

Highlights of recent news and public events from Saskatoon Southeast MLA Don Morgan



2019-20 BUDGET DELIVERS THE RIGHT BALANCE FOR SASKATCHEWAN

"The 2019-20 Budget is balanced, and it's the right balance for Saskatchewan," Finance Minister Donna Harpauer said Wednesday as she tabled the 2019-20 provincial budget. "This year's budget provides the right balance by increasing support for mental health and for vulnerable families. It increases funding to classrooms and it improves highway safety.

"This budget contains no new taxes or tax increases, so it's the right balance to keep our economy strong. It balances much-needed investments with carefully managed spending in order to achieve a balanced budget that is affordable and sustainable, now and in the years ahead."

The 2019-20 Budget is balanced, with a projected surplus of \$34.4 million. Higher surpluses of \$49 million, \$72 million, and \$84 million are projected for the three fiscal years that follow.

The government's operational debt will not increase in 2019-20. Revenue is forecast at \$15.03 billion, up about \$782 million, or 5.5 per cent, compared to last year's budget. Expense of \$14.99 billion is projected, up from the previous year's budget by \$382 million, or 2.6 per cent.

Investing in Health

Total investment in health in 2019-20 is projected to be \$5.89 billion, an increase of \$123 million, or 2.1 per cent, compared to last year's budget. The budget increases operating funding to the Saskatchewan Health Authority to \$3.6 billion, up more than \$113 million, or 3.2 per cent, compared to last year.

Harpauer said the 2019-20 Budget includes a strong focus on mental health. Funding for targeted mental health and addictions initiatives is increasing by nearly \$30 million in this budget to a total of nearly \$402 million. This represents the largest commitment ever to mental health services in Saskatchewan, and it includes funding for more than 140 new beds for mental health and addictions treatment.

The 2019-20 Budget also provides a \$700,000 increase for the Autism Individualized Funding benefit, increasing the benefit from \$4,000 to \$6,000 per year for children under age six.

Specific health care capital investments in this budget include funding the preconstruction design of a new Victoria Hospital in Prince Albert. The 2019-20 Budget also invests in planning for a new hospital in Weyburn.

Support for Seniors

The 2019-20 Budget continues to improve care for seniors by investing to replace the Northland Pioneers Lodge in Meadow Lake, fulfilling the government's commitment to replace 13 long-term care facilities for seniors across the province. This budget also increases home care support to help people stay safely in their homes as long as possible through the Connected Care program.

The 2019-20 Budget also provides \$1.1 million—an increase of more than \$660,000—to the Alzheimer Society for the First Link program.

Investing in Social Services

The 2019-20 Budget makes a \$1.43 billion investment in social services and assistance, an increase of \$51.4 million, or 3.7 per cent, compared to last year. The budget provides an increase of more than \$27 million to support at-risk children and families. Community-based organizations and those who deliver services to children and families and provide support for people with intellectual disabilities will receive an additional \$5.9 million in 2019-20.

The budget also provides a \$6.6 million increase in support for adults with intellectual disabilities, and \$1.4 million has been designated to increase monthly payments for foster families who complete training.

Investing in Education

The 2019-20 Budget invests in our children's education—\$3.28 billion in total, up more than \$19 million compared to last year. Saskatchewan's school divisions will receive \$1.9 billion in operating funding for the 2019-20 school year, an increase of more than \$26 million year over year.

"This budget increases school division funding while Education Property Tax rates remain unchanged," Harpauer said. "This budget includes more than \$72 million for child care, enabling the provision of more than 16,700 child care spaces across the province. That's an increase of 7,000 spaces since 2007-08."

Funding for the Ministry of Advanced Education exceeds \$727 million in the 2019-20 Budget. More than \$672 million of that amount will go toward operating and capital grants for Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions—including nearly \$88 million in funding for the College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan.

Investing in Communities and Community Safety

To improve safety at highway intersections, the 2019-20 Budget provides \$13 million as the first step of a five-year, \$65 million Enhanced Intersection Safety Program that will improve signage, sight lines and lighting and add safety features like rumble strips at intersections throughout the province.

