

Classrooms, Care & Communities

Provincial Budget | 2024-2025



2024-25 BUDGET ADDRESS

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Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance

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Check against delivery

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Speaker, colleagues and guests...

It is my honour today to present the 2024-25 Saskatchewan budget...

Our government's 17th budget...and my seventh as Finance Minister.

Every one of those budgets has been driven by the same guiding principle...

That a strong economy means a brighter future for our great province.

A strong economy means more people, more jobs and more opportunities...

And it means that we can reinvest the benefits of growth in the vital services that make Saskatchewan the best place to live.

This budget continues to follow that guiding principle.

In fact...this budget delivers the largest-ever new investments in three of the most important areas to Saskatchewan people and Saskatchewan's future...
Classrooms, care and communities.

This budget delivers the largest-ever increase in school operating funding – up \$180 million, or nearly nine per cent – to \$2.2 billion.

This budget delivers the largest-ever increase in health funding – up \$726 million, or more than 10 per cent – to \$7.6 billion.

And the budget delivers the largest ever increase in municipal revenue sharing to Saskatchewan communities – cities, towns, villages and RMs...

Up \$42 million, or 14 per cent, to \$340 million.

Record funding increase to schools.

Record funding increase to health care.

Record funding increase to municipalities.

Classrooms, care, communities.

Sometime this year, Saskatchewan's population will reach 1.25 million people.

That's up a quarter of a million people since our government was first elected.

This budget responds to the challenges of a growing province by reinvesting the benefits of a growing province.

The dark days of declining population, of closing schools and hospitals, and underfunding our communities are now in the past.

Our government vows to keep them in the past...as we work to always build a stronger economy and a brighter future.

FISCAL OVERVIEW

Mr. Speaker, the Budget makes these important new investments without any new taxes or tax increases.

It continues to deliver more than \$2 billion in affordability measures announced in previous budgets... like reductions in personal income tax and indexation of tax brackets.

And – while not a budget measure – on January 1 our government removed the federal carbon tax on home heating....

Saving Saskatchewan families an average of about \$400/year.

The \$19.9 billion revenue forecast for the 2024-25 Budget is up \$184.2 million, or 0.9 per cent, from last year.

The increase is primarily due to growth in all revenue categories, except non-renewable resources ... Largely due to the moderation of potash prices.

Total expense is projected at \$20.1 billion in the 2024-25 Budget, an increase of \$1.5 billion, or 7.9 per cent, over last year's budget.

The 2024-25 Budget has a projected deficit of \$273.2 million...but is expected to return to a surplus position in 2025-26 due to increasing revenues driven by economic growth and a growing labour force.

Saskatchewan continues to maintain the second lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in Canada at 14 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, just to put that in context, that's less than one-third of the federal government's debt to GDP ratio of 46.8 per cent.

Classrooms

The 2024-25 Budget supports students and teachers through a record-level investment of \$3.3 billion for the Ministry of Education.

That's up 8.1 per cent over last year's budget and is an increase of \$247.8 million to support Prekindergarten to Grade 12 schools, early learning, child care and libraries.

Saskatchewan's 27 school divisions will receive \$2.2 billion in school operating funding for the 2024-25 school year – a record increase of \$180 million over the previous year.

To ensure future enrolment increases are funded, school divisions will receive an additional \$35 million...

In addition to this, \$29.8 million will be provided to fund operational pressures, such as salaries for non-teaching positions like bus drivers and educational assistants.

Mr. Speaker, this budget focuses on what teachers, students and parents have told us matters most.

Overall, this budget provides \$356.6 million in supports for our classrooms, including funding to address classroom size and complexity.

This is an increase of \$45.6 million, or 14.7 per cent, from the previous year to help students and teachers in the classroom.

This includes annualizing \$4.9 million for the Teacher Innovation and Support Pilot Program and Specialized Support Classrooms Pilot to help provide better teacher and student experiences.

Building new schools and more classrooms is a priority for our rapidly growing province.

This budget invests \$216 million for Prekindergarten to Grade 12 school capital, an increase of 46.6 per cent over the previous year, including \$28.5 million for relocatable classrooms.

This includes ongoing funding for 11 projects and three major renovations currently underway in Lanigan, Carlyle, La Loche, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Regina, Prince Albert, Balgonie, and Wilcox...

