed workers to a maximum of \$10,000 per trainee.	Employers and workers
Youth at Work Program	The Youth at Work program increases awareness and understanding of what constitutes a safe, healthy, fair, co-operative, representative and productive workplace.	Youth
<b>Employment Programs</b>		
Workforce Development Program	Specialized career and employment services for adults with multiple barriers to employment.	Adults
Workforce Development for Persons with Disabilities (WFD-PD) Program	Provides funding to assist adults with disabilities to prepare for, secure and maintain employment. Support includes: training on the job; vocational and work assessments; psycho-educational assessments; job coaching; support for employers; and disability-related costs for a wide variety of post-secondary education and training programs.  Program support is cost shared under the Federal-Provincial Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities.	Adults with disabilities



Program	Description	Target Group
Canada-Saskatchewan Labour Market Services Offices	Employment services are available in 19 service locations in the province. Staff are available to provide job-seekers and employers with information and assistance, including Jobs First and related services for Social Assistance recipients.	Job-seekers and employers
Saskjobs.ca	The provincial job order system assists job-seekers to find employment. Job orders can be accessed over the telephone or through the Internet.	Job-seekers

To build on existing actions in this area that assist in reducing poverty, the following initiatives will be pursued:

## Initiatives Going Forward

### Short-term actions include:

- Develop links between human services providers and the K-12 education system to support vulnerable students and their families.
- Develop a Truth and Reconciliation/Residential Schools resource for educators.
- Extend the age of eligibility to receive financial support for continued education for youth and young adults who are Long Term Permanent Wards of the Province.
- Strengthen services to individuals on Social Assistance by identifying the interventions they need to make progress toward economic independence.
- Improve transition supports for at-risk youth who are graduating from high school, and for youth in care who are turning 18.

### Future direction for when the Province's fiscal capacity allows:

- Enhance support for programming to provide professional development for teachers that improves First Nations and Métis student engagement and achievement in school.
- Enhance employment readiness and literacy programming in correctional facilities to assist offenders in gaining employment once they leave the facility.

## 5) Health and Food Security

*An individual's health and income are closely connected. People living in poverty are more likely to experience ill health. Poor nutrition, inadequate, overcrowded or unsafe housing, stress, and unsafe communities are a few of the factors that contribute to long-term health issues. At the same time, a person experiencing health challenges will face barriers in retaining employment and accessing education, and this in turn contributes to poverty. Focusing on health promotion, disease prevention, and improved access to primary health services can lead to improved health outcomes.*

Lack of food security also results in individuals being more likely to develop a chronic illness. Children who go to school hungry have decreased ability to concentrate and be engaged learners, and as a result, are at risk of falling behind their peers and not reaching their full potential.

Our Government has partnered with Health Regions and community-based organizations to improve access to primary health care for low-income citizens. Two examples are the Saskatoon Health Bus and the Meadow Primary Health Care Clinic in Regina. The Saskatoon Health Bus (a mobile primary health care bus that services Saskatoon's core neighborhoods) was introduced as part of an overall strategy to address the needs of vulnerable populations and under-served clients. The bus operates in areas where people often experience geographic, social, economic and cultural barriers. The intent is to bring services directly to those who may not receive care, and provide an alternative for those seeking care for minor conditions at hospital emergency rooms.

The Meadow Primary Health Care Clinic in Regina has been working to "attach" clients from the inner city to health providers and enhance chronic disease management through a team-based approach to care. The Province also supports Community Clinics throughout Saskatchewan, some with integration of mental health and addictions services and specialized programming based on population needs. In addition, two Connecting to Care pilot programs were launched in Saskatoon and Regina to identify and assist high-use patients who are repeatedly hospitalized, helping them receive the care they need in the most appropriate way.

Our Government also supports health promotion initiatives aimed at improving community wellness. Provincial nutrition guidelines are in place for schools and child care facilities to help ensure that the foods provided in these settings are nutritious. Health Region Public Health Nutritionists and Health Promotion Practitioners provide direct support to schools, school divisions, child care facilities and other organizations to support healthy food environments. Some Health Regions are supporting communities through grants and working with community-based organizations to address food insecurity locally. Organizations like Regina Education and Action on Child Hunger (REACH) have school nutrition programs and are helping to increase access to healthy food in their broader communities.

