



Speech from the Throne 2021

Delivered on the Occasion of the Opening of

The Second Session of
The Twenty-Ninth Legislature
Province of Saskatchewan

Wednesday, October 27th, 2021

The Honourable Russ Mirasty
Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan

BUILDING A BETTER SASKATCHEWAN

MR. SPEAKER, MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE, HONoured GUESTS, PEOPLE OF SASKATCHEWAN

Welcome to the opening of the Second Session of the Twenty-Ninth Legislature of the Province of Saskatchewan.

We gather at a challenging time in our province's history.

We are being tested by drought and by the fourth wave of a global pandemic.

But in Saskatchewan we have been tested before by adversity and we have always persevered.

We have confronted uncertainty in the past and we have emerged an even stronger province.

The character of our people – strong and resilient - is evident for all to see.

At their farm just southwest of Saskatoon, Derek Dery and his family took off a disappointing crop.

But one that was quickly put into perspective.

“As tough as it is,” said Derek, “you just need to find things to be grateful for on the farm, and get the land prepared for 2022.”

In Saskatoon, technology entrepreneurs are busy building a vibrant new industry employing thousands of people.

Companies like Vendasta, Seven Shifts and Coconut Software are demolishing the stereotype that Saskatchewan's economy is driven exclusively by the resource sector.

“We've always believed in Saskatchewan,” said Vendasta CEO Brendan King.

In Gravelbourg, a young boy is demonstrating that the Saskatchewan tradition of caring for the most vulnerable transcends the generations.

This summer, nine-year-old Luc Brisebois started Little Breezer's Lawn Care.

Luc wanted to raise money to pay for new goalie equipment.

He accomplished that goal and kept on going, mowing lawns and giving some of what he earned to the local foodbank, donations matched by his family and others in the community.

These stories, and so many others like them, illustrate what we have always known: that we live in a big-hearted province where no problem is insurmountable, where no challenge can't be overcome, where optimism and hope prevail over fear and pessimism.

My government is honoured to work on behalf of all the residents of Saskatchewan.

We are determined to build a province worthy of the people we serve.

Our goal in this session, and in the years ahead, is to build a better Saskatchewan.

A stronger Saskatchewan.

A safer Saskatchewan.

A healthier Saskatchewan.

A better educated Saskatchewan.

And a more independent Saskatchewan.

HEALTH

Today, our most important and immediate task is dealing with the pandemic.

COVID-19 has proven to be an enormous challenge for Saskatchewan and every province and territory across Canada.

The surge of patients caused by the fourth wave of the pandemic has put significant stress on our health-care system.

My government is profoundly grateful for the dedication and sacrifice of our front-line health-care professionals, and all those involved in planning, administration and support.

We are also mindful that many families have been affected by the pandemic.

My government has invested more than \$530 million this year to support the effort to address COVID-19.

Funding has been provided to ensure health care workers have personal protective equipment, to support testing and contact tracing, and to undertake the most extensive vaccination program in the province's history.

My government recently enhanced the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre to serve as a joint command centre to:

- Better coordinate the pandemic response between government ministries and agencies;
- Ensure the right resources are in the right place at the right time; and
- Provide administrative and organizational support so health care workers can focus on providing the best possible care to patients.

My government will introduce a COVID-19 response bill that will prevent demonstrators from restricting access to hospitals and ensure that health care resources can be managed to provide the best possible care to patients.

The clear path to the end of this pandemic is through vaccination.

Every day, the overwhelming majority of new cases and hospitalizations are unvaccinated people, even though fully vaccinated people make up the vast majority of residents.

The evidence is clear.

You are at much greater risk if you are unvaccinated.

With safe and effective vaccines widely available and accessible in every part of the province, there is no reason to expose yourself, those around you and our health system to that risk.

If you haven't done so already, get vaccinated.

More than 85 per cent of eligible Saskatchewan residents have received their first dose of vaccine and 77 per cent are fully vaccinated.

Our vaccination campaign will continue and broaden, as more people become eligible for booster shots and more children are vaccinated.

On October 1st, my government introduced a proof of vaccination system for restaurants, bars, theatres and other establishments throughout the province.

This has contributed to a notable increase in the number of people getting vaccinated.

We are grateful for the understanding and cooperation of businesses and organizations taking part in this program.

Dealing with the pandemic has been a top priority for our health care system, but not the only priority.