As well, the budget includes funding for the planning of nine new schools and two major renovations in Regina, Saskatoon, Swift Current, Pinehouse and South Corman Park.

The 2024-25 Budget provides \$408.7 million for early years and child care, an increase of 5.5%, to increase the number of regulated child care spaces available at \$10 a day.

Our government is investing \$793 million in the post-secondary education sector, an increase of 3.7 per cent, to enrich the student experience and provide more opportunities for students to train and pursue careers here in Saskatchewan.

Post-secondary institutions are receiving approximately \$724 million in operating and capital grants, including \$492.7 million to the University of Regina, University of Saskatchewan and the federal and affiliated colleges.

The Western College of Veterinary Medicine will also receive new funding to explore infrastructure expansion.

Indigenous Teacher Education programs will continue to receive funding, supporting the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous languages in the province.

There is \$193.8 million for Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies and the Dumont Technical Institute, as well as \$37.1 million for Saskatchewan's regional colleges.

This budget provides a one-time \$12-million top-up to its current multi-year funding agreement with post-secondary institutions.

This is a 2.2-per cent increase in operating funding to help institutions remain responsive to the needs of students and our growing labour market.

Saskatchewan post-secondary students will also benefit directly from \$46.5 million in financial supports, including a new grant to help reduce financial barriers for low-income students with dependents.

The Graduate Retention Program will continue to provide up to \$20,000 in tax credits to post-secondary students who live and work in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this is the most generous program of its kind in the country and more than 81,600 students have benefited from this program to date.

Since 2007, our government has proudly invested approximately \$14.2 billion in post-secondary institutions and student support.

We will continue to invest in Saskatchewan's present and future labour force.

The 2024-25 Budget includes nearly \$80 million in funding for several workforce development programs.

The budget also includes an increase of \$1.5 million to support the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission in adding 250 apprentice training seats for construction-related trades.

This addition brings the total investment in apprenticeship training to \$22.9 million and will increase the total number of training seats to 4,700.

An increase of \$856,000 in this budget will support a record-high allocation of 8,000 nominations through the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program and provide enhanced fraud detection and integrity services within the program.

Care

Mr. Speaker, this budget also makes record investments in health care...

\$7.6 billion into the Ministry of Health, an overall increase of \$726.4 million, or 10.6 per cent, over the previous year's budget.

The Saskatchewan Health Authority will receive \$4.7 billion, or a 5.6 per cent increase, compared to last year.

Mr. Speaker, we have made great strides in recruiting and retaining health care professionals through the Health Human Resources Action Plan.

Since September 2021, 262 physicians have been recruited to Saskatchewan from outside the province, while we've also attracted 40 physicians from outside the country.

This includes 107 family physicians and 155 specialists.

We are committed to continuing to recruit more health care professionals.

The Health Human Resources Action Plan will continue to deliver on the commitment to add 250 new or enhanced permanent health care providers in rural and remote locations.

In Advanced Education, \$3.4 million in new funding will create 66 additional training seats in high-demand health training programs.

In 2024-25.

There will be a focus on training for registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses and other hard-to-recruit professions.

A further \$11.4 million will support the continued implementation of the significant seat expansions announced in previous years.

This includes approximately \$10.8 million for occupational therapy, speech language pathology and physician recruitment programs at the University of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training will be investing \$4.1 million for training and settlement supports for in-demand health occupations.

This investment includes \$2.4 million to support training seats for continuing care aides, licensed practical nurses and medical lab assistants.

It also includes \$1.8 million for credential recognition supports, such as streamlined and accelerated assessments, training and licensure pathways, and settlement programming for internationally trained health care workers.

This budget also includes record capital investment of \$516.8 million for facilities and equipment, which is \$179-million higher than last year's budget.

This includes:

- \$180 million for the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital;
- \$55 million for the Weyburn General Hospital;
- \$27 million for La Ronge long-term care;
- \$21.9 million to complete the Regina General Hospital Parkade; and
- \$20 million for specialized long-term care bed replacements in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, since 2007, the province has invested more than \$2.9 billion into facilities and equipment to improve health care across the province.

The 2024-25 Budget will also expand patient access to primary and community care through multiple initiatives.

A \$16-million increase will help improve access to nurse practitioners through integration into primary health care settings, support Healthline 811 and enhance support for Chronic Pain Clinics in Regina and Saskatoon.