The Northern Healthy Communities Partnership is a multi-sectoral action group dedicated to making the healthy choice the easy choice. They share strategies for how to overcome the challenges of gardening in a northern climate with their practical "how to" guide. They also help to make breastfeeding the natural choice by encouraging businesses to post "breastfeeding welcomed here" signs. Northern communities, like Cumberland House and Ile-a-la-Crosse, have developed local food security initiatives in their communities (e.g., greenhouses). These and efforts across the province are providing cumulative support for food security in Saskatchewan.

Listed on the next page are a number of Government programs that serve low-income families and individuals with health-related needs:

Program	Description	Target Group
<b>Drug Plan and Extended Benefits</b>		
Family Health Benefits	Family Health Benefits (FHB) help low-income families pay for their children's optical, dental, drug, and other health expenses.	Families with low income
Children's Drug Plan	Any prescription drug listed on the Saskatchewan Formulary costs no more than \$20 per prescription for all children 14 years of age or under.	Children 14 years of age and under
Seniors Drug Plan	Any prescription drug listed on the Saskatchewan Formulary costs no more than \$20 per prescription for seniors, depending on their income.	Seniors with low income
Supplementary Health Benefits	In addition to universal health benefits, a range of health benefits are available for low-income working families who meet the standards of an income test or are receiving the Saskatchewan Employment Supplement (SES) or the Saskatchewan Rental Housing Supplement (SRHS). The Family Health Benefits program helps pay for children's health services (i.e., dental visits, eye exams and more), plus some services for adult family members.	Individuals and families on Social Assistance
Special Support Program (for high prescription drug costs relative to income)	The Special Support Program is an income-tested program that helps residents with high drug costs in relation to their income. Eligible applicants will receive a deductible and/or a co-payment on their prescription drugs for each calendar year.  Families receiving the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), Seniors Income Plan (SIP) or Family Health Benefits may apply for this program.	People with low income
Saskatchewan Aids for Independent Living (SAIL)	The SAIL Program provides benefits that assist people with disabilities to achieve a more active and independent lifestyle and assist people in the management of certain chronic health conditions.	People with disabilities

Program	Description	Target Group
<b>Health and Disability Support Programs</b>		
Primary Health Care (PHC)	<p>As of December 2015, there are 95 PHC teams (including one in development) funded by the Ministry of Health focused on enhancing “closer-to-home” access to PHC and urgent care. Included in this network of teams are four community clinics (Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert and Wynyard), three Collaborative Emergency Centres (with two more in development) and eight innovation sites announced in 2012 that are using new models of team-based care focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing patient case management</li> <li>• Enhancing mental health and addictions support provided by PHC teams</li> <li>• Expanded hours of service</li> <li>• Linking with First Nations health delivery systems</li> <li>• New chronic disease management approaches</li> <li>• Developing mechanisms to connect unattached patients who present to emergency departments</li> </ul> <p>Of these 95 teams, 61 are in rural Saskatchewan, 26 are in urban or metropolitan areas and 8 are in Northern Saskatchewan.</p>	All
Individualized Funding for home care	Individualized Funding is designed to provide people with increased choice and flexibility in the way their needs are met through the home care program.	Individuals with assessed needs qualifying for home care

To build on existing actions in this area that assist in reducing poverty, the following initiatives will be pursued:

## Initiatives Going Forward

### Short-term actions include:

- Work with Health Regions and community-based organizations to improve access to primary health care services in vulnerable neighbourhoods.

### Future direction for when the Province's fiscal capacity allows:

- Explore potential partnerships with business and communities on projects to improve Northern food security.
- Work with Northern leaders to improve access to healthy food and support food self-sufficiency by promoting best practices in local harvesting and food production (e.g., fishing, gardening, and community-supported agriculture) within all Northern communities.
- Review adequacy of the food allowance for Social Assistance clients in the North.
- Work with Health Regions and community-based organizations to strengthen supports for access to healthy food in settings where children live, learn, and play.

### Cumberland House Market Garden Farm and Learning Centre

The community of Cumberland House Market Garden Farm and Learning Centre launched in 2012 through a collaboration of local leadership and the developers of High-Grow tunnel production systems. The Farm and Learning Centre grows fresh fruit and vegetables in tunnels filled with biodegradable mulch. The program has recently expanded to look at raising poultry for local consumption. Cumberland House Mayor Valerie Deschambeault sees collaboration on such projects as critical for meeting the food security and health challenges remote communities face, all while creating valuable education and employment opportunities for locals.