In August, a new \$2.25 million CT scanner began serving patients at Melfort Hospital.

This improvement in diagnostic services will reduce wait times and travel time for people living in northeast Saskatchewan.

My government is now covering the cost of the drug Trikafta, a medication described as the single greatest innovation in care provided to Cystic Fibrosis patients.

We are providing more funding to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency to support a new oncology drug program.

We are backing a new ovarian cancer tumour testing and drug prediction program at the University of Saskatchewan.

My government is supporting eight projects intended to improve patient flow and reduce emergency wait times in Saskatoon and Regina.

Engineering work is underway on new Urgent Care Centres in Saskatoon and Regina, with construction to begin in the new year.

The centres will help reduce wait times at emergency rooms by providing alternative care for illnesses or injuries not considered life threatening, but requiring immediate attention.

This includes caring for patients with mental health or addictions issues.

We are moving forward with a plan to develop approximately 600 new long-term care beds in Regina.

Planning continues on new hospitals in Prince Albert and Weyburn, on new long-term care facilities in Grenfell and La Ronge and on replacement long-term care facilities in Watson and Estevan.

This session, my government will amend *The Dental Disciplines Act* to allow dental hygienists, therapists and dental assistants to practice independently of dentists.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

My government continues to invest in mental health and addictions services across the province.

We have added more inpatient addictions treatment beds in Swift Current and Estevan and launched a new overdose awareness and prevention campaign.

A new website developed by the Ministry of Health provides information for people at risk of an overdose.

We have increased access to test strips for fentanyl and benzodiazepine as part of our harm reduction effort.

This session, my government will pursue further opportunities to increase the number of addictions treatment and detox spaces in the province.

This will include partnerships with charitable organizations and third party providers, with the goal of adding another 150 treatment spaces over the next three years.

My government will work with community pharmacies to increase accessibility to the Take Home Naloxone Program.

In the coming months, we will launch three new community wellness buses that will provide professional supports and harm reduction supplies.

Professional support for those struggling with addictions will also be available at new Urgent Care Centres in Regina and Saskatoon.

STRONGER ECONOMY

Saskatchewan has the resources to invest in health care and other important public services because our economy is growing.

A strong recovery is now underway in our province - a recovery driven by our entrepreneurs and workers.

The energy and determination of our people give my government confidence that Saskatchewan will meet the ambitious goals outlined in our Growth Plan.

Those objectives include:

- Creating 100,000 new jobs by 2030;
- Increasing the value of our exports by 50 per cent by 2030; and

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- Investing \$30 billion in the province's infrastructure by 2030.

Even in this very challenging year, there are many signs that Saskatchewan's economy is strong and the recovery is already well underway.

Employment in Saskatchewan has now recovered to over 99 per cent of its pre-pandemic level.

In September, the rate of job growth in our province was above the national average and our unemployment rate was below the national average.

More First Nations and Métis people are now working in Saskatchewan than ever before.

In September, off-reserve Indigenous employment, Indigenous full-time employment and Indigenous youth employment all reached their all-time high.

Exports have increased by nearly 35 per cent this year, as global demand for Saskatchewan's resources and manufactured goods rises.

Perhaps the strongest indicator of growing confidence is the surge of capital investment that has flowed into the province during the last few months.

Projects worth nearly \$10 billion have been announced, including:

- A new potash mine;
- Three new canola crushing plants and a major expansion of an existing plant;
- Canada's first wheat straw pulp facility;
- A new urea fertilizer plant;
- A new oriented strand board mill;
- A revitalized Prince Albert Pulp Mill;
- Expanded and upgraded sawmills; and
- And a new seeder manufacturing facility.

Together, these new projects announced during this most challenging time represent a tremendous vote of confidence in our province, our people and our future.

In August, BHP announced it would invest an additional \$7.5 billion to complete the Jansen potash mine.

BHP's total expenditure of \$12 billion will be the largest single private-sector investment ever made in Saskatchewan.

The Jansen project builds on more than \$20 billion invested over the last 15 years by Nutrien, Mosaic and K + S to expand and modernize Saskatchewan's potash industry.

The Jansen mine will create 3,500 jobs during construction and 600 full-time operating jobs when it begins production in 2027, adding to the nearly 6,000 jobs supported by the industry today.

Global demand for potash is growing, and so too is demand for canola oil.