This budget also includes a \$30-million increase to support the Saskatoon and Regina Capacity Pressures Action Plans.

Other measures to improve patient care include:

- A \$7.5-million increase in annual funding to enhance emergency medical services across the province;
- A \$4.5-million increase to stabilize and enhance neurology and cardiology services;
- A \$2.5-million increase for kidney health and organ and tissue donation programs; and
- A \$2.2-million increase for children's care, including the provincial pediatric gastroenterology program.

It also includes a \$5.1-million increase for specialized medical imaging services to add essential CT and MRI capacity...and reduce the waitlists for these important diagnostic procedures.

This budget includes a \$3.5-million increase for surgical programs to improve the quality of life for thousands of patients and continue to reduce the surgical wait list.

Mr. Speaker, in the first nine months of the current fiscal year...April to December 2023...71,850 surgeries have been performed, a new record for the province and an increase of 6,000 procedures over the previous year.

The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency will see an increase of \$26.1 million for a total record budget of \$248.9 million to ensure patients can access the most effective and leading-edge oncology drugs, therapies and treatment options.

This year's budget will deliver timely, exceptional cancer care services for Saskatchewan women.

A \$3.5-million increase for breast cancer care and screening initiatives will include technology enhancements, new diagnostic imaging equipment and the establishment of the Breast Health Centre in Regina.

A \$1-million grant will be designated for important ongoing ovarian cancer research.

Mr. Speaker, Mental Health and Addictions will receive its highest-ever budget of \$574 million – about 7.5 per cent of the total Health budget – with an increase of \$34 million for targeted incentives.

Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Mental Health and Addictions has three pillars: enhancing treatment capacity, improving the system and moving to a recovery-oriented system of care model focusing on treatment and recovery.

This budget includes an investment of \$4.7 million in targeted mental health initiatives with a strong focus on youth, including:

- \$1 million to expand the Mental Health Capacity Building Program in schools;
- \$150,000 for Prenatal Outreach and Response Teams through Sanctum Care Group; and
- \$120,000 for Saskatchewan youth homes.

The remaining youth-targeted increases will fund commitments such as psychiatry support services in Saskatoon and Prince Albert, as well as the BridgePoint Centre for Eating Disorders.

The budget also provides a \$29.2-million increase for targeted initiatives to address addictions and vulnerable populations.

Mr. Speaker...the largest funding increase in Saskatchewan history for classrooms....

And the largest funding increase in Saskatchewan history for care...

And the largest funding increase in Saskatchewan history for communities.

Communities

Cities, towns, villages and rural municipalities throughout Saskatchewan will receive a record increase of \$42.4 million in municipal revenue sharing.

This is an increase of 14.2 per cent from the year before, and a total of \$340.2 million in unconditional support for municipalities in the province.

Mr. Speaker...this increase is entirely driven by the strength of our economy...

As it is based on a dependable, predictable formula introduced by our government that sees municipalities receive a share of the PST.

So as our population grows, our economy grows, and people spend more money in our province...

Saskatchewan communities directly benefit from that growth.

An additional \$350.1 million – an increase of \$2 million – will be directed to infrastructure programs in partnership with municipalities, cost sharing important infrastructure projects in communities across our entire province.

This budget invests \$29.5 million to support municipalities and industry partners to make investments in the provincial transportation system. These investments include supporting economic growth and safety on rural and municipal roads.

Mr. Speaker, this budget includes \$719.4 million for the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety to maintain and promote public safety and the well-being of our communities.

Corrections, Policing and Public Safety's budget includes more than \$228 million to fund RCMP operations in the province and \$21.6 million for the RCMP's First Nations Policing Program.

This budget also provides \$23.1 million for 160 municipal police positions, including 17 Combined Traffic Services positions funded by SGI and other public safety initiatives through the Municipal Police Grants Program.

The 2024-25 Budget includes \$7 million to continue the implementation and hiring for the Saskatchewan Marshals Service, in anticipation of the service becoming operational in 2026.

It includes a \$37-million investment in the ongoing expansion of the Saskatoon Remand Centre, which will provide more space to manage and provide rehabilitative programming.

This budget includes \$12.35 million for the Saskatchewan Firearms Office, which will help fund a ballistics laboratory at its headquarters in Saskatoon.

An investment of more than \$250 million for the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General will support justice services and community well-being in our province.

Our government is committed to addressing the unacceptable interpersonal and gender-based violence.

