



Speech from The Throne 2023

Delivered on the Occasion of the Opening of

The Fourth Session of
the Twenty-Ninth Legislature
Province of Saskatchewan

Wednesday, October 25, 2023

The Honourable Russ Mirasty
Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan

BUILD AND PROTECT

MR. SPEAKER, MEMBERS OF
THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,
HONOURED GUESTS, PEOPLE OF
SASKATCHEWAN

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

As we gather today, it is an opportunity to reflect on all that we have achieved as a province, while at the same time looking to the future, steadfast in the belief that Saskatchewan's best days are still ahead.

Over the last 16 years, my government has worked to build a province worthy of the confidence and pride of Saskatchewan people.

While we continue to build, we must also protect all we have built.

During this session, my government will continue to build and protect Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan has enjoyed unprecedented growth in recent years.

Saskatchewan has grown by more than 200,000 people since 2007.

In the past year alone, Saskatchewan has grown by more than 30,000 people – the largest population growth in more than a century.

Since 2007, almost 180,000 newcomers from 186 countries have called Saskatchewan home.

In true Saskatchewan fashion, these newcomers have been welcomed with open arms by our residents and have settled in more than 450 communities across this province.

Saskatchewan is no longer the place to be from.

It is the place to be.

It is worth remembering that my government's plan for population growth was once met with derision by those who believed growth was simply not possible here.

But they were wrong.

Today, a growing population drives a growing economy.

The most recent Statistics Canada Labour Force report for the month of September showed there were 13,700 more people working in Saskatchewan than a year ago.

Saskatchewan set all-time record highs for the month of September for total employment, full-time employment, male employment, female employment, Indigenous full-time employment and Indigenous youth full-time employment.

Saskatchewan's economy expanded by 5.7 per cent last year – leading all other provinces in Canada.

The Conference Board of Canada forecasts that Saskatchewan's economic growth will lead the country again in 2024.

But growth is not the goal for its own sake.

Growth has enabled my government to reinvest in Saskatchewan and its people.

Since taking office in 2007, my government has been building Saskatchewan with almost \$66 billion invested in our province, including:

- 60 new schools and 30 major school renovation projects;
- 35 major health projects completed, under construction, or in planning including new hospitals, long term care facilities, and urgent care centres;
- Nearly 20,000 kilometres of highway repaired or improved;
- \$193 million in capital investments and preventative maintenance in Saskatchewan's provincial parks;
- \$780 million invested in post-secondary infrastructure; and
- Over \$22 billion in Crown Corporation capital, including the expansion of wireless service to more than 99 per cent of the province.

That's growth that works for everyone, from the family that pays thousands of dollars less in provincial taxes than they did in 2007;

To the more than 81,000 post-secondary graduates who have stayed in Saskatchewan and received \$739 million through the Graduate Retention Program;

To the thousands of additional doctors, nurses and other health care professionals treating patients across our province.

My government will continue to build and grow Saskatchewan while protecting what we have built for the benefit of current and future Saskatchewan residents.

BUILDING A STRONG ECONOMY

Saskatchewan is building a strong economy, and is on track to achieve many of my government's Growth Plan goals, including:

- 1.4 million people living in Saskatchewan by 2030;
- Private capital investment of \$16 billion annually. In 2023, total private capital investment reached \$13.2 billion; and
- Agri-food exports of \$20 billion annually. In 2022, Saskatchewan's agricultural exports hit \$18.2 billion – the largest on record.

Saskatchewan has already achieved many goals in the 2030 Growth Plan, well ahead of schedule.

These include:

- Increasing the value of Saskatchewan exports by 50 per cent. Export values have increased by over 70 per cent;
- Doubling meat processing and animal feed value-added revenue to more than \$1 billion. That target was exceeded in 2021 with total revenue reaching \$1.1 billion; and
- Increasing the value of Saskatchewan manufacturing exports by 50 per cent. Manufacturing exports have been steadily increasing and have already exceeded the 50 per cent increase target.