Saskatchewan's canola crushing industry is undergoing a massive expansion to meet that demand.

This year, a total investment of more than a billion dollars has been announced to expand crushing capacity.

Two new plants will be built in the Regina area, by Cargill and Viterra.

Cargill has announced plans to construct its new \$350 million facility at the Global Transportation Hub just west of the city.

Another new \$350 million plant will be built by Ceres Global Ag Corporation at Northgate, on the Canada-U.S. border.

Richardson International has announced a doubling of the capacity of its canola crushing plant at Yorkton.

With these investments, Saskatchewan will achieve my government's Growth Plan goal of having 75 per cent of the province's canola production processed at home.

There are other investments driving growth in our province.

In Regina, Red Leaf Pulp is set to build Canada's first wheat straw pulp facility, a \$350 million project that will create 110 full-time permanent jobs.

The Brandt Group of Companies is hiring more than 1,000 workers by the end of the year, bringing its workforce to 4,400 employees.

More than half of the new employees will be based in Saskatchewan.

In Saskatoon, a new \$25 million urea fertilizer facility will be constructed by Northern Nutrients.

Next month, Clean Seed Capital Group will begin assembling its new Smart Seeder Max-S in Saskatoon.

In the province's north, a historic expansion of the forestry industry will go a long way to meeting my government's Growth Plan goal of doubling the size of the forestry sector by 2030.

Nearly a billion dollars has been committed to projects that will create more than 3,000 new jobs.

Paper Excellence will invest \$550 million to upgrade its pulp mill in Prince Albert, which has been closed since 2006.

The mill is expected to resume operations in 2023, creating an estimated 1,650 new jobs.

Dunkley Lumber in Carrot River and Carrier Forest Products in Big River are upgrading sawmills in those communities.

One Sky Forest Products is planning to build a new \$250 million Oriented Strand Board mill in Prince Albert that will create more than 700 jobs.

One Sky is moving forward in partnership with several First Nations communities and organizations.

Nearly 30 per cent of the workforce in Saskatchewan's forestry industry is Indigenous, by far the largest percentage in any province.

Capital has flowed into Saskatchewan because the province has a competitive business environment and offers a range of incentives to attract investment, encourage value-added processing and spur innovation.

To encourage further capital investment in our value-added agricultural sector, we will be enhancing the Saskatchewan Value-Added Agriculture Incentive.

The incentive is a non-transferable tax rebate on investments in new or expanded value-added agriculture facilities in the province.

Saskatchewan is fortunate to have a growing number of Indigenous-owned companies, operating in mining, forestry, finance, manufacturing, hospitality, tourism and energy.

These enterprises collectively generate hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue each year, and employ thousands of people, while supporting many worthwhile causes in our communities.

To further strengthen the Indigenous business sector, my government will create the Saskatchewan Indigenous Investment Finance Corporation.

This new corporation will provide up to \$75 million in financing to Indigenous communities and organizations interested in making equity investments in resource development projects.

This initiative will support the Truth and Reconciliation call to action to build stronger economies in Indigenous communities.

Saskatchewan is an international trader, exporting about 65 per cent of the products we produce.

My government believes we must strengthen our international presence to diversify our markets and support the province's economic recovery.

That view is shared by many in the business community.

As Murad Al-Katib, the chief executive officer of AGT Food and Ingredients, puts it: "I can't emphasize enough how important it is to be on the ground. We can't just be sitting halfway around the world with an internet connection and a cell phone hoping we're going to sell."

Today, Saskatchewan has four trade and investment offices – in Japan, India, Singapore and China.

By early next year, another four offices will be up and running - in London, Dubai, Mexico City and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam.

Saskatchewan's strength as a major global exporter rests on our production of agricultural products, manufactured goods, potash, uranium and oil.

But the province also produces gold, coal, salt, clays and sodium and potassium sulphates.

In addition, companies are exploring for copper, lithium, zinc, nickel, cobalt, and rare earth elements.

Lithium is a chemical element with a wide variety of uses, from production of batteries to treatment of bipolar disorder.

For more than a year, Prairie Lithium has been using proprietary technology to produce lithium from subsurface brine water in oil wells, and is now beginning to drill its first dedicated brine wells for lithium extraction in Saskatchewan.

Prairie Lithium, which has benefitted from my government's Saskatchewan Petroleum Innovation Incentive, has built an extraction and refining facility at Emerald Park.