This year's budget is investing \$31.7 million for interpersonal violence programs and services, which includes \$4.66 million in funding through the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.

It also includes annualized funding of \$328,000 for second-stage shelters.

Mr. Speaker, the 2024-25 Budget provides the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency with a \$5.5 million deposit on four airtankers to help manage wildfires and will replace our current fleet, which is approaching its end of life.

Strong Families and Affordability

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan remains one of the most affordable places in Canada to live, work and raise a family.

We want to keep it that way.

That's why this budget includes no new taxes and no tax increases and continues to deliver more than \$2 billion in affordability measures.

Saskatchewan continues to have among the lowest personal income taxes in the country.

Saskatchewan families will continue to benefit from reduced education property tax and programs and services designed to make life more affordable.

This includes the Active Families Benefit, Children's Drug Plan and programs to help fund insulin pumps and glucose monitors.

This budget also delivers a \$4-million increase to the Autism Spectrum Disorder Individualized Funding Program to continue to meet the needs of children and their families.

The 2024-25 Budget will help low-income individuals, families and seniors provide for their basic needs.

This budget includes a \$17-million investment to deliver the first full year of the Saskatchewan Employment Incentive Program, making life more affordable for low-income families.

Targeted seniors' care initiatives will receive a \$43.4-million increase to stabilize services and programming so Saskatchewan seniors can live safely and comfortably in their communities.

The 2024-25 Provincial Budget invests in the renewed PST Rebate on New Home Construction Program and the recently introduced Saskatchewan Secondary Suite Incentive Program to help homeowners with affordability and increase housing and rental availability across the province.

This budget strengthens the support provided to families and communities and includes a record \$1.5 billion for the Ministry of Social Services – an increase of \$112.4 million, or 7.8 per cent, compared to last year.

The 2024-25 Budget includes \$28.9 million, an increase of \$16.7 million to continue to fund the Provincial Approach to Homelessness.

This investment consists of a \$7.2-million increase to support ongoing emergency shelter operations and a \$9.5-million capital investment to continue to develop supportive housing spaces in Regina and Saskatoon.

The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation will invest \$83.4 million to maintain and repair up to 1,400 provincially owned housing units.

This includes an additional \$9.6 million in provincial funding to prevent and reduce vacancies and respond to the increasing demand for social housing.

The 2024-25 Budget supports people with disabilities and includes:

- \$10.4 million to support the changing service needs of current clients with intellectual disabilities, and the delivery of residential and day programs to new clients; and
- \$7.6-million investment to plan and construct 10 new group homes and one assessment and stabilization home.

Monthly income assistance benefits will increase by three per cent for Saskatchewan Assured Income Disability (SAID) and Saskatchewan Income Support (SIS) clients. The second year in a row where benefits have increased for the SAID program, and the third straight year of increases for SIS.

The Personal Care Home Benefit monthly income threshold will increase by \$100 to \$2,500 to help make living in a licensed care home more affordable for seniors.

In 2024-25, community-based organizations across government will receive a three per cent funding increase, totaling \$18.1 million.

Our community-based service providers are critical in helping Saskatchewan people achieve a better quality of life.

Building a strong economy

Mr. Speaker, all of these vital investments in classrooms, care, communities and other important government services are only possible because of a strong and growing economy.

Saskatchewan is one of the best places in the world to invest and do business.

And that means more jobs and opportunities in every part of the province.

In the most recent report from Statistics Canada...18,700 new full-time jobs were created in Saskatchewan over the past year.

That's one new full-time job created in Saskatchewan every 28 minutes.

Think about it – that means a new job has been created somewhere in Saskatchewan since I started this speech.

I promise to wrap up before we get to two new jobs.

Our government will always be committed to strengthening our economy to build a better quality of life for Saskatchewan people and the communities where they live.

We recognize the contribution of small businesses to our growing economy.

For that reason, the small business tax rate reduction down to one per cent will be extended for another year...until June 30, 2025.

Saskatchewan will continue to have the second-lowest small business tax rate in Canada.

From the time the small business rate was lowered in the fall of 2020, Saskatchewan's small businesses will have saved an estimated \$416 million in Corporate Income Tax

The amount of eligible business income on which the small business tax rate applies will remain at \$600,000 – the highest threshold in Canada.

That means, Saskatchewan will continue to have the second-lowest small business tax rate in Canada.