Saskatchewan is an exporting province.

What we sell abroad creates thousands of jobs here at home.

My government, alongside Saskatchewan exporters, has been actively promoting Saskatchewan products to the rest of the world.

We have what the world needs – food, fuel, and fertilizer.

At a time of global uncertainty, Saskatchewan is the secure, reliable choice for over 150 countries around the world.

My government will continue to build and protect Saskatchewan's export markets.

That is why Saskatchewan has opened trade offices in nine countries: Vietnam, the United Kingdom, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, Mexico, Germany, India, Japan and China.

This is necessary because Saskatchewan has not been able to rely on the federal government to promote Saskatchewan products abroad.

Saskatchewan also produces some of the most environmentally sustainable food, fuel, fertilizer and other products anywhere on the planet.

Here is just one example.

If all oil-producing countries in the world adopted Saskatchewan's environmental regulations and practices, global greenhouse gas emissions from oil production would be cut by almost a quarter.

That is a tremendous success story and a great reason to buy Canadian oil that our federal government should be telling the world.

But they won't, so we will.

Later this year, the Premier and Saskatchewan will have a significant presence at the COP28 Conference in the United Arab Emirates, where we will join with Saskatchewan companies in promoting our province's sustainable products to representatives from virtually every country in the world.

COP28 will be a tremendous opportunity to promote sustainable Saskatchewan products and to build and protect our export markets by providing the environmentally-friendly goods and commodities the world is looking for.

While we continue to tell Saskatchewan's story and build our export markets abroad, my government will also continue to build a stronger economy and create new jobs here at home by attracting people, talent and business investment to our province.

During this session, my government will introduce a new Investment Attraction Strategy.

This strategy will attract new investment and create new jobs by building new opportunities in emerging sectors, growing existing industries and connecting the world to Saskatchewan.

While it is important to foster relationships and build trade with other countries, we must also build capacity within Canada.

As an export reliant province, Saskatchewan companies must be able to quickly and efficiently transport goods to market.

Maintaining and expanding a transportation network that seamlessly connects our province to other jurisdictions and supports our supply chains is essential for Saskatchewan businesses and exporters.

My government recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Alberta and Manitoba to strengthen economic corridors that support our supply chains.

The memorandum commits the three provinces to jointly work to improve our transportation system and to ensure the strength and competitiveness of our economies.

During this session, my government will release a new Saskatchewan Jobs Plan to recruit, train and retain a highly skilled workforce as part of our Growth Plan goal to create 100,000 new jobs in Saskatchewan.

The Saskatchewan Jobs Plan will:

- Ensure strong growth in the province's economy creates new job opportunities and careers for Saskatchewan people – complementing my government's investment attraction plan and preparing the workforce of the future;
- Address the labour shortage in key sectors of our economy and in public services such as health care, using all the resources available to the province, including ensuring internationally-educated professionals can have their credentials recognized in Saskatchewan;
- Expand employment, educational and training opportunities for Indigenous people, Saskatchewan's natural resource sector; and
- Create opportunities for young people, new entrants to the workforce and Saskatchewan residents by tailoring training and education opportunities to meet the needs of our communities.

Over the past five years, First Nations and Métis employment in Saskatchewan is up 28 per cent and 92 per cent of Indigenous graduates of Saskatchewan Polytechnic have employment upon graduation.

My government is committed to increasing Indigenous employment and participation in the economy, specifically in natural resource and value-added agricultural project equity ownership, through the Saskatchewan Indigenous Investment Finance Corporation.

Saskatchewan's agriculture industry remains a backbone of our economy.

Our farmers and ranchers saw mixed results in 2023, with some areas experiencing significant drought conditions while other parts of the province produced record crops.

Overall, our agriculture industry posted a third consecutive record year of agri-food exports in 2022 and is on track to set more records this year.