## 6) Vulnerable Families and Individuals

*People experiencing poverty are disproportionately impacted by domestic violence, mental health and addictions issues, and disability. Our Government recognizes this and has implemented a number of initiatives to support vulnerable families and children.*

### Victims of Family Violence

Women and children are disproportionately burdened by the trauma and stress of domestic violence. Women experiencing poverty have fewer options to remove themselves from violence and improve their quality of life. Our Government provides a number of services to support families experiencing domestic violence. The Province funds 10 women's shelters in Saskatchewan that provide emergency accommodation and support for women and their children who are leaving abusive and violent circumstances. These shelters are located in Moose Jaw, Swift Current, North Battleford, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Yorkton, and Regina.

The Province has also partnered with the Federal Government to support a shelter in La Ronge. We helped support the establishment of the Support for Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse Program. Family violence outreach services, funded through the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General, assist women and their children who need help in accessing a shelter or other services. Sexual assault services provide crisis intervention, support, and counseling to victims of sexual assault. We have doubled the funding provided to Mobile Crisis Services in Saskatoon, Regina, and Prince Albert.

The following provides a summary of services for victims of domestic violence:

Program	Description	Target Group
Family Violence Outreach	Provides assistance to men, women and families living in violent or potentially violent circumstances.	Individuals and families at risk of violence
Transition Houses	Provide 24-hour, staffed emergency safe shelter and support for individual women and women with their accompanying children leaving circumstances of violence and abuse.	Women and children fleeing violence
Enhanced Residential Services	Provides safe shelter and support in Prince Albert and Saskatoon to individual women, and women with their accompanying children, who have issues beyond family violence including addictions, mental health concerns, and homelessness.	People experiencing homelessness
Sexual Assault Services	Direct supports for victims of sexual assault including 24-hour crisis telephone support, crisis counselling, support and accompanying individuals to medical, legal, and Social Services appointments.	Victims of sexual assault
Victims Compensation Program	Reimbursement to victims of violent crime for actual expenses; primarily for immediate expenses after the crime and during the criminal justice process.	Victims of violent crime

Program	Description	Target Group
Victims Services Program	Delivers a range of programs and services to assist victims of crime after they have been victimized and throughout involvement in the criminal justice process.	Victims of crime
Maintenance Enforcement Service	The Maintenance Enforcement Office monitors and collects support payments ordered by the court or agreed to by two parties. The Office registers, receives and processes payments. If necessary, the Office also enforces the payment of court orders or agreements for maintenance.	People who have a court order or agreement for child or spousal support

## Mental Health and Addictions

One in every five Canadians deals with a mental health condition or addictions issue yearly. This means that many Saskatchewan families are impacted, either directly or indirectly, by mental illness. People with severe and persistent mental illness or addictions often live in chronic poverty. In 2013, the Province announced the intention to develop a 10-year inter-ministerial action plan to address the complex and often connected issues of mental health and addictions. In 2014, the Province received *Working Together for Change – A 10 Year Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Saskatchewan*, which outlines a number of important steps for provincial and community agencies to undertake to assist individuals and their families affected by mental health and addictions issues.

Since 2007, the Province has increased funding for mental health services by 34 per cent. The Provincial Government invested almost \$15 million towards the construction of the Dubé Centre for Mental Health in Saskatoon which opened in 2010. The Dubé Centre accommodates two adult units totaling 54 beds and a separate 10-bed child/adolescent unit. In 2009, the Provincial Government partnered with Phoenix Residential Society to support the development of 32 affordable housing units for people with serious mental health issues.

The Province has significantly increased the amount of resources available to support families and individuals dealing with addictions. The Province opened a 45-bed Brief and Social detoxification facility in Regina in 2010. Since 2009, the Government has funded a number of new addiction treatment centres in Prince Albert. This includes a 14-bed Brief and Social Detox Centre and the Family Treatment Centre which can

accommodate eight families, both operated by Prince Albert Parkland Regional Health Authority (PAPRHA). PAPRHA also partnered with the Prince Albert Grand Council to support the development of a 15-bed youth treatment centre, Valley Hill Youth Treatment Centre, which is operated by a non-profit agency. In 2014, the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation provided over \$250,000 to Oxford House in Regina, which supports individuals who have successfully completed addictions programs.

## People Experiencing Disability

People experiencing disability often do not have the same opportunities as others to participate in the economy. Our Government has committed to making Saskatchewan the best place to live for people with disabilities. In order to realize this commitment, our Government worked with representatives of the disability community to develop the Disability Strategy, entitled *People Before Systems: Transforming the Experience of Disability in Saskatchewan*. This ambitious 10-year strategy points to a number of priority areas for Government and community action. One of these priority areas is to increase economic and social inclusion for people experiencing disabilities. The Province is presently in the process of developing an implementation plan for the strategy.

