

MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

Ministry of Social Services Budget 2024-25

The 2024-25 budget for the Ministry of Social Services is \$1.54 billion, which is an increase of \$112.4 million, or 7.8 per cent, over 2023-24.

The budget provides targeted investments to meet the evolving needs of clients in the most need as they build a better life for themselves. This record budget will increase income assistance benefits, rejuvenate social housing and address vacancies, continue to implement integrated approaches to respond to homelessness, enhance services for people with disabilities and increase supports for at-risk families, children and youth.

Income Assistance

- \$17 million increase to deliver the first full year of the Saskatchewan Employment Incentive program, launched in January 2024.
- \$7.4 million investment to increase monthly benefits for Saskatchewan Income Support (SIS) clients. In May 2024, Adult Basic Benefit and Shelter Benefit will each increase by three per cent, representing an increase of up to \$60 per household per month. The Alternate Heating Benefit, for households that use alternative heat sources such as wood, electricity or propane, will increase by \$30 per month.
- \$6.3 million increase to raise Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID) monthly Living Income Benefits by three per cent, representing an increase of up to \$55 per household per month, starting in May 2024.
- SIS and SAID clients who are single or without dependent children will also benefit from increased earned income exemptions, enabling those who work to keep more of what they earn. This aligns with the new Saskatchewan Employment Incentive Program that supports working families with lower incomes.
- SAID clients with children will receive a higher annual benefit that helps cover expenses for school supplies.
- The Personal Care Home Benefit monthly income threshold will increase by \$100 to \$2,500.
- A new benefit will be introduced to support clients to secure identification, so they have better access to services.

Response to Homelessness

- \$7.2 million increase to support ongoing emergency shelter operations, including the 120 new permanent emergency shelter spaces established across the province in 2023-24.
- \$9.5 million new capital investment to continue to develop supportive housing spaces in Regina and Saskatoon.
- \$690,000 increase to expand the Income Assistance Mobile Workforce initiative to place an additional 10 ministry employees on-site with select community-based organizations to serve clients where they are.
- \$250,000 increase to expand trusteeship and money management services to help 150 more clients pay their rent and other bills each month.

Community-Based Service Providers

- \$13.7 million increase for community-based service providers, including:
 - \$7.8 million for service providers that support people with intellectual disabilities;
 - \$5 million for service providers supporting at-risk children, youth and families in their homes and communities; and
 - \$875,000 for approved private service homes that care for people with intellectual disabilities.

Social Housing

- Saskatchewan Housing Corporation (SHC) will invest \$83.4 million in the repair and maintenance of provincially-owned housing units in 2024-25.
 - A \$9.6 million increase will target the prevention and reduction of vacancies in social housing units, and respond to the increasing demand for social housing through investing in repairs, maintenance, and the replacement of major building components.

Disability Programs

- \$10.4 million increase to support the changing service needs of current clients with intellectual disabilities, and the delivery of residential and day programs to new clients.
- A \$7.6 million investment will plan and construct 10 new group homes and one assessment and stabilization home.
- \$4 million increase to the Autism Spectrum Disorder Individualized Funding Program to continue to meet the needs of children and their families.
- \$160,000 funding commitment to partner with the Rick Hansen Foundation to increase awareness on common accessibility barriers that persons with disabilities experience.
- A new Quality Assurance Unit will be established to strengthen oversight of homes supporting adults with an intellectual disability.

Child and Family Programs

- \$2.7 million increase to support additional residential care options for children and youth with complex behavioural needs or acute, chronic medical and developmental needs, enabling them to remain in their home communities. This includes:
 - \$1.8 million to support growing needs for private treatment; and,
 - \$950,000 to expand group home services for children and youth, and provide eight new spaces.
- Starting in July 2024, \$600,000 increase to foster care and extended family care allowance rates to help cover the costs of caring for a child, such as school fees and promoting family contact for children in care.
- \$500,000 increase to assist youth transitioning from care to access housing, employment and educational opportunities, as recommended by Youth Advisory Teams.
- \$500,000 increase in funding to Mobile Crisis Services to support critical after-hours services in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert.
- \$375,000 increase to expand intensive in-home services for at-risk families outside of Regina and Saskatoon to communities where they do not currently exist.
- \$135,000 increase to support the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Network to expand supports.