From January to June of 2023, agricultural exports were over \$10 billion, up 35 per cent from 2022.

Our producers are leaders in Canada's industry, having developed and implemented sustainable practices on their farms and ranches for generations.

My government is proud of the work of our agricultural producers and stands with them when they need assistance.

Saskatchewan Crop Insurance average coverage increased to a record level of \$446 per acre in 2023 and Crop Insurance is forecast to deliver over \$1.6 billion in payouts to producers this year.

My government is also supplying an additional \$70 million to help offset extraordinary costs of feeding livestock to maintain the breeding herd in Saskatchewan.

PROTECTING OUR ECONOMY

While Saskatchewan continues to build a strong economy, our economic growth faces threats like global instability, inflation and high interest rates.

Incredibly, one of the biggest threats to Saskatchewan's economy is our own federal government.

The federal carbon tax increases the cost of everything we produce, manufacture, transport to market, and buy.

The federal Clean Electricity Standards and net-zero emissions targets are unrealistic and unaffordable.

As our Premier stated: “We will not risk plunging our homes, our schools, our hospitals, our special care homes, our businesses into the cold and darkness because of the ideological whims of others.”

Instead, my government will continue to build affordable, reliable, sustainable power generation and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

Our resource sector is also under attack from our own federal government, through its Clean Fuel Standard regulations and its proposed oil and gas emissions cap.

These new regulations will kill thousands of jobs and devastate our resource sector, which already follows some of the most environmentally-friendly production practices in the world.

It makes no sense, especially at a time that our national government should be promoting Canadian oil and gas as a reliable and environmentally-sustainable option to countries facing energy shortages.

Last session, my government passed *The Saskatchewan First Act* to defend Saskatchewan’s economic potential and provincial autonomy from federal government overreach.

During this session, my government will take the next step to defend our economy and autonomy by using *The Saskatchewan First Act* to refer the federal Clean Electricity Regulations, the Clean Fuel Standard regulations and the oil and gas emissions cap to the Economic Impact Assessment Tribunal.

The Tribunal will define, assess and report on the economic harm caused by these destructive federal policies.

The Supreme Court of Canada recently ruled that the federal government “overstepped its constitutional competence” and the federal *Impact Assessment Act* is unconstitutional.

In light of this ruling, my government is calling on the federal government to rethink the many other areas where it is overstepping its constitutional competence, like electrical generation and oil and gas production.

BUILDING STRONG COMMUNITIES

My government understands that higher interest rates and rising construction costs have made it more expensive to build new homes.

In order to promote new home construction and protect new homeowners from rising costs, the Provincial Sales Tax (PST) Rebate for New Home Construction, which ended on April 1st of this year, will be reinstated and extended retroactive to April 1st.

This rebate returns 42 per cent of PST paid - about 2.5 per cent of the total house price, excluding the land value - for a new house.

This program has the strong support of both homebuilders and those buying a new home.

It will result in more new homes being built and will help protect homeowners from rising costs.

To help those facing rising mortgage rates, my government will also introduce a Secondary Suite Program.

This program will help homeowners with the costs of building a rental suite within their primary residence.

In addition to helping homeowners with their mortgage costs, the Secondary Suite program will increase the availability of rentals in Saskatchewan.

Communities are more than bricks and mortar, more than buildings and roads.

Communities are people, and government's role is to build strong communities while at the same time helping the most vulnerable.

Communities across Canada are facing challenges with mental health and addictions.

Saskatchewan is no exception.

My government is focused on protecting those struggling with addictions.

Addictions and mental health issues cannot be addressed without significant treatment plans and facilities.

My government will implement a new Action Plan for Mental Health and Addictions with concrete, near-term actions to address the addictions issues impacting individuals, families and communities across Saskatchewan.

While some jurisdictions have taken a different approach, my government will not be supplying illicit drugs through our publicly-funded healthcare system.