Rare earth elements are considered critical, strategically important minerals with numerous uses, including the production of catalysts, magnets, alloys, glass and electronics.

Currently, China accounts for 70 per cent of the world's production of rare earth elements.

Canada and other countries are working to increase production to reduce dependency on Chinese imports.

Last year, my government announced an investment of \$31 million to build a new rare earth element processing facility.

The facility is under construction in Saskatoon and will be operated by the Saskatchewan Research Council.

Saskatchewan also has large deposits of helium, which is used in medical research, semiconductor manufacturing, fibre optics and advancements in nuclear power generation.

The province is now home to the largest helium purification plant in Canada.

The \$32 million North American Helium facility is expected to produce more than 50 million cubic feet of helium per year.

My government's goal is to ensure Saskatchewan produces 10 per cent of the world's helium by 2030.

This fall, we will release a Helium Action Plan that will outline measures to help us meet that objective.

Earlier this year, Husky Midstream became the first company to complete a project under the province's Oil Infrastructure Investment Program.

Husky Midstream invested \$82 million and created 450 construction jobs as it expanded its gathering system near Spruce Lake.

We expect other companies will take advantage of this program.

Last month, the Enbridge Line 3 replacement pipeline, which moves Saskatchewan and Alberta oil to the United States, was completed.

This 1,765 kilometre pipeline is the largest project in Enbridge's history and will transport about 3.2 million barrels of oil per day.

These investments will help Saskatchewan meet its Growth Plan goal of increasing oil production to 600,000 barrels per day.

The province's energy sector, which has contributed nearly \$244 billion to Saskatchewan's economy since 2007, will grow and create opportunity for decades to come.

Saskatchewan produces some of the most sustainable products in the world.

If all oil-producing countries in the world adopted environmental regulations similar to Saskatchewan's, global greenhouse gas emissions from oil production would be cut by 25 per cent.

Saskatchewan is a world leader in the use of carbon capture and utilization (CCUS) technology in the energy sector, with more than 40 million tonnes of carbon dioxide sequestered, resulting in over 100 million barrels of incremental oil production.

Whitecap Resources' enhanced oil recovery facility in Weyburn accounts for half the CO2 sequestered in Canada every year.

My government plans to build on that success by attracting more than \$2 billion in new private investment for projects that will sequester more than two million tonnes of CO2 annually.

Last week, Whitecap signed a memorandum of understanding with Federated Co-operatives Limited to explore the development of a major CCUS investment in southeast Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan companies produce potash while releasing 50 per cent fewer emissions than their international competitors.

Meanwhile, the widespread use of zero-till practices in Saskatchewan agriculture sequesters 10 million tonnes of carbon dioxide every year.

This is a story that needs to be told.

This year, my government will launch a new Sustainable Saskatchewan brand that will promote the high quality and environmental sustainability of products produced in Saskatchewan.

Sustainable Saskatchewan will complement other marketing efforts including the Think Saskatchewan campaign.

The province's technology sector is growing fast.

Companies are attracting hundreds of millions of dollars in financing to support the development of innovative products and services.

In the first half of 2021, venture capital investment in Saskatchewan was \$171 million – setting a new record for annual investment in just the first six months of the year.

The Globe and Mail's Report on Business included four Saskatchewan technology companies – Vendasta, 7shifts, Coconut Software and sMedia – on its list of Canada's Top Growing Companies.

My government will continue to support the technology sector through programs such as the Saskatchewan Technology Startup Incentive and the Saskatchewan Advantage Innovation Fund.

We will also continue our backing of Co.Labs and Cultivator, technology incubators located in Saskatoon and Regina.

Together, Co.Labs and Cultivator have nurtured 175 startups – companies that have created nearly 500 jobs and generated \$27 million in revenues.

My government has provided \$15 million to support pandemic research at the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO), based at the University of Saskatchewan.

VIDO is a world leader in infectious disease research and vaccine development, and is in the process of developing a vaccine for COVID-19.

VIDO was the first Canadian organization to isolate the COVID-19 virus, the first to develop an animal model of infection, and the first university organization in Canada to have a vaccine in clinical trials.

VIDO will be one of the few organizations in the world capable of researching, developing, producing and marketing vaccines for both humans and animals.

AGRICULTURE

This year, agricultural exports will be reduced because of the severe drought that affected much of the province.