Saskatchewan is an exporting province.

More export sales abroad means more jobs here at home.

With a budget of \$40.6 million, the Ministry of Trade and Export Development is supporting Saskatchewan's economy by expanding our presence in international markets.

Private companies have committed to more than 60 large-scale investment projects across the province in recent years – totalling more than \$39 billion.

These include projects in the agri-value, manufacturing and processing, mining, forestry and energy sectors.

The 2024-25 Budget includes \$53.8 million for the Ministry of Energy and Resources to support our growing economy with a focus on Saskatchewan's world-class natural resources.

Included in this ministry's budget is \$10 million in funding over 10 years for the Public Geoscience initiative, which will support increased exploration for critical minerals.

In recognition of the important role of critical minerals in the global economy, the budget introduces the Saskatchewan Critical Mineral Innovation Incentive to support new technology pilot projects.

The budget also introduces the complementary Critical Mineral Processing Investment Incentive, which is open to new and expanded value-added processing projects.

Our province feeds the world, and our agriculture industry is the centre of Saskatchewan's growing economy.

The 2024-25 Budget invests \$570.6 million in agriculture, an increase of \$22.4 million, or 4.1 per cent, from the previous year.

This funding will allow the Ministry of Agriculture to fund agricultural research and enhancements to crop insurance, while investing in programming for producers and agribusinesses.

In recognition of the challenging weather and soil conditions faced by some of our producers, the ministry's budget provides \$431.7 million to fully fund federal-provincial risk management programs, including Crop Insurance and Agri Stability.

This is an increase of \$23.7 million from the year before.

The 2024-25 Provincial Budget provides \$89.4 million for strategic initiatives under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership.

Included among these initiatives are the Irrigation Development and Irrigation Efficiency programs that will help develop new irrigated acres and support improved energy and water efficiency of existing systems.

More than 55,000 new irrigated acres have been developed in Saskatchewan over the last four years, which means the province is on track to meet our Growth Plan goal of 85,000 irrigated acres by 2030.

Mr. Speaker, people travel to our province from across Canada and around the world to enjoy the natural beauty of Saskatchewan and experience our world-class hunting and fishing.

To ensure visitors to our parks have a great experience, the 2024-25 Budget provides \$15 million for capital and infrastructure improvements at provincial parks in Saskatchewan.

This budget also doubles provincial funding to the Saskatchewan Regional Parks Association to \$1.23 million, a lift of \$615,000 from 2023-24.

These funds will help pay for improvements and preventative maintenance in regional parks, which house campgrounds and recreation areas that serve local communities and tourists.

Improved Infrastructure

Our government continues to build Saskatchewan.

This budget delivers the largest investment in capital projects in Saskatchewan history.

Saskatchewan's Crown corporations will spend approximately \$2.6 billion on capital projects this year to support economic growth and maintain and improve utility infrastructure.

\$1.9 million is being invested in capital projects through executive government.

In addition to the many capital project already outlined in health and education...

This budget invests \$741 million in the construction and maintenance of a safe and efficient transportation system.

The Highways budget provides \$417.3 million for transportation capital to improve more than 1,100 km of provincial highways, including:

- 260 km of repaving;
- 765 km of light and medium pavement preservation;

- 58 km of Thin Membrane Surface improvements; and
- 25 km of gravel rehabilitation.

Other investments in provincial transportation infrastructure include \$73.5 million to build, operate and maintain the transportation system in northern Saskatchewan, and \$59.3 million to repair or rebuild 17 bridges and replace more than 100 culverts.

Since 2008, the Government of Saskatchewan has invested more than \$13 billion in transportation infrastructure, improving more than 20,700 kilometres of highways.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is now home to nearly a quarter million more people than when our government was first elected...17 years and 17 budgets ago.

I have had the opportunity to work on the development of all 17 of those budgets...

And the honour and privilege of delivering the last seven.

This budget...like all of those budgets...is designed to ensure our province continues to grow...

And that all Saskatchewan people enjoy the benefits of that growth.

More opportunities...more good jobs and careers...

Vibrant communities...and a great quality of life supported by important government services.

That's what every budget has been about.

And that's what this budget is about.

Investing the benefits of growth in classrooms...care...and communities.

Mr. Speaker...this budget will ensure that our province continues to grow...

That our economy remains strong...

And that Saskatchewan's future is bright.