Instead, our approach will be built on three pillars:

- Increasing capacity to get more people the help they need;
- Improving the system to better serve patients; and
- Transitioning to a recovery-oriented system of care.

To increase capacity, my government has set a new target of adding 500 new addictions treatment spaces across the province so that more people can get the help that they need to overcome their addictions and live healthy lives.

To improve the system itself, my government has committed to implementing a central intake for mental health and addictions treatment to better serve patients.

My government's approach to harm reduction will increase access to addictions treatment and support while reducing access to illegal drugs.

This is the best approach to protect both those struggling with addictions and those affected by their actions.

My government is actively working with all levels of government, Indigenous and community partners to address the complex issue of homelessness.

Building on supports already in place for those in greatest need, my government recently introduced a Provincial Approach to Homelessness.

This approach will result in 155 new supportive housing units, 120 new permanent emergency shelter spaces and increased support for transitions and community safety.

My government also recognizes that our emergency shelters are not always well-suited to those struggling with addictions.

In order to better assist those individuals and ensure the safety of other clients in shelters, my government will create 30 new Complex Needs Emergency Shelter spaces in Regina and Saskatoon.

Saskatchewan people deserve the highest quality health care services.

In 2007, my government inherited a health care system decimated by hospital closures, long-term care bed closures, declining numbers of doctors and nurses practicing in Saskatchewan and the longest surgical wait times in Canada.

My government set to work rebuilding the health care system.

Twenty-five healthcare facilities have been built since 2007.

These include the new hospitals in Humboldt and Moosomin, the new Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford, the new Jim Pattison Children's Hospital in Saskatoon and the new Dr. F. H. Wigmore Regional Hospital in Moose Jaw.

Long-term care centres have been built in Meadow Lake, Swift Current, Prince Albert, Rosetown, Tisdale, Saskatoon and Watrous.

Integrated facilities with both acute and long-term care beds have been built in Leader, Kelvington, Biggar, Kerrobert, Maple Creek, Kipling, Radville, Redvers and Shellbrook.

In addition to all of these projects, more are in stages of planning and construction.

In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, my government is providing:

- \$100 million for the construction of the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital;
- \$12 million for capital and operating funding for the Regina Urgent Care Centre;
- \$3 million for the Saskatoon Urgent Care Centre – in partnership with Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation Development;
- \$38 million for the Weyburn Hospital project;
- \$20 million for the new long-term care facility in La Ronge and \$10 million for the new long-term care facility in Grenfell;
- Continued planning for long-term care facilities in Estevan and Watson;
- \$500 thousand each for the Regina General Hospital Parkade and Yorkton Regional Health Centre projects; and
- Planning money has been committed for the new Rosthern Hospital, Battlefords District Care Centre and the Esterhazy Integrated Facility.

There are now 1,000 more doctors and 5,000 more nurses practicing in Saskatchewan compared to 2007.

But there is more to be done.

My government's Health Human Resources Action Plan to recruit, train, incentivize, and retain more health care workers has achieved significant success since launching a year ago.

Since its implementation, 728 new nursing graduates from the province and across Canada have been hired.

In August 2023, an accelerated, streamlined pathway for internationally educated nurses was implemented, reducing licensing times from nine months to 14 weeks.

Nursing recruits from abroad will be supported through the process, from recruitment to their work placements and settlement in a new community.

Thirty-four Registered Nurses (RNs) from the Philippines arrived in Saskatchewan this summer.

Once their clinical training is complete, these RNs will be eligible for licensing and ready to begin working in Saskatchewan's health system.

The Saskatchewan Health Authority has also hired 19 Ukrainian newcomers into the health care workforce since September 2022.

This fall, up to 12 Physician Assistant positions will be added at community clinics across the province.

An investment of \$1.3 million was included in the 2023-24 provincial budget to create Physician Assistant positions for the first time.