Next to the COVID-19 pandemic, the drought is the most significant challenge we face today in Saskatchewan.

But my government is confident our agricultural sector will recover and our province will meet the objectives outlined in our Growth Plan, including:

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- Boosting crop production to 45 million metric tonnes and livestock cash receipts to \$3 billion;
 - Increasing agri-food exports to \$20 billion; and
 - Increasing agriculture value-added revenue to \$10 billion a year.

Working with the federal government, my government has supported producers as they deal with the impact of the drought.

We provided \$119 million in direct support to livestock producers through the AgriRecovery program to help maintain Saskatchewan's breeding herd.

We increased the 2020 AgriStability interim benefit payment from 50 per cent to 75 per cent.

The Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation provided relief for producers who used their cereal or pulse crops for feed.

We tripled funding available through the Farm and Ranch Water Infrastructure Program to improve and build dugouts, wells and pipelines.

Our producers are resilient and are looking to the future, and so is my government.

In the coming year, my government will invest an additional \$2.5 million in agriculture water development.

This funding will build on existing irrigation development to increase the number of irrigable acres in our province.

My government also remains committed to a major irrigation project at Lake Diefenbaker, which has the potential to transform agriculture in Saskatchewan.

The Lake Diefenbaker project will increase irrigation opportunities, help diversify crop production, attract more value-added processing and improve water security for municipalities and Saskatchewan industries.

The project has the potential to boost Saskatchewan's gross domestic product by as much as \$80 billion over the next 50 years.

Last month, my government announced \$3.2 million in funding for a new engineering biology centre at the Global Institute for Food Security in Saskatoon.

This investment is part of a broader effort to ensure Saskatchewan remains a global leader in agricultural research and development.

This fiscal year, we have committed more than \$30 million to support institutions and specific research projects, expand scientific capacity, and assist in the commercialization of agricultural research undertaken in Saskatchewan.

BETTER EDUCATION

The last 20 months have been challenging for Saskatchewan's educational system.

My government has provided more than \$150 million to ensure students can learn safely during the pandemic.

But we understand our schools have operated at a high level because of the commitment and professionalism of the people working in them.

We're thankful for the dedication of our teachers, teacher's assistants, administrators and support staff.

During the pandemic, more children than ever were taking part in online learning.

While this form of instruction isn't appropriate for every situation, it does create learning opportunities that might not otherwise be available and many students have thrived while learning from home.

My government will create a new learning policy to ensure students receive the best education possible if they study online.

Last month, residents of Weyburn celebrated the opening of Legacy Park Elementary School.

Legacy Park Elementary has 51 child care spaces.

Since 2007, the number of child care spaces in the province has increased 77 per cent – from 9,305 to 16,475.

In August, we signed a \$1.1 billion child care deal with the federal government.

This plan will reduce child care costs to an average of \$10 a day by 2025-26 and create thousands of new child care spaces.

By the end of next year, child care fees will be reduced by 50 per cent.

We will also increase wages for child care workers by up to \$3 per hour.

This plan will support parental choice by ensuring a wide variety of child care options are available for parents.

My government continues to make progress on another 16 school projects as part of our ambitious capital plan in education.

New schools are under construction in Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Carrot River, La Loche, Blaine Lake and Lanigan.

My government is also planning to create a new funding pool to enhance class supports for teachers working with the greatest number of students.

This will include new funding for hiring Educational Assistants.

This fall, my government will begin a new Parent Teacher Home Visit Pilot Project to strengthen relationships between educators, students and their families.

Delivered in partnership with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, the pilot project will involve 400 students.

Students and parents will meet in their homes with their teachers at least twice during the school year.

Social media is a powerful communication tool.

But there is growing evidence that social media platforms can cause harm, particularly to our youth.

That is why Saskatchewan Education will be launching a new “Take a Break” campaign that will encourage young people to use social media in a healthy, responsible way.

My government increased the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship from \$500 to \$750 per year, to a lifetime maximum of \$3,000.

Since 2012, we have provided \$72 million through the scholarship to support post-secondary students and students taking adult basic education and GED courses.

My government is also providing significant direct support to post-secondary institutions.

We have made an unprecedented long-term operating funding commitment.

During the next two academic years, my government will provide institutions with an additional \$60 million in operating funding.

On November 1st, the Ministry of Advanced Education will launch a new international education strategy.

The strategy supports our Growth Plan and will enhance the province's reputation as a destination of choice for international students and researchers.