The budget also includes more than \$60 million for twinning and passing lane projects. Overall, the budget provides funding to improve about 1,000 kilometers of the highway network in 2019-20.

The 2019-20 Budget includes more than \$15 million to continue funding 128 municipal police positions and targeted policing initiatives across the province. A \$1.1 million increase has been designated for drug-impaired driving detection training for police.

The 2019-20 Budget provides more than \$251 million in municipal revenue sharing, a \$10.5 million increase compared to last year.

“A new formula, developed by the province with the municipal sector, is based on revenue generated by three-quarters of one percentage point of the Provincial Sales Tax,” Harpauer said. “Since 2007-08, municipal revenue sharing has nearly doubled—an increase of more than \$124 million.”

Including revenue sharing, infrastructure funding, and a number of other grants and initiatives, the 2019-20 Budget provides more than \$437 million in direct provincial support to municipalities from multiple ministries across government—an increase of \$25.4 million or 6.2 per cent compared to last year.

The 2019-20 Budget also includes \$211 million in targeted investment that will benefit First Nations and Métis people, communities, businesses, and organizations, a 4.7 per cent increase compared to last year.

This budget also provides an increase of \$2.25 million, for a total of \$27 million, to help deliver the SARCAN Beverage Container Collection and Recycling Program.

Tax Changes

The 2019-20 Budget contains new, non-refundable tax credits for volunteer firefighters and volunteer medical first responders who serve to protect and help Saskatchewan people when they need it most.

Beginning with the 2020 taxation year, individuals with at least 200 hours of volunteer service in a year will be able to claim a \$3,000 tax credit.

The budget also includes measures that will ensure the people of Saskatchewan receive a fair and balanced return for their potash.

"The base payment component of the Potash Production Tax is intended to provide a simple flat payment per tonne of potash sales," Harpauer said. "However, it has gradually been eroded by currently allowable deductions. To address this, effective April 1, the calculation of the Potash Production Tax will be simplified by eliminating these deductions.

"This budget also achieves the right balance by investing a total of \$2.7 billion into hospitals, schools, highways, and municipal and Crown infrastructure to help meet the needs of a growing population and economy, while ensuring that debt is managed responsibly. The 2019-20 Budget is part of our government's plan to continue to balance into the future, and sustain needed investments in high-quality government services for all Saskatchewan people."



POSITIVELY PROVINCIAL . . .

SASKATCHEWAN HOSPITAL NORTH BATTLEFORD **OFFICIALLY OPENS**

Patients and offenders living with mental health issues now have access to enhanced facilities and programming at the new Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford (SHNB). The Government of Saskatchewan's \$407 million investment replaces a century-old psychiatric care facility and two correctional facilities.

"The grand opening of the new Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford represents the single largest investment in mental health services in the history of our province," Premier Scott Moe said. "Our government is committed to providing better, more efficient mental health services for Saskatchewan residents, and the Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford will ensure patients in Saskatchewan receive the care they need, when they need it."

The new SHNB includes 188 psychiatric rehabilitation beds and a separate secure wing with 96 beds for offenders living with mental health issues, a total of 284 beds. This includes 32 more

psychiatric rehabilitation beds than the old SHNB so that patients in need of care can receive it as quickly as possible. All patients from the old SHNB have been relocated and settled in to the new facility.

“The new Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford is among the most advanced mental health treatment centres in all of Canada,” Health Minister Jim Reiter said. “Its patient-focused design includes private rooms that are more spacious, natural lighting throughout the facility, and other features that make it an overall more therapeutic environment for patients in their journey through healing.”

The project is a multi-ministry partnership between the Ministries of Health, Corrections and Policing and Central Services, along with the Saskatchewan Health Authority and SaskBuilds, to address mental health needs in the province in accordance with Saskatchewan’s 10-year Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan.

“The Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford offers an opportunity for our government to provide enhanced programming to offenders with mental health needs,” Corrections and Policing Minister Christine Tell said. “This facility will allow us to better address the needs of offenders in a therapeutic environment, and will allow for improved assessment, treatment, and rehabilitation for offenders living with mental health challenges.”