Since 2007, our Government has invested over \$285 million in funding increases to disability programs, services and initiatives. These include expanded services for Community Living clients with complex needs, incremental increases to the SAID benefit, wage increases to recruit and retain qualified front-line staff of community-based organizations providing services to people with disabilities, the Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living Program, employment programs and municipal para-transit programs.

Of particular note, with the introduction of the SAID program in 2009, our Government has spent a total of \$731 million to improve the quality of life for persons with significant and enduring disabilities.

The following provides a summary of services for those with mental health and addictions issues and those experiencing disability:

Mental Health and Disability Support Programs		
Program	Description	Target Group
Mental Health and Addictions	Includes programs for mental health, drug, alcohol, and gambling issues.	All
Acquired Brain Injury Partnership Project	Partnership between Saskatchewan Health and Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI) to provide a co-ordinated and integrated continuum of community-based services for individuals with an acquired brain injury and their families. The project's goal is to provide individual and family support to people with acquired brain injury so that they may live successfully in their communities with improved quality of life. There are currently 36 community-based programs that serve Saskatchewan residents.	People with acquired brain injuries
Autism Resources	Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) consultants screen for the possibility of ASD, refer for diagnosis and assessment, and facilitate the development and implementation of a support and/or treatment plan for individuals up to the age of 19 years.	Persons with ASD
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Support in Community	<p>There are a number of FASD prevention and support programs funded by Government and available in the community, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>FASD Support Network</b>, which is a parent-led organization that helps individuals with FASD and their families recognize themselves as safe, supported, valued and contributing members of the community. The FASD Family Support Program offers individualized support to families living with FASD along with opportunities to gather, connect and share lived experiences.</li> <li>• <b>Regina Community Clinic FASD Centre</b>, which offers two health and wellness programs for individuals impacted by FASD.</li> <li>• <b>Saskatchewan Prevention Institute</b>, a non-profit organization, co-ordinates and administers a provincial FASD prevention program with a group of public speakers on the topic, the Youth Action for Prevention program, and other initiatives.</li> </ul>	<p>Support programs – persons with FASD and their families</p> <p>Prevention programs – pregnant women at high risk for having a child with FASD (until the child reaches two years of age)</p>

## Mental Health and Disability Support Programs

Program	Description	Target Group
Therapies Services	Includes services for occupational and physical therapy along with audiology and hearing services, and speech and language pathology services.	Persons with illness and/or disabilities
Community Living Service Delivery	Community Living Service Delivery (CLSD) partners with community-based organizations (CBOs) and other service providers across the province to provide residential and day programs based on an individual's support need, including: group homes, group living homes, Supported Living programs, and Approved Private Service Homes. CLSD also provides community case management services and Outreach and Prevention Services (OPS) and family respite for children with intellectual disabilities.	People with intellectual disabilities

To build on existing actions in this area that assist in reducing poverty, the following initiatives will be pursued:

### Initiatives Going Forward

**Short-term actions include:**

- Initiate implementation of the 10-year Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan.
- Implement the Disability Strategy.

**Future direction for when the Province's fiscal capacity allows:**

- Implement a collaborative Saskatchewan Government plan to prevent and reduce interpersonal violence and domestic abuse.

# Conclusion

Our Government has consistently demonstrated its commitment to helping those most vulnerable in our society. The creation of the SAID program, our pioneering of the HUB model in Canada, and our record investments in housing and child care are just a few examples of our commitment in action.

We recognize that there is still more that needs to be done and we thank the Advisory Group on Poverty Reduction for their thoughtful recommendations, which have informed this document. Through the development of the Saskatchewan Poverty Reduction Strategy, we have identified an ambitious poverty reduction target and outlined some first steps to keep us moving forward. We will continue to monitor results to ensure that the initiatives we have in place are the right ones at the right time.

While the Provincial Government has a key responsibility in taking the lead on poverty reduction, we will not reach our goals without the continued work and commitment from the business community, First Nation and Métis organizations, health providers, community-based organizations, educators, and citizens in communities throughout Saskatchewan to address the many factors contributing to poverty.

Acting on our provincial motto, “From Many Peoples Strength,” we must work together to ensure that all Saskatchewan people can fully realize their potential.