SAFER COMMUNITIES

My government has taken many steps to ensure our communities are safe.

We have introduced Police and Crisis Teams and Crime Reduction Teams.

We have expanded the Saskatchewan Crime Watch Advisory Network.

We have created the Protection and Response Team to help respond to crime in rural Saskatchewan.

These efforts have contributed to a decrease in overall crime rates during the last decade.

However, during the last five years, there has been an increase in violent crime and in property crime in rural areas.

This is unacceptable.

My government will move forward with a number of measures intended to address gaps in policing and public safety, particularly in rural Saskatchewan.

A key objective will be to increase the visibility of law enforcement across the province.

Criminologist Daniel Nagin has said that the certainty of being caught committing a crime is a vastly more powerful deterrent than the punishment.

My government intends to provide criminals with that certainty.

If you commit a crime, you will be caught.

My government will add 60 new police positions and another 11 civilian positions to support new law enforcement initiatives, and will create a new Provincial Protective Services unit.

This will bring together, under one command, Conservation Officers, Highway Patrol officers, Provincial Capital Commission community safety officers, Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods (SCAN) officers and deputy sheriffs working in the provincial court system.

With more than 325 officers, this unit will work closely with police and serve as law enforcement to help protect our communities, while continuing to fulfill their core responsibilities.

Trafficking of illegal drugs such as fentanyl continues to be a serious problem in Saskatchewan.

My government will create the Saskatchewan Trafficking Response Team (STRT) to target criminals who transport illegal drugs and weapons into the province, and to combat human trafficking.

The STRT will include 30 RCMP officers, six municipal police officers and two criminal analysts.

Too frequently in Saskatchewan, dangerous criminals with multiple active warrants are not brought to justice until they are caught committing more crimes.

My government will create a Warrant Enforcement and Suppression Team (WEST) to target dangerous offenders with outstanding warrants.

WEST will be staffed by eight officers, from both RCMP and municipal police services.

To support their efforts, my government will give courts the option to order GPS electronic monitoring for repeat offenders who have committed serious crimes.

There are now five Crime Reduction Teams operating in the province.

Composed of RCMP officers and criminal analysts, the teams work closely with communities to enhance public safety.

My government will add 16 police officers and reallocate internal positions to create new Crime Reduction Teams in Meadow Lake, La Ronge, Lloydminster and Moose Jaw.

Criminal gangs in the province find ways to launder money generated through illegal activities.

This session, my government will introduce legislative changes to *The Seizure of Criminal Property Act*, and bring together investigators, lawyers from the Ministry of Justice and a criminal analyst to combat money laundering.

My government believes that if you do the crime, you should do the time.

Those who break the law must be held fully accountable for their offenses.

The Ministry of Justice and Attorney General will enhance training for prosecutors and further develop its capacity to use private bar lawyers as Prosecutors' Agents to support new policing initiatives and maintain public confidence in the justice system.

In 2019, my government introduced amendments to the province's trespass laws to shift the onus of responsibility from rural land owners to individuals seeking to access their property.

On January 1st, those amendments will come into force.

This session, we will introduce further changes to *The Trespass to Property Act*.

The amendments will increase penalties for repeat offenders and create a statutory tort for trespass to make it easier for land owners and occupiers to seek damages against a trespasser.

My government wants to ensure spousal and child support payments are paid in full and on time.

This session, we will amend *The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Act* to allow the Maintenance Enforcement Office to take quick action when a payer of support is repeatedly and maliciously withholding payments.

This legislation will be the first of its kind in Canada.

Child and spousal support payments can be difficult to collect when the payer of support lives outside the province.

My government will take steps to simplify this process by amending *The Inter-Jurisdictional Support Orders Act*.

The amendments will eliminate the requirement for copies of support orders from other jurisdictions to be certified before they are filed in a Saskatchewan court.

In 2018, my government made changes to *The Privacy Act* to protect the victims of revenge porn.

This session, further amendments will be made to expand the remedies available for those victimized by the non-consensual distribution of intimate images.

Every Saskatchewan worker in every workplace should be protected from all forms of harassment.

That is why my government will introduce legislation to protect every worker from sexual harassment and all other forms of harassment in the workplace.

This will include students, volunteers, self-employed people and contractors.

This legislation will make Saskatchewan a leader in Canada in ensuring our workplaces are safe and free from all forms of harassment.