The Rural and Remote Recruitment Incentive of up to \$50,000 available to nine high priority designations in 54 communities is seeing success, with 166 new hires conditionally approved to date.

This incentive covers healthcare professionals from a variety of disciplines, from Registered Nurses to Medical Radiation Technologists and Continuing Care Assistants.

Of the 250 new and enhanced permanent full-time position postings, there have been 203 hires.

These positions are targeted to stabilize staffing in rural and remote areas of the province.

The Final Clinical Placement Bursary to support students in health disciplines with their final clinical placement requirements has had 149 applications approved since April 1, 2023.

The Nursing Loan Forgiveness Program aims to attract nurses to smaller and mid-sized communities.

This fall, my government will build on this program and expand eligibility to nursing professionals who choose to work in the communities of Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Swift Current, Yorkton and The Battlefords.

My government is investing \$25.2 Million in continued support for approximately 550 new post-secondary training seats for Saskatchewan students across 18 health training programs.

Additional training seats for Medical Laboratory Technologists and Medical Radiologic Technologists have been added at Saskatchewan Polytechnic this fall.

My government is expanding the scope of practice for pharmacists, nurse practitioners and advanced care paramedics to optimize their skills.

This work will ensure patients receive the right care at the right time.

Providing access to timely surgeries is a priority.

Saskatchewan surgeons performed more than 24,000 surgeries in the first three months of 2023 – the highest number of surgeries ever performed in a three-month period.

The surgical system is on track to eliminate the COVID-related backlog and return to a pre-pandemic wait list by March 31, 2024.

Over \$7 million is dedicated this fiscal year to address wait times for diagnostic imaging.

This funding will deliver:

- CT services for an additional 10,500 patients;
- MRI services for an additional 4,700 patients; and
- Interventional radiology for an additional 150 patients.

PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITIES

My government is working to protect Saskatchewan communities in other ways.

Saskatchewan residents can train to become firefighters right here at home.

My government recently partnered with Suncrest College to establish the Saskatchewan Emergency Response Institute, located outside of Melville.

It will provide municipal firefighter education and train volunteer and industrial firefighters.

Firefighters are a part of every community in Saskatchewan, putting their lives on the line to protect the residents of our province.

This fall, my government will amend *The Workers' Compensation Act* to expand the list of cancers in the presumptive coverage for firefighters.

Saskatchewan currently provides presumptive coverage to firefighters for 16 types of cancer.

This legislation will add presumptive coverage for six more types of cancer: primary site pancreatic, thyroid, penile, soft tissue sarcoma, mesothelioma and laryngeal cancer, giving Saskatchewan the broadest presumptive cancer coverage for firefighters of any province in Canada.

It is with much gratitude that my government thanks these women and men who sacrifice daily to keep us all safe.

My government continues to work with Lung Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Heart and Stroke and the Canadian Cancer Society to reduce the incidence of smoking and vaping, particularly among young people.

During this session, my government will introduce legislation designed to reduce smoking and vaping, including raising the legal consumption age from 18 to 19, consistent with the age for alcohol and cannabis consumption.

PROTECTING FAMILIES

A growing population means more children in our daycares and our schools.

In the first two years of the Canada-Saskatchewan Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, nearly 5,000 new spaces were created.

My government understands the need to create more affordable childcare spaces throughout the province.

That is why nearly 2,500 new childcare spaces will be added in the coming months.

This will bring the total number of new childcare spaces created in Saskatchewan since 2007 to 10,521 – a 114 per cent increase.

Earlier this year, my government delivered an additional \$40 million to school divisions to support increasing enrolment and classroom complexity.

This means total operating funding has grown to \$2.08 billion for the 2023-24 school year, an increase of \$89.4 million, or 4.5 per cent, over last year.

In Saskatchewan schools today, there are 705 more teachers, 570 more educational assistants and 221 more student support staff positions than in 2007.