# Appendix A

## Monthly Income from Income Assistance

Monthly Resources	Single Employable on TEA* Tier A (Regina, Saskatoon)	Single with Disability on SAID Tier A (Regina, Saskatoon)	Single Employable Parent With 2 Children (<6 yrs) on TEA Tier A (Regina, Saskatoon)	Two Parent Family With 2 Children (<6 yrs) on TEA Tier A (Regina, Saskatoon)		Single Senior (65 yrs and older)
<b>Income Assistance</b>						
General Living Allowance/ Living Income	583	1,064	966	1,221		
Pre-Employment Allowance	20	0	20	40	OAS	565
Disability Allowance	0	70	0	0	GIS	766
Utilities – TEA/SAID 2014-15 Fiscal Avg	112	119	192	218	SIP	270
<b>IA Total</b>	<b>715</b>	<b>1,253</b>	<b>1,178</b>	<b>1,479</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,601</b>
<b>Other Federal/Provincial Resources</b>						
CCTB – Jul 2015	–	–	245	245		
NCBS – Jul 2015	–	–	358	358		
Universal Child Care Benefit (< age 6) – Jul 2015	–	–	320	320		
Family Rental Housing Supplement	–	–	305	305		
Disability Housing Supplement	–	262	0	0		
Saskatchewan Employment Supplement	–	–	–	–		
Working Income Tax Benefit	–	–	–	–		
2015 GST Credit	23	23	69	69	2015 GST Credit	23
2015 SLITC Credit	20	20	48	56	2015 SLITC Credit	20
<b>Other F/P Resources Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>1,345</b>	<b>1,353</b>		<b>43</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$758</b>	<b>\$1,558</b>	<b>\$2,523</b>	<b>\$2,832</b>		<b>\$1,644</b>
<b>2015 MBM (2012 Actual CPI Adjusted)</b>	1,582	1,582	2,741	3,165		1,582
<b>Welfare Income – % of 2015 MBM</b>	48%	98%	92%	89%		104%



## Monthly Income from Minimum Wage Employment

Monthly Resources	Single Employable Tier A (Regina, Saskatoon)	Single with Disability Tier A (Regina, Saskatoon)	Single Employable Parent With 2 Children (<6 yrs) Tier A (Regina, Saskatoon)	Two Parent Family With 2 Children (<6 yrs) Tier A (Regina, Saskatoon)	Single Senior (65 yrs and older)
<b>Minimum Wage \$10.50/hour – 36 hours/week</b>					
Gross	1,638	1,638	1,638	3,276	1,638
Net					
*Based on Canada Revenue Agency calculator					
Deductions					
\$75.17 Federal Tax					
\$26.11 Provincial Tax					
\$66.64 CPP					
\$30.79 EI					
Total Deductions = \$198.71/person	1,439	1,439	1,439	2,879	1,439
<b>Other Federal/Provincial Resources</b>					
OAS	–	–	–	–	570
CCTB – Jul 2015	–	–	245	245	0
NCBS – Jul 2015	–	–	358	103	0
Universal Child Care Benefit (< age 6) – Jul 2015	–	–	320	320	0
Income Tax – UCCB	–	–	-83	-83	0
Family Rental Housing Supplement	–	–	245	82	0
Disability Rental Housing Supplement	–	124	0	0	0
Saskatchewan Employment Supplement	–	0	375	25	0
Working Income Tax Benefit	–	21	101	–	9
Working Income Tax Disability Supplement	–	42	–	–	–
2015 GST Credit	35	35	69	138	35
2015 SLITC Credit	20	20	48	112	20
<b>Other F/P Resources Total</b>	55	242	1,678	942	634
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$1,494</b>	<b>\$1,681</b>	<b>\$3,117</b>	<b>\$3,821</b>	<b>\$2,073</b>
<b>2015 MBM (2012 Actual CPI Adjusted)</b>	\$1,582	\$1,582	\$2,741	\$3,165	\$1,582
<b>Min Wage Income – % of 2015 MBM</b>	94%	106%	114%	121%	131%

Abbreviations: TEA (Transitional Employment Allowance), SAID (Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability), CCTB (Canada Child Tax Benefit), NCBS (National Child Benefit Supplement), GST (Goods and Services Tax), SLITC (Sask. Low Income Tax Credit), MBM (Market Basket Measure), CPI (Consumer Price Index), CPP (Canada Pension Plan), EI (Employment Insurance), OAS (Old Age Security), UCCB (Universal Child Care Benefit)

**For more information, contact:**

**Ministry of Social Services**

**306-787-3686**

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