“The care and treatment delivered at the new Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford builds on the best practices of the past and has the potential to develop innovative strategies for best practices in mental health care and treatment into the future,” Saskatchewan Health Authority COO Suann Laurent said. “The opportunities for success are immense.”

The Government of Saskatchewan’s \$407 million investment includes construction and maintenance costs to keep the facility in like-new condition for 30 years under a Public-Private Partnership (P3) agreement. The P3 model selected ensures that the facility is delivered on budget, with total project cost savings estimated at \$90 million compared to a traditional method of procurement. The P3 also protects the public from risks, cost overruns and time delays that are the responsibility of the private sector partner, as per the agreement.

VACCINATION PREVENTS SPREAD OF MEASLES

Ensure Your Immunizations Are Up-To-Date

The Ministry of Health is strongly encouraging Saskatchewan residents to ensure their measles immunizations are up-to-date.

There are currently no confirmed cases of measles in Saskatchewan; however, vaccinations are key to staying healthy and preventing the spread of the disease.

“Because measles is a serious, infectious illness, we are urging all residents to ensure that their immunization and their children’s immunizations are up-to-date,” Saskatchewan’s Chief Medical Health Officer Dr. Saqib Shahab said. “We are aware of measles cases in Canada and the U.S., and we are monitoring the situation here closely. Vaccines are safe and have saved more lives in Canada in the last 60 years than any other medical intervention.”

The measles vaccination is routinely given as MMRV vaccination to all children at 12 and 18 months of age in Saskatchewan. All children in Saskatchewan starting school should have received two doses of a measles containing vaccine - MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella).

People born in 1970 or later are also eligible for MMR if they have not received two doses of a measles vaccine in the past. Individuals travelling with infants six-11 months of age outside of North America and the Caribbean should contact their local public health office to inquire if they need a vaccination against measles. Regardless of travel plans, all Saskatchewan residents age one year and older should ensure they are up-to-date on their measles vaccinations.

Measles cases are rare in Canada, but do occur typically as a result of international travel. Currently there are measles cases reported in British Columbia and in the United States. The last reported case of measles in Saskatchewan was in 2014.

Measles is a viral infection that is airborne and can spread easily from person to person, even without direct contact.

People who have contracted measles usually have the following symptoms:

- fever (38.3 C or greater);
- cough;
- spots in the mouth appearing 1-2 days before the rash;
- a red blotchy rash appearing on days 3-5 and usually lasting for 4-7 days;
- runny nose; and
- redness of the eyes and inner eyelids and/or light sensitivity.

Symptoms usually occur within eight to 12 days after exposure, but this timeframe can range from seven to 21 days post-exposure. Measles is highly contagious from about four days before the appearance of the rash until about four days after.

If a person develops the symptoms listed above, they should call ahead before going to see their physician to ensure they are seen in a manner that minimizes exposure to others in the waiting area.

For more information on immunizations, residents can contact their local public health office.

Information on measles and immunizations is also available through the HealthLine at 811 and on the Ministry of Health website at www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health/diseases-and-conditions/measles.

For information on how to access your immunization records, visit www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health/accessing-health-care-services/immunization-services#immunization-records.

Information for international travelers is available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/measles.html> and <https://www.cdc.gov/features/measlesinternationaltravel/index.html#graphic2>.

SASKATCHEWAN INNOVATORS CHALLENGED TO FIND PRIVATE PROPERTY ACCESS SOLUTIONS

While delivering the Premier's address at the 2019 Convention of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, Premier Scott Moe announced an Innovation Challenge to find creative solutions in connecting would-be land users with rural private property owners to access land. The Innovation Challenge stems from proposed changes to The Trespass to Property Act, which would require people to get permission from rural property owners to use their land for hunting, and other recreational activities.

Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM), with support from Innovation Saskatchewan, is leading the challenge and asking Saskatchewan technology startups,

entrepreneurs, researchers, and students to find technology solutions to the following question: "How can technology be used as a tool to obtain permission from rural property owners before accessing their land?" The ideal solution should create a convenient way for communication to occur between those seeking permission to access land and the landowners.