Since 2007, my government has invested \$2.4 billion to build 60 new or replacement schools and fund 30 major renovation projects in the communities of Saskatoon, Regina, Martensville, Langenburg, Hudson Bay, Lloydminster, Swift Current, Turnor Lake, Humboldt, Oxbow, Porcupine Plain, Prince Albert, Weyburn, Rosthern, Blaine Lake, Lanigan, Warman and many others.

My government is investing \$147 million this year to build:

- A Francophone school in Regina;
- St. Frances Cree Bilingual School in Saskatoon;
- Kindergarten to Grade 12 school in Lanigan;
- Joint-use school in Moose Jaw;
- Elementary school in La Loche;
- Regina North joint-use school;
- Saskatoon City Centre school; and
- Harbour Landing West joint-use school in Regina.

Not all education happens inside a traditional classroom.

My government recently launched the Saskatchewan Distance Learning Centre (SDLC) to ensure students have access to as many learning opportunities as possible, regardless of where they live.

The SDLC offers more than just regular courses.

The SDLC has been busy reaching out to industry to form new partnerships that will ensure our students will be well prepared to enter the growing job market here in Saskatchewan.

These partnerships have resulted in programs in areas such as agriculture equipment technician, mechanical and automotive, autobody, tourism, power engineering and animation.

Saskatchewan Polytechnic has long been a cornerstone of advanced education and skills training in Saskatchewan, offering over 150 programs to prepare students for ever-changing workplace requirements.

Last month, my government announced a major step forward for the future of Saskatchewan Polytechnic, committing up to \$200 million to a new centralized Saskatoon campus which will be located at Innovation Place on the University of Saskatchewan campus.

The new campus will set the stage for an Innovation Corridor that brings together business, entrepreneurs, students and other learning institutions to create a centre of excellence in applied learning and research.

My government continues to deliver meaningful supports to Saskatchewan seniors.

Since 2007, we have quadrupled support for low-income seniors through the Seniors Income Plan, from \$90 to \$360 per month.

To better support seniors, the Geriatric Evaluation and Management program in Regina is being further enhanced to better serve southern Saskatchewan.

The enhanced program will help assess and provide assistance to seniors managing complex medical issues, provide social supports, assess cognitive issues and assist with mental health issues.

My government continues to take action to protect Saskatchewan people from the threat of interpersonal violence.

In July, my government signed on to the National Action Plan to End Gender Based Violence.

We are investing \$27.5 million in interpersonal violence programs and supports this year.

This includes \$876,000 in operational funding over three years to support second stage housing, including intervention and counselling services for women and their children leaving interpersonal violence and abuse.

My government recently announced expanded funding for the second stage housing pilot to include additional locations in Prince Albert and Regina, bringing the three-year commitment for second stage shelters to \$984,000.

We have expanded the Child Support Calculation Service pilot project, which will allow families to determine and re-calculate child support payments without needing to go to court.

The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Community Response Fund is an important part of Saskatchewan's actions to address issues raised by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

The fund supports Indigenous community approaches to violence prevention and enhancing safety for Indigenous women and girls.

To date, the fund has provided \$400,000 in support of eight projects in southern, central and northern Saskatchewan.

My government remains committed to protecting Saskatchewan people and communities.

Last spring, Saskatchewan joined with other provincial and territorial governments in calling on Ottawa to reform Canada's broken bail system.

We will continue this work by holding the federal government to account to make the needed changes to the Criminal Code.

My government will also continue to work with the federal government and First Nations to develop solutions to First Nations policing issues and continue to work with the Prince Albert Grand Council to look at self-administered policing options.

During this session, my government will introduce *The Protection from Human Trafficking (Coerced Debts) Amendment Act*, which will relieve human trafficking victims of negative credit factors incurred through coercion.

Rapid Access Counselling serves adults in 24 communities across Saskatchewan.