Families experiencing violence need to have access to immediate help and ongoing assistance.

Earlier this year, my government's first Family Intervention Rapid Support Team (FIRST) was established in the west-central area of the province.

This fall, we will work to establish two more FIRST teams to support Saskatchewan families.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Saskatchewan requires modern infrastructure to drive economic growth and ensure quality of life in our communities.

Since 2007, my government has invested nearly \$37 billion to renew, expand and modernize the province's infrastructure.

This significant commitment has been an important factor in enabling the province to attract billions of dollars of capital investment.

Our Growth Plan goal is to invest another \$30 billion by 2030 to build and improve roads, hospitals, schools, power plants, communications infrastructure, and water and wastewater projects.

This includes upgrading 10,000 kilometres of highways over the next decade.

My government is making steady progress toward meeting that goal.

This year, we allocated \$830 million for highways and airports, with \$520 million committed to new capital projects.

Work is continuing on passing lanes on Highways 2, 3, 5, 7, 12, 14, 16 and 39, while planning is moving forward on the twinning of an eight-kilometre stretch of Highway 3 west of Prince Albert.

The \$65-million Enhanced Intersection Safety Program is continuing with a range of improvements, including new lighting, guardrails and rumble strips at key intersections.

This fiscal year, nearly \$200 million is being invested in thin-membrane and rural highway improvements, while \$68 million has been committed to maintain and improve highways and airports in northern Saskatchewan.

My government is beginning an intake for infrastructure projects under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP).

This intake will focus on northern and rural projects and provide more than \$60 million to support municipal infrastructure projects, building stronger communities and improving the quality of life for Saskatchewan people.

My government has made improving Saskatchewan's communications network a priority.

We directed SaskTel to construct nearly 200 new cell towers to improve wireless coverage in rural communities, along highways and in provincial parks.

With the last tower coming into service this fall, Saskatchewan now has more than 1,000 cell phone towers across the province.

During the last decade, my government has made significant improvements to internet service across the province, particularly in rural areas.

But we know there is more work to do.

SaskTel is investing an additional \$100 million to expand and improve fibre optic internet service in rural areas.

By the end of 2024, 45 rural communities and over 60,000 rural residents and businesses will have access to advanced fibre optic broadband infrastructure.

This will allow those communities to use the latest digital tools and technologies to connect, learn and pursue business opportunities.

My government will also work directly with private sector fibre optic providers to install internet service in places where there is no fibre optic infrastructure.

Saskatchewan must have a reliable supply of affordable, sustainable energy to power economic growth and support quality of life in our communities.

This fiscal year, SaskPower is investing a record \$272 million to repair and replace power lines, power poles, transformers and other transmission and distribution infrastructure.

As part of this investment, my government provided a \$50 million Power Grid Renewal Grant to improve system reliability across the province.

SaskPower is continuing work on the new 360-megawatt Great Plains Power Station at Moose Jaw.

This combined-cycle natural gas power plant will provide a steady supply of electricity while supporting the expansion of renewable energy in our province.

SaskPower plans to add 585 megawatts of wind power across the province, in support of its goal to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.

New commercial solar power projects, undertaken in partnership with Cowessess First Nation, George Gordon First Nation and Star Blanket Cree Nation, will help SaskPower meet its objective.

My government believes the world will not meet the challenge of addressing climate change without a major expansion of nuclear power.

To advance this crucial technology, we have signed a memorandum of understanding with Ontario, New Brunswick and Alberta to evaluate and develop small modular nuclear reactor technology (SMRs).

SMRs are smaller than conventional nuclear power plants and will be cheaper to build.

They will be capable of generating emissions-free, reliable baseload electricity for industries, small businesses and households.

My government has created a unit within the Ministry of Environment to lead the planning of SMRs in Saskatchewan.

We have directed SaskPower to prepare for the deployment of SMRs as the company expands its generating capacity to meet the demands of a growing economy.

My government has invested a record amount in facility and infrastructure improvements in the province's provincial parks.

This fall, dozens of projects are moving forward, including improvements to campgrounds, visitor reception centres and water treatment facilities.

The new infrastructure is needed because our provincial parks are more popular than ever, with record visits and camping nights.

This year, the number of visitors to our parks was up 16 per cent over the previous year.

The second intake of my government's Community Rink Affordability Grant began on October 15th.