"Saskatchewan has a long history of innovation and entrepreneurial achievement, and right now the technology sector in our province thriving," Moe said. "We think there's an opportunity to continue apply our Saskatchewan innovation when it comes to rural property access. We're calling on our vibrant tech sector to bring ideas forward on how we can make it easier to ask for permission to access private land, and easier for property owners to respond to those requests. With the strong leadership and commitment of SARM, we're hopeful our innovators and entrepreneurs will answer the call."

"Providing the public a tool to assist with receiving permission from rural property owners is important," Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities President Ray Orb said. "SARM hopes this initiative will assist in finding an innovative solution."

Prior to the April 30 deadline for applications, there will be information sessions held in Regina, Saskatoon and online. Application forms and further details on the program are available at www.innovationsask.ca. A winner will be selected through a competitive process involving input from key stakeholders. The winner will then receive funding of up to \$10,000 and will work directly with SARM over the course of four months to develop a prototype of their technology.

"Our agriculture sector is at the forefront of innovation," Minister Responsible for Innovation Saskatchewan Tina Beaudry-Mellor said. "Saskatchewan is home to a growing and inventive tech sector, ready to create solutions. The Innovation Challenge is a great way to tap into the ingenuity and creativity of Saskatchewan people, and bring together the tech sector and SARM to find a solution that works for both rural residents and the public."

The Innovation Challenge was first launched in 2017 with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice. The challenge sought technological solutions to address rural crime. Saskatoon's Rivercity Technology Services Limited won the challenge and developed a prototype during the 16-week residency. The company launched BeeSecure, an application-based tracking system and GPS device to alert land owners about irregular activity related to their property.

To learn more about the Innovation Challenge and how to participate, visit www.innovationsask.ca.

SASK PARKS LAUNCHES NEW RESERVATION SYSTEM

The Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport launched a new, upgraded online reservation system today for the 2019 camping season.

"With campsite reservations kicking off in just a couple of weeks, we are excited to offer our customers a new reservation site with a fresh look and feel," Parks, Culture and Sport Minister Gene Makowsky said. "The new system will provide more online services and a better overall experience when campers are booking their favourite campsites."

All customers will be required to create a new account with the upgraded system. For a smooth booking process, campers are urged to set up their accounts prior to reservations opening.

It is also suggested that campers take some time to browse the site over the next couple of weeks to become familiar with the new design and features.

Campers can access the reservation site at <http://saskparks.goingtocamp.com>. Reservations open April 2 for seasonal sites, April 4 for group camping sites, and April 8 to 18 for nightly sites.

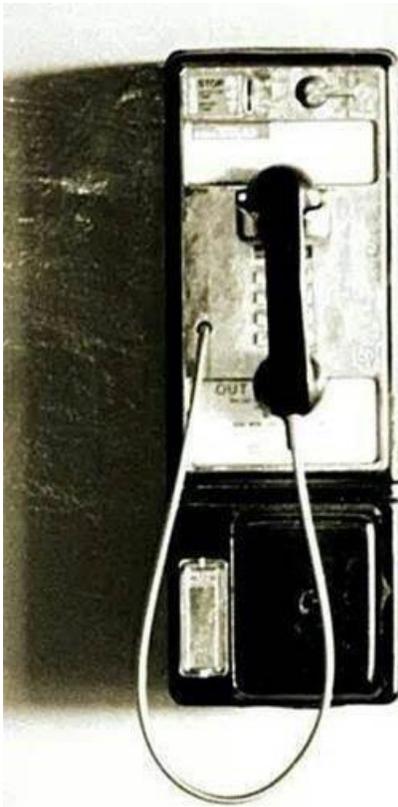
For more information, visit www.saskparks.com.

On The Lighter Side . . .

This past week around 80 high temperature records were broken across Western Canada . . . GOODBYE WINTER! 😊



IT'S SPRING!



KIDS TODAY
WILL NEVER
KNOW THE
JOY OF
FINDING
MONEY IN
THE COIN
RETURN

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