This year, my government will expand these mental health services to children and youth in thirteen communities including Estevan, Weyburn, Carlyle, Oxbow, Regina, Saskatoon, North Battleford, Humboldt, Prince Albert, Kindersley, Yorkton, Swift Current and Moose Jaw.

New residential homes for youth with complex mental health needs and addictions issues will be opened in Saskatoon, Regina and Prince Albert.

My government has heard Saskatchewan people's concerns about affordability and the cost of living.

While federal policies like the carbon tax and clean electricity regulations will increase utility costs for Saskatchewan families, my government and Saskatchewan's Crowns are making every effort to keep utility costs as low as possible.

Today, Saskatchewan residents enjoy the second lowest utility bundle costs in Canada.

On October 1st, SaskEnergy lowered natural gas costs by 24.5 per cent, resulting in an overall bill decrease of eight per cent for the average residential customer.

Inflation has caused cost of living pressures for everyone, particularly low-income families.

During this session, my government will introduce a new Saskatchewan Employment Incentive program.

This program will bolster the income of low-income working families with dependent children by providing financial incentives for individuals to obtain and maintain employment.

PROTECTING OPPORTUNITIES

The growth and successes Saskatchewan has realized over the past 16 years must be protected.

Saskatchewan feeds the world.

Irrigation can protect future crop production.

Since 2020, over 34,000 acres have been irrigated in Saskatchewan.

The 2030 Growth Plan has a target of irrigating an additional 8,500 acres per year.

Saskatchewan has seen almost double that target this year – 15,000 new irrigable acres - and is on track to meet its 2030 target.

Our province is blessed with an abundance of natural resources and my government will ensure Saskatchewan remains at the forefront of opportunities.

The Critical Minerals Strategy is putting Saskatchewan on the path to lead the country in mining exploration and development.

Opportunities are already being realized with the first carbon neutral copper mine in the world being built in McIlvenna Bay by Foran Mining.

Another great summer has just concluded in Saskatchewan's beautiful provincial parks, with more than 900,000 park visits.

Improvements continue to be made, including a new group pavilion at Rowan's Ravine, a new visitor reception centre at Crooked Lake and a new 40 site serviced campground at Meadow Lake Provincial Park.

The Creative Saskatchewan Film and Television Grant continues to attract new productions to our province.

Through the assistance of the Film and Television Grant, 25 new film and television productions began filming in the past year, 20 of which have completed production.

My government is grateful for the service and sacrifice of military veterans and their families.

We honour that service by providing \$1.5 million annually to the Saskatchewan Veterans Support Club Program.

As Remembrance Day approaches, many Saskatchewan residents show their gratitude and honour our veterans by donating to the Royal Canadian Legion Poppy Campaign and by wearing a poppy.

While no one is required to wear a poppy, no one should ever be prevented from doing so.

That is why my government will introduce *The Saskatchewan Remembrance Observance Act* to protect individuals' right to wear a poppy in all Saskatchewan workplaces.

Sound financial management protects future generations by ensuring resources are available to deliver vital programs and services, both today and in the years ahead.

Surplus provincial budgets last year and this year have enabled my government to pay down \$2.5 billion of the debt incurred during the pandemic, resulting in interest savings of \$110 million per year – savings that are used to support important programs, services and infrastructure for Saskatchewan people.

CONCLUSION

There are so many opportunities right here in Saskatchewan, regardless of whether you've lived here all your life or you are brand new to our province.

Saskatchewan has built a strong foundation - a foundation of a strong economy, of strong communities where families can grow and thrive, and of opportunities for those who seek them.

A strong and growing province means more homes, more businesses, more families, more opportunities, more careers and more futures have been built, right here in Saskatchewan.

It means more hospitals, more schools and more highways have been built right here in Saskatchewan.

And it means there is so much more to be built in the years ahead.

My government, together with the people of our great province, will keep building Saskatchewan.

And we will protect all we have built.

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 its deliberations.

God bless Saskatchewan.

God bless Canada.

God save the King.