Since the grant was reinstated last year, more than 332 facilities with 586 ice surfaces have received support.

RECONCILIATION

All of Saskatchewan was shocked and saddened by the discovery of unmarked graves on the grounds of former residential schools across Canada, including 751 unmarked graves at Cowessess First Nation here in our province

In June, my government announced it would provide \$2 million to the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) to investigate undocumented deaths and burials at former residential schools in Saskatchewan.

In addition, I have been working with my government on a memorial honouring those who have been impacted by the residential school system.

The memorial will be built on the grounds of Government House in Regina.

In July, my government, along with the federal government, was privileged to take part in a historic ceremony celebrating Cowessess First Nation's official assumption of jurisdiction over child welfare for its members.

The agreement was the first of its kind in Canada.

My government is engaging with other First Nations interested in assuming responsibility for child welfare services delivered to their members.

The Ministry of Social Services is working to ensure the services it provides are appropriate to the needs of its clients.

As part of that effort, the Ministry is expanding the Opikinawasowin program that offers culturally appropriate child welfare services to Indigenous families requiring support.

My government believes economic development in Indigenous communities is necessary to advance reconciliation.

We have been pleased to support Indigenous involvement in forestry, energy, mining and tourism.

In forestry, 30 per cent of the provincial timber supply is allocated to Indigenous businesses, by far the highest allocation of any province.

No other jurisdiction in Canada has a gaming agreement with First Nations as successful as Saskatchewan's.

Last month, we signed an amendment to the government's gaming agreement with the FSIN that will lead to the creation of a new online gaming site to be developed and operated by the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority (SIGA).

Revenues generated by the gaming site will be shared by the province and First Nations.

At the signing ceremony, FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron called the agreement the first of its kind in Canada and reconciliation at its finest.

The Ministry of Highways has received a request from Saskatchewan's Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC) to install signs that mark the boundary between Treaty 4 and Treaty 6 to further raise awareness of the Treaties in Saskatchewan.

My government has agreed with the request and will work with the OTC to identify locations for treaty boundary signs.

MORE INDEPENDENT SASKATCHEWAN

My government is determined to build a stronger, more independent Saskatchewan within Confederation.

A month ago, Saskatchewan officially took control of our firearms program with the appointment of the province's first provincial Chief Firearms Officer.

Previously, the Chief Firearms Officer was appointed by the federal government.

Robert Freberg will bring a Saskatchewan perspective to the administration of the federal *Firearms Act*.

In recent years, my government has raised concerns about the unfairness of the equalization formula with the federal government, but those concerns have been ignored.

Last week, Alberta residents voted in a provincial referendum to remove equalization from the Canadian constitution.

The federal government is now compelled to enter into good faith negotiations with the provinces on changing the equalization section of the constitution.

My government will be a full participant in those negotiations, representing Saskatchewan's interests to achieve meaningful reform to equalization.

This session, my government will consider other measures to build provincial autonomy, including the possibility of taking back the administration of our corporate income tax system from the federal government.

The creation of the new Provincial Protective Services and addition of 60 new police positions will also enhance our province's autonomy.

As we move forward, we will consider other options to ensure law enforcement in Saskatchewan is more effective and responsive, including the creation of a provincial police force, to compliment the services provided by municipal police forces and the RCMP.

SUPPORTING OUR VETERANS

My government remains committed to supporting veterans and their families.

The Veteran Service Club Support Program has distributed nearly \$1.5 million to help sustain veterans' clubs in 65 communities.

CONCLUSION

This decade has not started the way anyone was expecting.

Like every other province and country, Saskatchewan has been on an uncertain journey and we have more road to travel.

But we will complete our journey together.

And the 2020s will still be Saskatchewan's decade.

We will meet the challenges before us as we always do in Saskatchewan – with perseverance, courage, faith and compassion.

A bold, confident province will emerge on the other side of the pandemic.

A Saskatchewan that offers hope and opportunity for our young people and for all those around the world wanting to build a better life.

A Saskatchewan with thriving, vibrant communities, and more people, more jobs, and more opportunities.

A Saskatchewan that is stronger, safer, healthier, better educated and more independent.

I now leave you to the business of the session, knowing that you will favourably discharge your duties and responsibilities.

May divine providence continue to bless our province and guide this Assembly in all of its deliberations.

God bless Saskatchewan.

God bless Canada.

God save the Queen.

